

10th May 2026 – Morning Service

The Lakeside Appearances

Margaret Bradley

Gathering

On this sixth Sunday of Eastertide, we remember that Christ appears to us in the ordinary activities of life. But God has also appointed a time and place for us to gather together in Christ's name and meet him. And so, we come to worship now, expectant and eager to meet the risen Christ. Because Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

StF 148 – Come let us with our Lord arise

- 1) Come, let us with our Lord arise,
Our Lord, who made both earth and skies:
Who died to save the world he made,
And rose triumphant from the dead;
He rose, the Prince of life and peace,
And stamped the day for ever his.
- 2) This is the day the Lord has made,
That all may see his love displayed,
May feel his resurrection's power,
And rise again, to fall no more,
In perfect righteousness renewed,
And filled with all the life of God.
- 3) Then let us render him his own,
With solemn prayer approach his throne,
With meekness hear the gospel word,
With thanks his dying love record,
Our joyful hearts and voices raise,
And fill his courts with songs of praise.
- 4) Honour and praise to Jesus pay
Throughout his consecrated day;
Be all in Jesus' praise employed,
Nor leave a single moment void;
With utmost care the time improve,
And only breathe his praise and love.

Charles Wesley

Prayer of Adoration, Confession and Collect

Great God, we gather together today to offer you our praise, worship, and adoration because you are Creator and Sustainer of all things. The whole universe is alive with your energy, and we see signs of it breaking out around us in the new life of Spring. You are not an impersonal force, but you love all that you have made and have chosen to enter into a relationship with us. You have made yourself known in the life and death of Jesus, where we see that your amazing love cannot be quenched, even by the hatred and bitterness of the cross. In Christ's Resurrection you have given us the hope of renewal, so we come now with joy, to celebrate your greatness and your goodness, in the knowledge that your Spirit is amongst us now, uniting us with you and with one another.

We come, aware of our own unworthiness, before your perfect goodness. Because we know that we have let you down and not been the best people that we could be. What we have sung with our lips, we have not had the courage to practise in our lives.

Christ our friend, you ask for our love in spite of our betrayal. Give us courage to embrace forgiveness where we have fallen short, to know you again and trust ourselves in you. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

Introduction

The Gospels tell us that the first people to witness the Resurrection of Jesus were women, including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus. According to Mark and Matthew, they were given a message to give to the other disciples. They were told to leave the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had been put to death, and go back north to Galilee, where they had first met Jesus and his ministry had begun, and they would find him there. An appendix to the fourth Gospel has a story of how they did indeed return to their former occupation of fishing on Lake Tiberias. Without him their work proved fruitless. Until Jesus suddenly and unexpectedly appeared to seven of them, and in response to his call and guidance their new life work began. We break the story into three parts.

Reading: John 21: 1-8 (NIV)

Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 'I'm going out to fish,' Simon Peter told them, and they said, 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?'

'No,' they answered.

He said, 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment round him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred metres.

Reflection – Christ comes to us in the ordinary

As the first disciples of Jesus encountered him in the course of their everyday work, it is the experience of those of us who would be disciples of Jesus today that he comes to us in ordinary, familiar, unspectacular ways, as we go about our business of living and working. He doesn't always encounter us in holy 'sacred' religious situations, where the atmosphere is emotionally charged and expectations are high. He comes, too, as we go about our day-to-day tasks. We can't segregate God off into a separate compartment saying, 'This part of life is religious and spiritual – those things are worldly and secular'. Everything is mixed up together, as this story demonstrates; work with worship, the commonplace with the holy, friendship with sacramental communion.

Some years ago, Keith and I went to stay with the religious community that lives on the island of Iona in the Scottish Hebrides. Each day began with common prayer together. The morning service doesn't end with a benediction, but with responses that prepare the worshippers to go straight out into their lives and continue to worship in the context of their work. In the evening the group comes together again for corporate prayer, but the service doesn't begin with a call to worship, because everyone has been open to God's presence all day long. Only at the close of day is there a benediction. In this symbolic way the community tries to express the conviction that the whole of our day is all of a piece, starting and ending with prayer, but continuing through every action of work, activity and recreation, as one act of service offered to God.

So, I'd like to encourage you to be open to Christ everywhere, in whatever you are involved this week, because Christ comes to us in the ordinary.

StF 296 – Christ has risen

- 1) Christ has risen while earth slumbers,
Christ has risen where hope died,
As he said and as he promised,
As we doubted and denied.
Let the moon embrace the blessing;
Let the sun sustain the cheer;
Let the world confirm the rumour.
Christ is risen, God is here!
- 2) Christ has risen for the people
Whom he loved and died to save;
Christ has risen for the women
Bringing flowers to grace his grave.
Christ has risen for disciples
Huddled in an upstairs room.
He whose word inspired creation
Is not silenced by the tomb.
- 3) Christ has risen to companion
Former friends who fear the night,
Sensing loss and limitation
Where their faith had once burned bright.
They bemoan what is no longer,
They expect no hopeful sign
Till Christ ends their conversation,
Breaking bread and sharing wine
- 4) Christ has risen and forever
Lives to challenge and to change
All whose lives are messed or mangled,
All who find religion strange.
Christ is risen. Christ is present,
Making us what he has been -
Evidence of transformation
In which God is known and seen

John L Bell & Graham Maule © 1988 WGRG Iona Community

Reading: John 21: 9-14 (NIV)

When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught.' So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Reflection – All are held together within God's net

This story, at the end of John's Gospel, is very similar to one which appears at the beginning of Luke's Gospel, where Jesus comes to the aid of the disciples after a fruitless night of fishing. They are stories that are full of symbolism, and they are important for what they have to say about mission rather than about miraculous fishing techniques.

After Jesus' death, the disciples found the going hard. They were working in the dark, as it were, and their mission to their fellow Jews wasn't proving very successful. But when they received divine instruction to put down their net on the other side – to those who were not Jews – there was an overwhelming response to their message. John says that there were 153 fish in the net. That is, one of every variety known to them! And the net didn't break! There were no splits. This was a symbolic way of saying that the apostles were to gather in people of every nation and race. The borders of God's kingdom are open to everyone, and all are held comfortably within the love of God.

I wonder what your response would be to a question that *The Sun* newspaper once asked its readers, 'What is the best thing about being English?' I would have said that it was our nation's historic tolerance and respect for the rights of others. This is an attitude that has developed over the centuries as England has become home to a great mixture of different settler groups – Saxons, Vikings, Romans, Normans, French Huguenots (who contributed to the fame of the Stourbridge glass industry), Jews, people from Ireland, from the Caribbean, Asia, Europe, China, Africa – all have contributed to the life of our nation, enriching and blessing it in many ways. Sadly, in recent years, there has been a disturbing increase of other voices, which promote fear, suspicion, and even hatred towards others. There's been a rise in attitudes that are profoundly in opposition to the values of Jesus and of Christianity. Our faith demands that we recognise the

innate dignity and value of all human beings and respect all cultures, because all are held together without strain within God's net.

StF 297 – Christ is alive!

- 1) Christ is alive! Let Christians sing;
His cross stands empty to the sky;
Let streets and homes with praises ring;
Love drowned in death, shall never die.
- 2) Christ is alive! No longer bound
To distant years in Palestine,
But saving, healing, here and now,
And touching every place and time.
- 3) In every insult, rift and war,
Where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
And lives, where even hope has died.
- 4) Women and men, in age and youth,
Can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
And find the way, the life, the truth,
Revealed in Jesus, freed for all.
- 5) Christ is alive and comes to bring
Good news to this and every age,
Till earth and sky and ocean ring
With joy, with justice, love, and praise.

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Reading: John 21: 15-19 (NIV)

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!'

Reflection – God restores us when our discipleship falls short

The last summons of the risen Christ in the fourth Gospel is the same as his first summons in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke: 'Follow me'. Jesus calls people, in the midst of their everyday life, to become his disciples and to continue his work of making God's kingdom on earth a reality so that people of all nations are included.

On the night of Jesus' arrest, a fearful Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before the cockerel crowed to herald daybreak. On the day of Pentecost, a Spirit-filled Peter stood up to boldly and confidently witness to the man he had disowned seven weeks before. This story stands mid-way between those two events. Following the despair of that dreadful night Peter must have been full of remorse, guilt, and regret that he hadn't had the opportunity to make amends. He must have felt that the cockerel would for ever crow

accusingly in his ears. But it was not to be so. He is reassured by the presence of the risen Christ that he is forgiven and is being offered another chance. Peter is given the opportunity to cancel out the three denials by making a three-fold declaration of his love. This is a reassurance to us in the times when our discipleship falls short and we let Jesus down. As with Peter, so too, God doesn't write us off. God's love for us is so strong and deep that it seeks us out to restore us. God comes to us, not in recrimination, but in gentle understanding of our human frailty, asking us 'Do you love me?' as though we had never been anything but faithful and trusting us to do new tasks.

Today we rejoice in God's mighty act in raising Jesus from the dead. We open ourselves to encountering Christ in the course of our everyday living. We celebrate the inclusive nature of God's kingdom, which welcomes and embraces all people. We take reassurance that God is patient with us when our discipleship falls short. Albert Schweitzer was an outstanding organist, philosopher, theologian, and doctor. He could have had a brilliant career in any of these fields, but he devoted his life to working as a medical missionary in Lambarene, West Africa, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. Just before he went to Africa, he wrote these words, which perfectly capture today's Gospel story:

'Jesus comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old by the lakeside. He speaks to us the same word, 'Follow me' and sets us the tasks which he has to fulfil for our own time. He commands. And to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings, which they shall pass through in his fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who he is.'

StF 314 – This joyful Eastertide

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| 1) This joyful Eastertide,
What need is there for grieving?
Cast all your cares aside
And be not unbelieving: | 2) No work for him is vain,
No faith in him mistaken,
For Easter makes it plain
His kingdom is not shaken: |
| Ch) <i>Come, share our Easter joy
That death could not imprison,
Nor any power destroy,
Our Christ, who is arisen, arisen, arisen, arisen!</i> | 3) Then put your trust in Christ,
In waking and in sleeping.
His grace on earth sufficed;
He'll never quit his keeping: |

Fred Pratt Green © 1969 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Reading: Acts 10: 34-45 (NIV)

Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

'We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Lord, we bring our thanks to you for your wonderful creation and for all the signs of new life breaking out around us. We thank you for your mighty act in raising Jesus from the dead and for the hope that we have been given of sharing in his resurrection life. We thank you for all your faithful people whose lives have revealed your love and truth throughout the ages, and for the way that your Spirit is transforming lives and situations in the world today. We give thanks that we can encounter you, not only on Sundays, but on every day of the week and in every place; in our church life and service, but also in our homes; in our work and in our leisure.

We remember all those followers of Jesus on other continents who are celebrating Eastertide, especially those worshipping in difficult conditions. We pray for the church in our own land, that you will renew it and raise up much-needed ministers and local preachers. We pray for the Leadership Team and congregations in our Circuit. When members feel discouraged, show them new opportunities, as you did for the first disciples. As we enter Christian Aid Week, we commit to you this arm of the church's work which seeks to restore justice and peace to the world and to protect the future for our children and grandchildren. We pray that lives may be changed and people given hope through the money that is collected this week. May your church everywhere know your presence and be a sign that Christ is risen.

We pray for peace among the nations as we listen each day to news which fills us with dismay and anguish hearing of the disregard for international law and humanitarian concern for the lives of children and civilians. We are saddened by the use of Scriptural texts to justify political aims of settlement and invasion of others' territories, rather than for spiritual inspiration and moral guidance. We pray for the safety of those living in Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, Israel, Ukraine, and those serving with the UN peace-keeping forces. May Christ, raised from the tomb, bring life and light to all the world.

We pray for those in our own land who are charged with national and local government, for our Parliament, and for those whom we have recently elected to serve on Dudley Council. May they serve all interests with wisdom and integrity.

We pray for those who are in need of hope and reassurance; those who feel that their work is dull and unproductive; those who have no job to give them a sense of purpose; those who would like to believe, but find faith difficult; those in need of healing of body, mind or spirit; those who are mourning. May all find respect, comfort, strength, and hope in the living Christ.

We remember those we have known and love who have died. May we all come to share at last in the grace and light of life eternal.

In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

StF 347 – Crown him with many crowns

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| 1) Crown him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon his throne;
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
Of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity. | 2) Crown him the Son of God,
Before the worlds began;
And ye, who tread where he has trod,
Crown him the Son of Man,
Who every grief has known
That wrings the human breast,
And takes and bears them for his own,
That all in him may rest. |
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3) Crown him the Lord of life,
Who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife
For those he came to save.
His glories now we sing,
Who died, and rose on high;
Who died, eternal life to bring,
And lives, that death may die.

5) Crown him the Lord of love;
Behold his hands and side -
Rich wounds, yet visible above,
In beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For thou hast died for me;
Thy praise and glory shall not fail
Throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges & Godfrey Thring

4) Crown him the Lord of peace,
Whose power a sceptre sways
From pole to pole, that wars may cease,
Absorbed in prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end,
And round his pierced feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend
Their fragrance ever sweet.

Blessing and Sending out

May God, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life. And the blessing of God the Creator, Son, and Spirit be with each one of us through this Eastertide, and for ever. Go out into the world in joy, to serve God, and know that the Risen Christ is with you. Alleluia! **Amen.**