

A service for Easter Sunday – 5th April, 2026 (StF)

Call to Worship: Alleluia! Christ is risen! – He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

In 1920 the Soviet Union held a great anti-God rally in Kiev. For an hour the great speaker, Bukharin, ridiculed the Christian faith with argument and abuse. At the end of his speech, listeners were invited to ask questions. A Russian priest stood, faced the people and simply said,

Khristos voskres! “Jesus is risen!” At once the people rose and answered,
Voistinu voskres! Alleluia! “He is risen indeed. Alleluia!” The atheist speaker had no answer. Let us echo their cry of faith as we respond in English to the priest’s call: **Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

Our opening hymn was written by Noel and Tricia Richards. Noel was born in Llantrisant, near Cardiff in 1956 and was inspired to become a hymn-writer and composer after he saw Graham Kendrick at Colston Hall when Noel was fifteen. He married Tricia in 1978 and they have complemented one another in producing several albums of fine hymns and worship songs. Hymn number 293, ‘All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord;’

**1. All heaven declares
The glory of the risen Lord.
Who can compare
With the beauty of the Lord?
Forever He will be
The Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
And worship Him alone.**

**2. I will proclaim
The glory of the risen Lord,
Who once was slain
To reconcile man to God.
Forever You will be
The Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
And worship You alone.** © Noel & Tricia Richards

Let us pray.

Amazing God, we worship and adore you with joyful hearts as we celebrate the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ. You formed the heavens and earth with awesome power and you made us to share the beauty and wonders of this planet, to be your earthly children. Instead, we turned ourselves against you, despite your efforts to draw us back to you through the Commandments and the prophets.

In boundless grace you sent Jesus to become the One Perfect Sacrifice to atone for the sins of this world. Through Jesus’ resurrection we are offered eternal life through faith in him, not through our own merit or works. God most gracious and holy, hear and accept our worship this morning and help us set aside all distractions and anxieties, so we may worship you in spirit, love and truth.

Thank you, O Lord, for this beautiful world that you created for us, for all the good things we enjoy. Most of all, thank you for coming as Jesus Christ and for loving us,

even when we are unloving and unlovable, for without your grace, we would be hopeless and lost.

Merciful Father, forgive us for the sins we have committed and for the good we have failed to do, for we know what terrible suffering our Lord Jesus bore to take away the burden of human sin. Help us change from self-centred to Christ-centred living.

In sure confidence that you have heard our prayer and have restored us in your sight, we thank you, Lord. May we serve you and our neighbours, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, so we may bring light and goodness to a sin darkened world. Amen.

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

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 second hymn was written in 1884 by a Swiss pastor Edmund Budry, to be sung to George Frideric Handel's tune, 'Maccabeus'. It was translated from French by Richard Hoyle, a Baptist Pastor at Kingston on Thames and an accomplished linguist. In 1923, ready for its inclusion in the hymn book of the World Student Christian Federation, 'Cantate Domino' - Sing to the Lord. We shall sing hymn number 313, 'Thine be the glory,'

**1. Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hath won;
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay: *Chorus:***

***Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the victory thou o'er death hath won.***

**2. Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom,
Let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
For her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting: *Chorus:***

**3. No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life!
Life is naught without Thee: aid us in our strife.
Make us more than conquerors, through Thy deathless love;
Bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above: *Chorus:***

We come now to our prayers of intercession for people nearby and far away
Heavenly Father, our celebrations of Christ's resurrection are tempered by the heart-breaking brokenness of this wonderful planet, caused mainly through our failure to live as you want us to. We acknowledge that the very selfishness, pride, greed, cruelty and indifference that led Jesus to Calvary is largely responsible for the world's problems. Lord, help us to serve you in Jesus' holy name, but we know that our power is limited, whereas yours is infinite. Therefore, we pray that you will influence people with greater power and influence to do what we cannot. Nevertheless, we bring you our concerns in Jesus' precious name.

Lord, there are so many conflicts in the world, the consequences of which are far-reaching and not only for the warring parties, but for the wider world. Jesus entered Jerusalem as Prince of Peace, died and was raised offer salvation to all-comers.

Therefore, in his name we are bold to ask that the leaders of those nations learn to negotiate a just ending of conflicts. We pray for the victims of warfare, persecution, prejudice and discrimination, asking you to ease their suffering and help them rebuild what strife has destroyed, so they may live in peace and security.

We remember people in our community who are needy or troubled: those who are sick in body, mind or spirit, all who are lonely, anxious and burdened by unemployment, addiction, broken relationships or bereavement: people who are at the end of their tether. In a time of silence, we offer you names of people for whom we are particularly concerned.

Loving Lord, wherever possible enable us to offer them practical support, but embrace them with the healing of your love, so they may experience the real peace that only you can give.

Lord, hear our prayer for the Church, here and throughout the world. Give us the faith we need to stand firm when we are challenged or mocked. Keep us steadfast and loving in good times and bad. Keep us as loving in the face of opposition, as was our Saviour, so we may be bearers of the good news of God's love for everybody.

Abba, heavenly Father, may your blessing rest upon us, our families and friends. Help us to overcome the trials of life and to rejoice in the risen Lord Jesus. Keep us safe, but most of all, help us to share the abundance of your love with everyone we meet, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

We continue our worship with a hymn by Revd. Samuel Medley, an Eighteenth Century Pastor at Byrom Street Baptist Church in Liverpool. Penned by a man who in his youth was almost as godless as John Newton, but who found faith after being seriously injured in a naval battle and nursed back to health by his God-fearing grandfather. This hymn is a great statement of resurrection faith. Hymn number 303, 'I know that my Redeemer lives -'

**1. I know that my Redeemer lives –
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting Head.**

**2. He lives to bless me with his love;
He lives, to plead for me above;
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;
He lives, to help in time of need.**

**3. He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives, my mansion to prepare;
He lives, to lead me safely there.**

**4. He lives, all glory to his name;
He lives, my Saviour, still the same;
What joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!**

© Samuel Medley {1738 – 1799}

Our Gospel reading is John chapter 20 verses 1 to 18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said,

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally, the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

“Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said,

“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her,

“Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic,

“Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said,

“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. Amen.

We shall sing a hymn loved by Ira Sankey. It was written in 1874 by Robert Lowry, a Nineteenth Century Baptist Pastor in Pennsylvania and New York. He also wrote the melody which was apparently improved by the editors of the 1933 “Methodist Hymn Book”! Hymn number 305, ‘Low in the grave he lay’.

1. Low in the grave he lay,

Jesus, my Saviour,

Waiting the coming day,

Jesus, my Lord: *Chorus*

Up from the grave he arose,

With a mighty triumph o’er his foes;

He arose a victor from the dark domain,

And he lives for ever with his saints to reign:

He arose! He arose!

Alleluia! Christ arose!

2. Vainly they watch his bed,

Jesus, my Saviour;

Vainly they seal the dead,

Jesus, my Lord: *Chorus*

**3. Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus, my Saviour;
He tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord: *Chorus***

© Robert Lowry {1826 – 1899}

Address: Interview with Mary Magdalene.

Shalom! Here is today's Zion fm news for the first day of a new week, with me, Toamas Bradby. We have breaking news about the agitator Jesus the Nazarene, who was put to death as 'King of the Jews' on Golgotha on the eve of Pessach Shabbat. There have been extraordinary reports that he is alive again, despite many witnesses having seen him die and the Roman authorities testifying that he was buried in a sealed tomb before Shabbat began. The claim seems absurd, but I have one of this Jesus' followers here with me in the studio.

Shalom, I believe you are Mary of Magdala, a follower of Jesus the Nazarene?

Shalom, Toamas, I am Mary Madgalene, a friend and supporter of Jesus.

Mary, you are claiming that Jesus is alive and that you have spoken to him, yet he was crucified and buried three days ago. With respect, this claim seems ridiculous, because once you are dead that is the end of the story – at least until the Day of Judgment. Are you sure you didn't imagine it?

With respect, Toamas, I DID NOT IMAGINE IT! I actually embraced his legs and saw the nail-wounds in his heels. I am not mad, as you are suggesting.

Mary, I am not suggesting you are mad, but you must admit that you were deeply troubled a few years ago.

Yes, I was, but my Master healed me and I have followed him ever since. I know my story is hard to believe, but it's true!

All right, Mary, I'm sorry if I've offended you. Please tell me what happened this morning and if there is anybody else who witnessed what happened?

Some women followers and I set out at sunrise to walk to the tomb where our Lord had been buried by Joseph of Arimathea. We took herbs and spices to anoint him, in accordance with our traditions.

You say it was only women who went? Were his men too afraid?

Toamas, you know only too well why only we women went. If we Jews touch a dead body, we become ceremonially unclean, so it is usual for the anointing to be done by women. Mind you, the men were afraid after what happened to Jesus, so it isn't surprising they left it to us, is it?

No, I suppose not. Please continue, Mary.

When we arrived at the graveyard, we expected to have to try to move the boulder from the entrance, but to our amazement, it was already rolled back. We hurried to the entrance and looked in. Jesus' body wasn't there! I left the others there to look for the body, while I ran back to tell the other followers what had happened.

Although you sneered about the men, two of his closest friends rushed to the tomb ahead of me.

So they saw Jesus? That would make it easier for our listeners to believe.

Look, Toamas, I know that women can't give evidence in a court on their own, but the men didn't see anything, other than the burial sheet and face covering folded and laid out neatly when the Master had lain. One of them said it couldn't have been men working for Caiaphas, because they wouldn't have left the burial clothes, let alone leaving them folded neatly.

Mary, why would Caiaphas have wanted to take the body?

In case we claimed that the Lord had risen, so they could produce the body to show he hadn't! In fact, if my account is untrue, I'm sure that's what they'll do.

Jesus' followers could have done that to suggest he has risen.

That is a foolish suggestion, Toamas. The tomb was guarded by Temple Guards and anyway, where could we hide a corpse in Jerusalem?

I suppose you're right, Mary. It would have started to smell by now.

Exactly! Anyway, the two men wandered back to the house with the women following soon afterwards.

I peeped into the tomb and – it does seem mad, I know – but I saw two figures in white seated where my Master would have been laid. I took them for angels, because I can't who else they could have been. They asked me why I was crying and I told them someone had taken my Lord away and I didn't know where he'd been taken. I heard a voice ask the same question, turned around and saw a man silhouetted against the rising sun. I thought he must have been one of the gardeners, so I pleaded with him, 'If you've taken him away, tell me where he is and I'll go and get him.'

The man simply said, 'Mary,' in a tone I recognized at once. It was Jesus! I fell at his feet and put my arms round his legs. He told me to tell the others that he'd been raised from the dead and I must tell the disciples.

What did you do, then, Mary?

I went back rejoicing and told them all the news. One of those who'd run to the tomb said, 'I thought he'd risen!' but the other looked sadder than ever.

What about the others, Mary?

Some believed at once, but others doubted, even when the women said that the Lord had appeared to them as they returned from Jesus' grave, but that's the trouble with you men: you never take our word, do you?

Mary, I must admit your story is plausible, though fantastic, because you are clearly not unhinged. Indeed, you are sincere and I can't see that you would gain anything by lying to us. Mind you, if Jesus has risen from the dead, the implications are enormous.

Yes, Toamas, it means he is the Messiah and he will change this world in the way that Adonai Elohim wishes.

Thank you, Mary. You have left us with much to think about. I can hardly wait to see what will happen next. This is Toamas Bradby Zion fm. Shalom.

"Christ is alive! No longer bound / To distant years in Palestine, / But saving, healing, here and now, / And touching every place and time." Lovely words by

Brian Wren that remind us that Jesus belongs to today as well as the distant past. We shall close our worship as we sing hymn number 297, 'Christ is alive! Let Christians sing;'

**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,
He 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.**

© *Brian A Wren (Born 1936)*

Benediction

May the light of love that lit the empty tomb to proclaim that Christ had risen shine brightly in our hearts. May the warmth of your love that proclaims the power of sin and death has been broken inspire us in all good works and may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen.