



# Kaurihohore Historic Church

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## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 24 April 2022 – Easter 2

*Our service today has been prepared by Rev Freddy De Alwis*

We are saddened that we are unable to welcome those into our midst who do not have Vaccine Passes. We will continue to provide emailed, posted or hand-delivered service outlines for those unable to participate in person, and also to find creative ways of doing Church so all are included in some way.

### **Call to Worship:**

We adore you risen Lord Jesus.

As brothers and sisters gathered together from different cultures, languages and families yet part of the worldwide family of God;

We re-affirm as one voice,

**we adore you risen Lord.**

The darkness is gone!

**Bright light floods into this new day of hope.**

Those who went to the tomb received good news.

**Christ was not there!**

Christ is risen in our hearts and our spirits!

**Christ is risen from the dead! Alleluia! Amen!**

**Hymn H&P 190: Christ is Alive!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fD8pxDgTZZU>

**Prayer of Confession and Healing:** (based on John 20:19-31)

We gather here as a fellowship of people who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. One of the major marks of this fellowship is the sense of joy we experience as we gather to worship God, to give thanks for Jesus Christ and to witness to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Yet, we admit that there are times when we feel afraid, abandoned, and lonely; when faith leads to doubt and questions rather than a sense of joy or peace of mind. Lord Jesus Christ, unlike those first disciples, we cannot touch you or see you, and so it is all too easy to become downcast and given to despair.

**Forgive us when, like the disciples, we find the truth of Easter hard to believe.**

Come to us, risen Christ, come through the closed doors of our hearts and minds and take away our fears and doubts;

**Come to us, risen Christ, breathe on us  
and fill us with the joy and peace of your presence.**

Bless us all as people, who have not seen you, but who believe that you are truly the risen Christ, Son of God.

Hear the good news: "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"....

So I declare to you: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Reading:** John 20: 19 - 31

**Hymn HFTC – 560:** *God is Here! As We His People*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbkNXq71iis>

**Reflection: “Peace be with you”**

Our Lectionary readings for this Sunday are John 20:19-31 & Acts 2

Soon after the death and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, his followers were locked in the upper room in Jerusalem. They were overwhelmed by **fear, uncertainty** and **confusion**. They could not see any possibility of hope. They were unable to get over the horrific scene of the crucifixion. They were disappointed, discouraged, feeling betrayed and now living crucified lock-down lives.

In our reading we see Jesus suddenly appear in the midst of them. He gave them the eastern greeting “Peace be with you”, then he breathed the **Spirit** into them. The **breath of Christ** brought life back to these men and women.

It doesn't matter what situation you are in, in any situation or context, Jesus brings life to the people who are in the midst of **uncertainty and fear**, and also those who are living in the shadow of the cross. In the same way, the disciples were driven out of their fearful isolated safe locked room, and they began to proclaim the **HOPE**, the Good News of Jesus' resurrection; they proved the assurance of HOPE that dry bones can live; that life comes from death and in Christ there is always HOPE!

Our Gospel reading this morning also talks about **doubts**. When we talk about doubts, it has a negative connotation, but realistically it can be hard for us to be honest about **our doubts**. I have found conversations about doubt often beginning with “I don’t think I believe all of this stuff.” or “I’m not sure I believe in God.” or “Am I going to hell because I question the resurrection?” How are we going to respond to these questions?

Most of us, in our desire to follow Christ, earnestly want to get it “right.” Many of us have been raised in traditions where we are encouraged to make a personal proclamation that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour. Some of us were scolded for questioning or doubting the tradition as it had been handed down. Others have been taught that every word in the Bible is the Word of God. And so if we doubt, we experience shame, condemnation, exclusion etc. Why can’t I just believe the way everybody else does? Why do I question so much? We find in the disciples, a company of doubting, Mary Magdalene doubted when she saw the empty tomb. Peter doubted when he denied Jesus. All of the disciples doubted when they locked themselves in the room that Easter evening.

Yet of all the disciples, the one we most associate with doubt is Thomas. He refused to believe when he heard the resurrection account from the other disciples. Reflecting the doubts of so many of us, he bravely declares, “Unless I see it for myself, I will not believe it.” Theologian Paul Tillich, in his classic book *Dynamics of Faith*, claimed that doubt is in fact **an inescapable and essential part of faith**.

According to Tillich, faith is what happens when a finite being is ‘grasped by and turned to the infinite.’ Because we are limited in our understanding, there will always be things about the infinite nature and character of God that we cannot understand, try as we might. Yet, ... it is important to try... an unquestioning faith is no faith at all, because it shows a lack of engagement with the divine.” This engagement is risky though, because we may question and hear no answer, or we may hear an answer that we don’t want to hear. Following in the footsteps of Thomas, we find we can doubt, and still have our faith; in fact, doubt may strengthen our faith. Thomas sees the resurrected Christ who somehow walks through walls and also bears the wounds of the crucifixion.

Christ meets us where we are too. Friends, I don’t want to talk too much of the current COVID 19 situation, but there are millions of people suffering and 15 million are already dead. Another fact is that there are millions of people who have no hope for the future. Today, there are about 30 million children who have been uprooted from their homes, including Ukrainian children with this on-going war.

Millions of families left their homes and became refugees in unknown countries and also were externally displaced within their home countries, all together 65 million refugees and asylum seekers. All of them are living under the shadow of the Cross. Each day, wars, disasters, climate change and extreme poverty drive people from their homes to the Cross. COVID-19 only adds to their miserable vulnerability. What can I say, this appears to be the reality of modern society, that these people are treated as disposable, vulnerable sectors and are called collateral, when they were killed.

It is true that there is going to be worldwide economic downturn, - Europe and USA blame Russia for this. Nobody can say how long this is likely to last. I am very concerned about the bad situation in my home country, approximately 10 people died during this week while in the queue to get their food, cooking oil, petrol and gas. Economic depression can cause drastic declines in output, severe unemployment in almost every country of the world. This thought might pre-occupy our hearts and minds, and it may bring **fear, uncertainty, confusion and depression**. It is the same thought in the minds of the disciples when they lock their doors.

When Jesus entered the room where the disciples had been gathered in lockdown, or in their bubble, Jesus came to them with a greeting of peace. When Jesus said, **“Peace be with you”**, he was reminding them of the peace he had promised to them before he had been crucified. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. Just as “the Lord had formed man/woman out of the dust of the earth and breathed life into their nostrils.” Just as Ezekiel was commanded to breathe new life into the dry bones, “Jesus breathed his own Holy Spirit into the disciples giving them eternal life.” And then, filled with his peace, filled with his Spirit, they could spread HOPE, the Resurrection News to the world.

Love is stronger than hate.

Light is stronger than dark.

Life is stronger than death.

The Resurrection News spread like wildfire. We know from the letter to the Hebrews, “... faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” My friends, I want you to understand that doubting and questioning are a part of the faith journey. So is hope. In my own life, I have found that every time I go through a “dark night,” or a period of feeling unsure, I come out the other side with a new and deeper understanding of God. The time of doubt is dark, but not something of which we should be ashamed...

Now we are in the midst of questioning WHY Lord, WHY? Please continue to pray and wonder, and question. It is a way to be in relationship, even when we are not sure. But question with hope, hope for even things not seen.

God's grace will carry us through this difficult period, the Spirit of Christ comes to us where we are —maybe not in our timing or in the way we expect, but trust that belief is possible. God's grace is persistent and greater than our disbelief. Trust that God will grasp us and turn us into people of resurrection, HOPE and the infinite.

Blessed are we who have not seen as Mary Magdalene, Peter, Thomas, and the 500, saw, and yet believe—even if we can only believe in the possibility of believing. The Spirit Christ breathed on the apostles, is breathed on YOU and ME as well. It gives us new life to live as messengers of HOPE.

Leonardo Boff speaks of resurrection as a process when he writes: "He penetrates the entire cosmos, pervades the whole world, and makes his presence felt in every human being". The resurrection is a process that began with Jesus and that will go on until it embraces all creation. Wherever human life is growing in the world, wherever justice is triumphing over the instincts of domination. Wherever grace is winning out over the power of sin, wherever human beings are gathering in social life together, wherever love is getting the better of selfish interests, and wherever hope is resisting the lure of cynicism or despair, there the process of resurrection is being turned into a reality. The resurrection is not only an event in history; it is a process embracing YOU and ME, and all of creation at this very moment, and for all eternity.

May God bless you and keep you safe.

**Peace be with you.**

**Amen**

### Lord's Prayer:

Hymn HFTC 158: *Low in the Grave He Lay*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtxSWcfH9hk>

### Benediction:

Beyond death is abundant life.

**We will live it.**

Beyond the shadows of hatred and isolation is the light that draws us into community.

**We will follow it.**

Beyond the stone covered tomb is a dance called resurrection.

**We will move with it.**

Christ is risen!

**Alleluia**

Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Let us go into the Eastertide to live in the resurrected Spirit of Christ.

**We go in the name of risen Christ.**

**Grace:**

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**the love of God**

**and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.**

**Amen, Amen, Amen.**