

twelvebaskets



EASTER 2C

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Second Sunday of Easter - Year C
27th April 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

84 STF – Praise the Lord, his glories show OR

177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk (Equipment: playing cards and scissors)

Hymn:

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay OR

94 STF – To God be the glory, great things he has done!

Readings: Acts 5: 27-32, Revelation 1: 4-8, John 20: 19-31

Hymn:

339 STF – When you prayed beneath the trees, it was for me OR

731 STF – When, in our music, God is glorified

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

347 STF – Crown him with many crowns OR

593 STF – Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour

Blessing

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Call to worship

God of love,
You are here by your Spirit,
Lift and inspire us and our time of worship, by your grace, we pray

Amen.¹

Hymn:

84 STF – Praise the Lord, his glories show OR
177 STF – Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Opening Prayers

Living, loving God,
We come to you, believing in the possibility of resurrection,
The chance for new life, a new start, a new possibility.
The Easter season gives us so much to be thankful for, and we thank and praise you this day, O God.

As the buds burst into bloom all around us, so we spread our hands in praise to you.
As the flowers poke through the dirt, so we find hope in the midst of challenging times.
As the days get longer, we give thanks for your light, shining in the darkness.

And we come to you, knowing that we have fallen short of your glory,
We come to you, seeking your forgiveness,
And knowing that through the power of your resurrection love, you have already accepted us just as we are, and that we are set free by your grace.
Remind us of that freedom, we pray

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Equipment: playing cards and scissors to suit the age group and dexterity

I would recommend practicing this beforehand, and if you want to make the challenge slightly easier, rather than using a playing card you could use a piece of a5 card instead. You could even raise the stakes by asking others to have a go with card and then when you share the solution, you could boast using a playing card – seeing whether they will believe you too.

Have you ever tried 'Stepping through a card?'

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

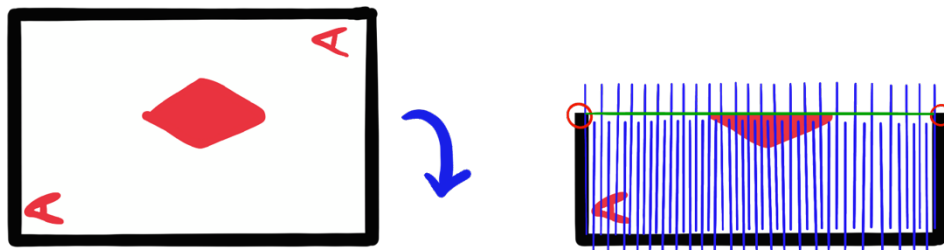
² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

Put your hand up if you think it's possible. Is anyone willing to share what they think?

Right, let's get some volunteers and challenge them to step through a playing card.
(each volunteer will need a pair of scissors and a playing card)

You can give people a chance to have a go, or show them the solution straight away (see below). You could even prepare one in advance.

Here is the solution (fold a playing card in half lengthways and start making a series of cuts making from the top and the bottom, and then finally cutting down the crease – but leaving the very ends of the crease uncut. With some gentle unravelling it should create a big enough concertina card loop to step through.



Well done give all of our volunteers a round of applause. I wonder whether any of us actually surprised by the outcome, or whether you'd even seen something like this done before. A little later on we shall be looking at another story about an impossibility and how some believed whilst others needed persuading.³

Hymn:

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay OR

94 STF – To God be the glory, great things he has done!

Readings: Acts 5: 27-32, Revelation 1: 4-8, John 20: 19-31

Hymn:

339 STF – When you prayed beneath the trees, it was for me OR

731 STF – When, in our music, God is glorified

Reflections on the readings

Greetings to you all in the name of our risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Today's reflection is written by Raj Patta, let's listen to his words below:

The first Sunday after Easter is celebrated in my local Dalit Lutheran Church tradition in India as 'Women's Sunday'. The reason for choosing the Sunday after Easter as 'Women's Sunday' is that since the women were the first to encounter the resurrected Jesus, and since the women were the first to carry the message of resurrection to other men disciples, our foremothers and forefathers of our Dalit church earmarked this Sunday to celebrate

³ All Age Talk written by Mark Stennett

women and their gifts in the mission and ministry of God. Such a tradition existed long before International Women's Day started to be observed and celebrated in our Churches. Such a tradition of Women's Sunday is to recognise that every experience of resurrection is unique and authentic in its own right, for God encounters God's people in various diverse ways, in diverse situations and in diverse paths, particularly through women.

Some might wonder, what happens at a Women's Sunday? Well, in my home context, it will be the women who would lead the liturgy, it will be women who share the sermon, it will be women who share their faith testimonies, it will be women who give leadership to the service and hospitality at church. It is an opportunity to celebrate the gifts of women in the life of the church. In a patriarchal world, this Sunday is an opportunity for the congregation to listen to women's perspectives. Then the question that needs asking is, will it be sufficient to just have one Sunday in a year to observe it as a women's Sunday? The answer is no, and we can't limit women's voices to just one Sunday and therefore it is time to be intentional throughout the year to listen to the voices of women and to celebrate the gifts of leadership of women in our churches.

Resurrected Jesus appeared to the women disciples on Easter morning as a gardener, as an angel, whereas the men disciples could only witness the rolling stone, the empty grave and his garments. To the disciples walking on the way to Emmaus Jesus appeared to them as a sojourner walking along with them as a stranger. Then to the men disciples who were in a locked door experience, Jesus appears to them saying 'peace be with you.' Finally, the risen Jesus appears to Thomas showing him his wounded hands and bruised side. From all of these experiences, we notice resurrected Jesus' encounters with people was unique, diverse and authentic.

Mary Magdalene becomes the hermeneutical key in interpreting this text for me, for the risen Jesus' first encounter with women and women being chosen as the apostles of carrying the gospel of resurrection to the world needs to be emphasised and celebrated year after year when we think of Easter story. Particularly in the world where gender inequality still persists, to acknowledge women to be the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and for Mary Magdalene to be the first one to be encountered by risen Jesus should challenge the church today to affirm gender justice, for God in the risen Jesus has a preferential option to those who are pushed to the margins.

Now the text from John's Gospel, tells us that after the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples were afraid of the Roman Empire, thinking it would be their turn to be crucified after Jesus. So, the men disciples flocked together in a locked door experience, with a blocked faith and were living in fear. The men disciples were living in situation of peacelessness and fear, for they were frightened for their lives. Jesus appears to the men disciples and pronounces 'Peace be with you', not just once, not twice but thrice. Jesus' sharing of peace had a deep consolation and comfort to his men disciples.

It is interesting to note that the risen Jesus on encountering Mary who was weeping when she did not find the body of Jesus, called out her name and did not share the words of peace with her, like he did to the men disciples. Why did Jesus not share the words of peace with Mary, whereas he shared the words of peace on encountering the men disciples and also Thomas? Perhaps the context and need of the men disciples, who were in utter fear needed to experience peace, for on the one hand it was fear for their lives from the Roman Empire to be crucified next and on the other hand I assume there is a sense of guilt on their part for not seeking to find the risen Jesus to seek forgiveness and reconciliation for denying, abandoning and betraying him during his cross experience. Maybe Mary felt peace on the calling of her name by someone known, in her context it was the voice of the risen Jesus that gave her an inner peace.

To Mary Magdalene, the risen Jesus called her name and met her, to the men disciples Jesus shares peace and breathes a fresh breath of the spirit of God and to Thomas it was

by touching that he felt peace. In all these incidents we need to celebrate the diverse ways that God in Jesus encounters the world and each of us. The risen Jesus' encounters are diverse, distinct and dynamic, for God in the risen Jesus reaches to each of us in God's own ways, offering peace and consolation, for God is the source of peace & reconciliation. The disciples are living in the context of fear, in the context of doubt, in the context of unbelief, on that Easter evening when they were filled with gloom, fear and distress, and then the risen Jesus comes into their midst and pronounces peace to them, offering courage and strength in their discipleship. Christian discipleship calls us to be such peacemakers, bringing peace to people who are caught up in situations of fear, distress and unbelief. Allow me also to say, the opposite of faith is not doubt, but fear, and it is this post-resurrection moment that clears that fear and fills the disciples with calmness, and leads them to peace which passes all understanding.

Sharing of peace is an important liturgical and contextual element in our worship, and sometimes 'peace again and again' means a lot to some people in our congregations. Some of our friends are not comfortable in sharing peace in the service, to both those who like sharing peace and to those that don't like sharing peace, the risen Jesus encounters us all differently based on the needs and contexts of our lives. One thing is sure, that the risen Jesus encounters us all through various ways in our lives. May the risen Jesus offer peace and breathe a breath of fresh spirit upon us all and drive away all our fears and despairs.

Thomas is more of a typical than a unique case when he insists on some kind of evidence in order to believe that the one he saw die was alive again. A question worth asking is, "Why was Thomas not with them when Jesus first visited the disciples?" It could be that Thomas' faith was so completely shattered by the events of Good Friday that he questions his living as a disciple, and probably would have wanted some time for himself to reflect and discern his way forward. In that process of deep discerning when the rest of the disciples shared that they have seen the risen Jesus, Thomas would have sought evidence to believe in the risen Christ, which included touching Jesus' wounds.

It is again interesting to note that when Mary Magdalene recognised the risen Jesus on hearing her name from him, Jesus said to her not to touch him, but allows Thomas to touch his wounded hand and wounded side, inviting Thomas not to disbelieve but to believe. Why was Mary not allowed to touch, whereas Thomas was allowed to touch the risen Jesus? Mary never asked for evidence to believe in the risen Jesus by touching him unlike Thomas. Perhaps the discipleship experience of Mary and Thomas are on two different levels. We are not here to judge whose experience is better between Mary and Thomas. Rather we are called to recognise and acknowledge that there are diverse experiences among the disciples, for Mary hearing her name being called by the risen Jesus is enough, for the men disciples excluding Thomas sharing peace and breathing the spirit of God is enough and for Thomas putting his finger in the wounded hands and wounded side of the crucified-risen Jesus is needed – risen Jesus reaches out to different people with different levels of faith experiences in different ways, and that is the beauty of the risen Jesus' faith story. God in risen Jesus meets us where we are and where we seek his encounter, for God's revelations are unpredictable and always adventurous. The beauty of the gospel of the risen Jesus is that there is no one size fits for all, there is no one template that is relevant for all and there is no one way of God reaching us.

In verse 30 and 31 we read, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." What do these unrecorded signs of Jesus convey to us? In John 21 verse 25 we read "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I

suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” How do we account for these unmentioned and unrecorded signs of Jesus?

These verses from John helps us to understand that Jesus’ activities are dynamic and are not limited merely to the written book. The calling for us is to recognise the unrecorded signs of Jesus and allow God’s word to be dynamic. These unwritten signs of Jesus counters all literalists who narrow the work of God merely to the closed revelation of God. God’s revelation is an ongoing process, and God can speak in God’s own terms and God’s own diverse ways, and let us not limit that dynamism in the word of God.

Has our reading of the written scriptures helped us to believe in Jesus’ messianic role and in having life in his name? Hopefully it has, for belief in Jesus is to affirm God so loved the world through Jesus. Similarly, the unwritten word of God, which contains the ongoing activity, signs and presence of God in Jesus should help us to believe more in the messianic role of Jesus and helps us to promote life and live life in all its fullness.

Resurrection is all about celebrating life, new life and renewed life. It is very unfortunate that the written Bible has been used, misused and abused in excluding people in the name of class, colour and gender, in fanning hatred on others and in spitting venom against people of different traditions and faiths.

It is helpful here to reiterate the Methodist quadrilateral, which has scripture, tradition, reason and experience as the four vertices of faith formation. All these four angles of faith are complementary and inform each other in shaping faith in Jesus Christ. When we are reading this text in John from Mary Magdalene’s perspective, it is important for us to acknowledge the many unwritten things about Jesus’ ministry to women and allow the spirit of God to acknowledge gender justice as the vision of the God of the Bible. The unwritten-ness of the Scripture opens up for the spirit of God to allow God’s speech to come to us in various ways, for we are called to engage the word of God with the world of God today.

So, what is the relevance of this text for our context today? In the world of increasing conflict and violence, the risen Jesus is inviting us to join with him in working for peace and justice to the wounded world. As a church of the risen Jesus, we are called to negotiate peace in situations of conflict with justice as the main marker for it. In the context of the UK, when the present government’s plan for a refugee citizenship ban, as our Easter peace commitment, we as churches should unite against such a ban allowing people who are seeking a sanctuary in our nation to find their belonging. Believing in the risen Jesus is to practise life affirming things in our context, which includes offering home, hope and hospitality to those who feel un-belonged in our world today. We as the followers of the risen Jesus are called to be peace and justice makers, peace and justice givers and peace and justice seekers.

The first Sunday after Easter, the women’s Sunday, strengthens us with undeserving peace, with uneasy belief and helps us to recognise and acknowledge that God works in mysterious ways which are part of the unwritten word of God. To that end, may the Holy Spirit help us to become committed disciples of Christ in sharing peace to people living in fear, in seeking comfort to those struggling in faith and in recognising the dynamism of God’s ongoing revelation today.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son

⁴ Reflection written by Raj Patta

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray.

In the stillness, let us bring our own prayers to God, starting with prayers for those closest to home.

Hold a moment of quiet.

Lord, you know our hearts, and you know the people we carry there, people we love and people who are carrying their own pain right now.

Bring your healing we pray.

In the stillness, let us bring our own prayers to God, this time praying for those further afield, perhaps those we don't know but have a particular concern for, or feel the urge to pray for today.

Hold a moment of quiet.

Lord, you know our prayers and you know the people we have brought to you today, far better than we know them ourselves. Bring your peace into their situation today, we pray.

In the stillness, let us bring our own prayers to God, and finish by offering prayer for the wider world, for situations we've read about or watched in the news, for the places of conflict and violence in our world.

Hold a moment of quiet.

Lord, this is your world, and we know you weep for it. Bring your love into places where there is hatred, O God, bring your light into places where there is darkness. Come, Lord Jesus,

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of grace,

We thank you for these gifts and ask you to bless them as we return them to you.

May they be used for your Kingdom-work,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

347 STF – Crown him with many crowns OR

593 STF – Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour

Blessing

You shall go out with peace,

And be sent forth with joy,

May you go and spread the peace, joy and love of Christ with all you meet this week.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker