



Kaurihohore Historic Church

P O Box 4118, Kamo, Whangarei 0141



Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish

Order of Worship - Easter Day 17th April 2022

Our service today was prepared by Eleanor Ashby, one of our Lay Preachers.

Call to Worship:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We have not seen the risen Christ,
**but we see him in the lives
of those transformed by grace.**

We have not seen Jesus face-to-face,
**but we have seen him in the faces
of everyone whose love encourages us.**

We have not touched the wounds
from the cross,
**but we have been called to bring healing
to the scarred of the world.**

Opening Prayer:

Christ, you are risen with the sun
you are light in darkness, warmth in our cold.

You are peace and hope and joy,
for you went willingly to death.

You turned defeat and failure to victory for all.

You live eternally
and with you all the living and the dead
who trust in you.

May we who in baptism die to sin, rise again to new life
and find our true place in your living body.

May the covenant sealed in your blood
through us bring healing and reconciliation
to this wounded world.

Alleluia! You are risen. We are risen with you.

Praise and glory to the living God! Amen.

Hymn: This is the day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cccJhMVFrLs>

Psalm 118

Give thanks to God who is all goodness,
whose sure love prevails forever!

Let all God's people say:

this love prevails forever.

God is my strength and my song,
and has become my healing and liberty.

Listen to the happy songs of triumph
from the camps of the true believers:

The right hand of God wins all!

The right hand of God is awesome!

The right hand of God wins all!

I shall not now die, but shall live
to recite these wonders God has done.

Though God allowed me to suffer much,
I have not been deserted in death.

The stone which the builders threw aside
has now become the foundation stone.

We owe all this to our God's actions,
and it looks in our eyes.

**This new day has been made by God,
let us celebrate and be delighted with it!**

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Centering Prayer

We praise you, living God, with songs and prayers and listening hearts
and lives trying to obey your will.

You have created and are creating, bringing life and hope and love.

You come in Jesus, your Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new.

In a culture where the power death gets all the headlines your Holy Spirit summons us
to be people shaped by your power to work resurrection.

We are not sure we believe as fully as we think we should.

We are not sure we trust as deeply as we think you require.

But we bring who we are and what we have become into your presence,
longing to know your grace and your love.

Forgive what has gone wrong. Repair in us what is broken.

Reveal in us what is good and turn us toward it.

So may we follow wherever your Spirit may lead.

So may we love with the love of Jesus flowing through us.

So may we, body, mind and spirit,

be children of resurrection,

children of hope,

children of grace.

In Christ Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: Christ the Lord is Risen Today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cErtpg5hBSw>

Reading: John 20: 1 -18

Reflection:

In the season of Lent, leading up to Easter, we usually talk about the various aspects of our faith as a way of re-examining our own lives. There is so much about our faith that is beautiful and comforting and reassuring. To know that the very light that surrounds us is a sign of God's love constantly filling our lives with mercy and compassion and grace is something that gives us great joy. To believe that Jesus gave his life for us so that we can find new life is humbling and moving. To hold onto the hope that God is working to transform us all into people of compassion, is encouraging in the midst of the struggle that life can be.

But when it comes to Easter, I think we run into a wall. Most people can accept that Jesus was born. And that Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross. But when it comes to Easter, it can be a different matter altogether. Even many who have identified themselves as Christians all their lives have a hard time really embracing faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That means Jesus was dead. He was really dead. He was so dead that he was buried. And somehow, he was raised to life.

It's one of those aspects of our faith that moves us beyond the normal realm of our experience. For most of us, we live our lives based on what we can see and touch. But when you believe that all you have to go on is what your eyes can see or what you can touch with your hands, you have not necessarily rejected faith; you've simply embraced a different kind of faith. It is a kind of faith that believes that our future rests entirely on what we can do for ourselves.

But the good news of Easter is that God does not operate within the limits of what we can see! Easter faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead points us in hope to the possibility that God really is working to make all things new. That sounds attractive, but it's still not easy. As one philosopher puts it, our faith moves us beyond the realm in which we can understand and manage things. It moves us into "the sphere of the impossible," where "only the great passions of faith and love and hope will see us through."

I think, in part, that means that it's not enough just to "believe" our faith intellectually. Rather, the miracle of Easter calls us to trust God with all that we are, to entrust ourselves and our actual everyday lives completely to something we cannot see. For some of us that comes fairly naturally—like John the beloved disciple from our Gospel lesson for today. Scholars speculate about why he was so quick to believe. It seems that he was one of those people who simply have a natural tendency toward faith. I guess in some respects I'm like that.

When I think about the great questions of faith, in the depth of my being, in that place where all pretence is stripped away, the hope and faith that there is a God who loves us all, who is working to restore and renew everything and everyone, simply rings true. From that perspective, everything makes sense; without it nothing makes sense.

For others, Easter faith not so automatic, like Mary. When she came face-to-face with the risen Christ, she thought she was talking to a gardener who may have removed Jesus' body. It was only when Jesus broke through her sorrow and her suspicion by calling her name, "Mary," that she recognized him. For some of us, it takes an experience like that to break through the walls we put up to protect our hearts.

A young mother was having a conversation with her four-year old daughter, Elena. As Easter approached, she was struggling to get through to Elena, the meaning of Easter. It went something like this:

"Mommy, will the Easter bunny bring me purple jelly beans?"

I am sure he will bring you jelly beans, Elena. But, remember, Easter isn't about the bunny. It's about Jesus.

"But will they be purple?"

Yes, honey, I am sure there will be some purple ones in there. Honey, the important thing about Easter isn't the bunny. Easter is about how much Jesus loves you and me and the whole world.

"Mommy, how many purple jelly beans will the Easter Bunny bring me?"

Elena, I think he will probably bring plenty of purple jellybeans. Do you know how much Jesus loves you?

"Mommy..."

Yes Elena?

"Will he bring me easter eggs too?"

You see, for a four-year old, Easter bunnies and purple jelly beans and easter eggs are just way more interesting than JESUS, and they are enough to make Easter fun. And fun is, for a four old, enough! Although Easter hasn't gotten to the point of having as many consumer and cultural distractions as Christmas, sometimes it's the same way for adults; A long weekend break and hot cross buns and family visits and Easter dinner preparations consume our attention.

Showing up at worship on Easter Sunday for some of us is just part of our routine, and we come expecting little more than chocolate-coated clichés. But my guess is that, unless you're four, you're looking for something beyond chocolate-coated clichés added to the of easter eggs we consume. I have to believe that is why many of us come to worship on this particular day. We want to know something of what Janet was trying to get through to Elena.

Janet knows that Elena won't always be four, and sooner or later--or should I say sooner AND later--Elena, and all of God's children, indeed, all of us, will encounter the dark night of heart wrenching grief, devastating disappointment or smothering guilt, and when we do, we will need MORE than bunnies and easter eggs.

I wonder when that need for more will hit Elena.

Will it be when she's bullied at school and feels like there's no one to turn to?

Will it be when she's betrayed by a so-called "best friend" or has her heart broken by the person around whom she's built her whole life?

Maybe it will be the day she's told by the doctor it's not just a cold after all.

Maybe it will be when she encounters some insidious systemic expression of racism or classism or some other ism and the human capacity for cruelty will astonish and paralyze her.

You and I know, perhaps all too well, those days happen when, as Mary Chapin Carpenter's lyrics describe:

It seems so black outside that you can't remember

Light ever shone on you or the ones you love, in this or another lifetime.

And that's when we really need to know what Easter is all about.

That might have been how Mary Magdalene felt that first Easter morning. It was just so dark outside; violence and fear hung like a dark cloud over her once adventurous life of following and learning from this meek but authoritative teacher around whom she had reoriented all of her days. The light that had once shone on her had been extinguished on a Roman cross. Not only was it dark in the world that morning, but it was dark in her soul. Where there had once been a glimmer of hope, there was only despair now. And while it was dark, she came to the tomb. There in the darkness of her life, she was surprised by the Light of Easter and her story has become the Christian story. It is the story we remember and celebrate together in worship today. It is the single most important reason we get together any Sunday of the year or any day of the week. It is the heartbeat of Christian community. It is the HOPE to which we cling and the PROMISE upon which we stand. It is the very essence of Christian faith. It is so much more than a cliché.

SO, WHAT IS IT ABOUT? In the final analysis, IT'S ABOUT LIFE!

Did you know that scientists have studied the mineral and chemical composition of the human body?

That's right. The U.S. Bureau of Chemistry and Soils calculated the chemical and mineral composition of the human body, which breaks down as follows:

65% Oxygen

18% Carbon

10% Hydrogen

3% Nitrogen

1.5% Calcium

1% Phosphorous

Less than 1 % of Potassium, Sulfur, Sodium, Chlorine, Magnesium, Iron, and Iodine

Oh, and the trace quantities of fluorine, silicon, manganese, zinc, copper, aluminium, and arsenic.

If we took all those parts and sold them on the common market, it would be worth less than \$1. Now our skin is our most valuable physical asset; it's worth about \$3.50, I'm told. So, added all up, you're worth less than \$5!

But take a moment now to place your hand on your wrist or on your lower neck on either side of your windpipe; go ahead. Let's all be quiet and still together for a moment.

What do you feel?

You feel your pulse. You feel the mystery of biological life beating through your \$5 worth of chemicals and minerals.

Do you understand how that works? Do you understand how \$5 worth of chemicals and minerals adds up to you? Or the person sitting next to you?

Easter is the power that makes \$5 worth of elements priceless.

Easter is the power that gave you that pulse, calling you by name and promising you that long after your pulse stops beating that power will go on. It's called eternal life, but it doesn't start after your pulse stops. Easter assures us that eternal, abundant life -- what the Bible calls ZOE--not only goes on forever, but that it is available to us here and now.

And that is what the resurrection is all about, because we all know that having a pulse does not guarantee a full life. One can have BIOS, or biological life, and not ZOE, the energy of God. One can have a heartbeat but no heart for living, an existence but no energy.

You see, we all know that we are worth more than \$5. We know we are worth far more than the sum of our biological parts, and that "MORE" is what Easter is all about.

Easter addresses that universal human longing to tap into that MORE. You might call it meaning, you might call it peace, you might call it purpose. Augustine called it the longing for GOD, the restlessness that only finds rest in God. Paul Tillich called it the ground or the power of being itself. Kierkegaard called it the leap of faith that quells anxiety.

And all of us are seeking it in one way or another. We want to know the more. We want to know GOD. Easter is the Christian answer to that longing. It is knowing that death is not the end and a pulse alone is not living. But if you are not sure exactly what that means, if you feel in the dark about that, you are in good company.

You see, Mary came to the tomb thinking that death was the end for Jesus. She goes in the dark, presumably to prepare Jesus' \$5 worth of minerals and chemicals for burial. She is resigned to the finality of death. She is grieving. At first, she does not even recognize new life right when it is in front of her. But when the Risen Christ speaks her name, she knows.

Easter is not a promise that your business or your family or the church or the world will be "like it used to be" or even that your pulse will go on beating forever. It is a promise that the power that gave you that pulse will never ever abandon you. The power that raised Jesus from the dead can raise you from despair, and that same power is calling you by name and is still at work doing a new thing in you and in the church and in the world! Easter is the promise that nothing in your past, present or future, has the ultimate power to define you. You are defined by the ZOE, the energy, the light of God that flows through you and that flows through all creation making all things new! Unlike Thomas, you don't need proof of this.

You don't prove love; you embrace it.

You don't prove power; you experience it.

You don't prove life; you live it!

You don't prove new life; you receive it!

The way of resurrection - The way of life – is calling us.

Put your hand again on your pulse.

Just as surely as blood is pulsing through your veins right now, the ZOE of Christ--the life that cannot die--is pulsing through creation making all things new! We are called by name to receive that new life and share it with the world!

And that, my friends, is better news than bunnies and easter eggs. It is the reason for all our alleluias! Amen.

Hymn: He came singing love

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGv_6PNCI_8

Offering and Prayer:

Bountiful God, we come with our offerings in response to your love.

With the new life in Christ, we give ourselves in service to others.

Receive the work we do, and the gifts we bring,
that they may become a blessing in your sight.

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray for those who do not share our Easter joy:

O God, with faces touched by the light of a new day, and hearts warmed by our prayers and praises, we come before you to pray for the needs of our world.

Into the light of Easter morning, we raise those who are struggling with illness, with despair over their lives, or with the breakdown of relationships.

We pray for those who live in the shadow of darkness and despair;
for those who live with the hopelessness of shattered dreams
trust betrayed, opportunities lost, love denied;
for those who live without faith or hope or love;
who see no resurrection, no hope of new beginnings for themselves or for the world.
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning, we bring those places in our world
where war, violence, poverty and need
are the experiences of everyday life.

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning,
we bring the headline news of this weekend
we hold in our hearts the pain of those suffering violence, bereavement or conflict.
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

And into the light of Easter morning
we bring ourselves, the private struggles, the heart's yearnings, the hidden dreams,
the unfulfilled potential.

May the light of Christ shine upon us.

If Christ be truly risen, let us show forth his resurrection
so that all who meet us shall know that he is risen indeed! Amen

Hymn: Yours be the Glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaoV5w2Qfag>

Benediction: Go forth with renewed hope, trusting in the transforming love of God.
God does not leave things as they are; With God, all things are made new.
All creation responds to God's presence; The world is alive with possibility.

We open ourselves to this truth; With Christ, we trust our whole lives to this power.

Nothing is beyond the reach of God; Neither evil, nor hardship, nor death.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Amen