



#### OPENING WORDS

This is a moment set apart, for even though the sun will rise,  
we, like the women at the tomb,  
begin our journey in the dark.

For even in the darkest times, love and light find a way.

#### SONG | 'The Sun Will Rise' by The Brilliance

The sun will rise, the sun will rise  
Bringing life to the earth  
As it springs from the ground  
The sun will rise, the sun will rise  
Won't you dry all your tears lay your burden down?  
Won't you dry all your tears lay your burden down?  
The sun will rise, the sun will rise  
Bringing life to the earth  
As it springs from the ground  
The sun will rise, the sun will rise  
Won't you dry all your tears lay your burden down?  
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**'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,  
nor angels, nor rulers,  
nor things present, nor things to come,  
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.'**

*Light a candle*

Christ is risen!  
**He is risen indeed.**  
Hallelujah!

SONG | 'Our God Alone' by The Brilliance

Who formed the mountains and filled the oceans?  
Our god alone, our god alone  
Who took the dust, breathed life in us?  
Our god alone, our god alone  
Alleluia...

Who came from heaven for our redemption?  
Our god alone, our god alone  
Who died for sin that we may live?  
Our god alone, our god alone  
Alleluia...

Who rose again? death could not win  
Our god alone, our god alone  
Who is returning bringing our kingdom?  
Our god alone, our god alone  
We will worship, we will worship  
Our god alone, our god alone  
We will worship, we will worship  
Our god alone, our god alone  
Alleluia

POEM | **"The Wilderness is the Birthplace of Joy"** by Sarah Are

I used to know the wilderness only as pain;  
A land without food, a land without water.  
But you rained down manna  
And even water flows in your desert.  
I used to think the wilderness was total isolation  
— But the Israelites had each other,  
And you had the stars in the sky.  
So then I thought the wilderness must be time wasted  
— Forty years of circles.  
Forty years of wondering.  
But then I realised, each step is a step,  
And maybe there's growth in that.  
So then I concluded that the wilderness must be lonely spaces  
— The woman and her well,  
The blind man and his gate,  
Martha and her kitchen,  
Peter and his fire.  
But then you showed up in each of those places,  
To each of those faces.

So now I wonder—

What if the wilderness is the birthplace of creation?  
What if the wilderness is where call begins?  
What if the wilderness is where joy is birthed?  
What if, between the dirt and the sky  
And that wide orange horizon,  
The wilderness is where we find you?

READ | John 20:1-18

#### REFLECTION

Fear and death flow about their feet  
as the first preachers plod towards the finality of stone and grave.  
The angels speak their peace and hope rises.  
A gardener, who is not a gardener, speaks a name,  
and their re-cognition turns fear into hope;  
finality into resurrection.  
Before the sun is up,  
the tomb is empty,  
and they flee with terror and joy.  
Then heavy of breath and alight with love  
their first fear - fuelled - sermon begins:

**Christ is risen.**

Easter joy begins in the grip of chaos and fear.  
Yet it is hope that rises in the darkness before the dawn.  
The first sermons whisper on the wind:

**He is risen indeed!**

My dear friends,  
in these wilderness days of Covid 19, we are learning how to whisper astonishing  
words of hope against the darkness and fear of our days  
We are practising how to be one body in heart and in Spirit, when we can't gather  
together in the one place, with the same familiar patterns and faces.  
We are rediscovering that the resurrection is more than a surprising, unexpected  
story, but daily reality woven into our everyday lives in the love and liberating  
grace of Christ Jesus.  
I've heard people describe resurrection life as rebirth  
like being dragged from your inner darkness with a power and compassion  
beyond measure, beyond understanding into a new - transformed life.  
For me, resurrection mostly feels like the quiet recognition of what makes me  
human: those tear filled moments when I can hear my name whispered on the lips  
of God, in the words of a friend, in the love of family, in the forgiveness and  
creativity of community.  
For all of us Resurrection is a process - not a destination.  
And this Easter, as we sit apart in our various locations,

there is a sense that we are being invited to allow the whole Holy Week to take shape in us over and over and over again: to attend to the reality of death and suffering and the many expectations we are learning to let go of..., to sit alone, in that in-between space of Holy Saturday between death and life, grief and hope... And to open our eyes to see and proclaim - where God's presence is to be found in this new Easter wilderness of our world.

Today I'd like to offer you an Easter message from our moderator Rev. Simon Hansford, who speaks to us and to our whole church

SERMON | HOPE IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS by - Rev. Simon Hansford,  
*Moderator of the Synod of NSW and ACT*

We know how this season works, whether we are people of faith, or not. Despite the clumsy marketing of some supermarkets immediately after Christmas, hot cross buns and chocolate eggs usually appear in late February, so we know that Easter is near.

Despite the irony of buns and chocolate, the Christian church has traditionally marked the weeks before Easter with the challenges of discipline and occasionally abstinence, preparing for the event which is the coherent crux of belief in Jesus Christ.

Many of us – people of faith, some faith and none – have danced this dance before, with worship attendance significantly larger than usual over the Easter weekend. For those of us who honour faithfulness and sacrifice, Anzac Day often follows on, sometimes within days.

Easter is about community, acknowledging with thankfulness a priceless sacrifice, the solidarity of Jesus with the brokenness of every human being, and the affirmation that love is stronger than death.

But this year, the dance is entirely different, and many may feel that we will dance alone.

We know, despite their depredations, how to manage natural disasters when they come. The chaos of the fire season, ravaging the drought-scorched landscape, drew us even closer as community. We carried people in our arms and our prayers, gathered on beaches, in surf clubs, and lounge rooms - together. Our fear was lessened because our shoulders bumped old and new friends as we faced the crisis.

This season we wait, in our individual spaces, zooming and texting and tweeting, quarantined from a virus and each other, wondering how to share communion, or play two-up, with no one standing, or laughing, or weeping, or singing, next to us. This year, sanctuaries across the planet which are usually replete with music and colour and celebration will sit silent over the Easter weekend. In this season of disorder, our community will try to find its steps.

Churches and families have already begun to adapt, with a plethora of choice in worship and theology sweeping across the net, matched only by the marketing of businesses as chaos confronts the world they know. As in everything, some are acts of creativity and faithfulness; some, of course, are not.

However, a zoomed event is not the same as shaking the hand of a friend, or leaning on their shoulder. Sharing a meal, blessing a marriage, weeping at a graveside, blowing out birthday candles are inherent to the weave of all our lives. People in our community are wary of their quarantine, as mental health concerns become more tangible. For some, home is not the sanctuary everyone deserves; violence and abuse can be appalling visitors when uncertainty and fear meet loneliness and isolation.

How will we care? How will our compassion be realised for those around us? Incidental conversations need now to be more deliberate, as we attend to those who might not call our attention to their need – small, or not so small.

Easter is more than what happened in Jerusalem two millennia ago. It is more than a story of empire and sacrifice, betrayal and suffering. It declares far more than a promise of life wrested from the silent injustice of death.

Easter is hope. This is not the trivialised “hope” for a parking space, or that it rains tomorrow. This is the hope which looks at what Jesus proclaimed in his life, in his death, and when he was raised again to life.

How Jesus invites (calls!) us to live – loving our neighbour, our enemies, even ourselves – is made tangible in his suffering and death at the hands of his neighbours and those who feared and hated him.

Jesus is the one who understands the fear of suffering, the grief of isolation, the pain of unjust violence. Jesus is the one who seeks forgiveness for those who harm him.

Hope resides here.

Those who follow Jesus Christ place their hope in all our suffering being met on the cross with Jesus; when Jesus was raised to life, death was no longer the most powerful word.

Love is.

So, this Easter, we will care for each other, sing our songs, eat our chocolate eggs and call the spinner in by zoom.

We will declare our hope that this story of separation is not our complete story, and will end. We will assert our need for community and justice and life.

We will dance, now and in the days to come.

SONG | 'WOOD AND NAIL' by the Porters Gate Project

*Wood and Nail is a song that invites us to participate in the continuing work of the Risen Christ amongst us.*

O humble carpenter, down on Your hands and knees

Look on Your handiwork and build a house

So You may dwell in me

So You may dwell in me

The work was done with nothing but

Wood and nails in Your scar-borne hands

O show me how to work and praise

Trusting that I am Your instrument

O loving labourer with the sweat upon Your face  
Oh, build a table that I may too may join You  
In the Father's place  
Oh, in the Father's place  
The work was done with nothing but  
Wood and nails in Your scar-borne hands  
O show me how to work and praise  
Trusting that I am Your instrument

The kingdom's come and built upon  
Wood and nails gripped with joyfulness  
So send me out, within Your ways  
Knowing that the task is finished  
The dead will rise and give You praise  
Wood and nails will not hold them down  
These wooden tombs, we'll break them soon  
And fashion them into flower beds  
The curse is done, the battle won  
Swords bent down into plowshares  
Your scar-borne hands, we'll join with them  
Serving at the table You've prepared

#### PRAY | Gratitude Prayer

Easter is a day of new beginnings and new life. It is a day for hope and love that overflows. It is a day of gratitude for the days we've had and the days to come. It is a day where we remember that love is stronger than hate, and death does not have the last word. Therefore, it only seems appropriate to take a moment to practise gratitude.

Listen to the sounds that are around you...

Take a moment to recognise and appreciate the signs of life around you

If you're with others, look into one another's eyes with joy and thanks giving  
or take a moment to look at some photos of loved one

Allow this practice of gratitude to be a prayer..

You might like to write something down,

or share a few words with those with you.

or simply sit and be present to what ever it is that gives you joy today....

*Perhaps after our worship, you might like to call or text or write to someone - think of this action as Passing the Peace to one another.*

#### BLESSING | **Crucified and Risen Christ**

**You have chosen us**

**And we have chosen you**

**May this way of choosing become a way of living,**

**knowing and loving**

**that knows no end. Amen**