

Easter Sunday 2023

Unexpected Good News

Do Not
be afraid



LOVE Faith

He has Risen ^{Resurrection} Love
Jesus
His love endures forever ^{New start}

Good News

Rejoice

Hope ^{Be glad}

Joy ^{Risen Faith}

Give ^{Love}

thanks



The United Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

Synod Easter Sunday A 2023

Theme: Unexpected good news

Key Scripture: Matthew 28:5-6a

The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."

- *New International Version*

Preparation

Prepare the communion elements for distribution as per your usual custom.

The All Age Talk uses an image of a cocoon, and an image or model of a butterfly.

Alternatively, you could show a "kinder-surprise" egg (chocolate egg with a small toy inside) or you can buy small plastic eggs from craft shops and place a small object inside. A second alternative if you have one is a 'Jack in the box' which jumps up as a surprise when you wind the handle.

Decorations

If you have covered the communion table in black cloth on Good Friday, remove the cloth prior to worship.

Butterflies are used as symbols in the All Age Talk. You might decorate the worship space or communion table with origami or paper cut-out butterflies.

New (unused) plain white Christ candle

GATHERING

Lighting of the Christ candle

We light this candle with hope
for we know...

that after the night comes a new day,
after sin comes forgiveness,
after defeat comes another chance,
after struggle comes peace,
after death comes resurrection,
and the hope of eternal life.

The light will shine in the darkness,
and the darkness will never put it out.

light candle

Call to worship

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.

Matthew 28: selected verses New International Version

responsive

Do not be afraid, for Christ is risen:

Christ is risen indeed!

We come seeking Christ:

Seek, and you shall find.

The tomb could not contain him:

Christ is present with us now.

He gives us courage and strength:

In Christ we know joy, hope and faith.

We rejoice, and give thanks:

for the power and glory of God!

Acknowledgement of Country

As we come to worship on this Easter morning, we acknowledge that we are on the land of the *(Insert the name of the traditional Aboriginal people of the area, or simply use 'First peoples')* and that the Spirit was in the land revealing God to them through law, custom and ceremony. The same love and grace that was finally and fully revealed in Jesus Christ sustained the First peoples and gave them particular insights into God's ways. Therefore, we honour the wisdom of their Elders and their continuing culture, and pray that we might all work together for reconciliation and justice in this nation.

Prayer of adoration and praise

We give you glory and praise, O God,
that in the uncertainty and darkness of our lives,
we find an unexpected message of joy.

"Do not be afraid", we hear,

"He is not here; he has risen!"

In this timeless Easter message we find hope,
and the opportunity for a new start.

We leave behind our broken dreams,

our struggles and our defeats,
and experience your transforming love
that brings new life.

Do not be afraid, for Christ is risen:
Christ is risen indeed!

Music suggestions

Christ the Lord is risen today *Together in Song 370*
This is the day that the Lord has made *Scripture in Song 40*
Christ is risen from the dead *All Together For Good 544*
Why do you look among the dead *All Together Whatever 452*
He is risen, he is risen! *Together in Song 379*
O Praise the name (Anástatis) *Hillsong*
Come, God's people, sing for joy *Together in Song 391*
Praise the one who breaks the darkness (Rusty Edwards) *Words © Hope Publishing Co; Tune Together in Song 392*
Come people of the risen King (Getty and Townend)

LISTENING

Scripture

Matthew 28:1-10

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

New International Version

All Age Reflection

Facilitate a discussion about surprises.
You might ask some prompting questions such as:
Do you like surprises?

Can you think of a time when you have been surprised?
Perhaps when something good has happened unexpectedly?

You might prompt with a story of a surprise party, a gift, or an unexpected act of kindness.

Alternatively, you might show a “kinder-surprise” egg (chocolate egg with a small toy inside) or you can buy small plastic eggs from craft shops and place a small object inside. Ask what they might expect to find in the egg, and talk about the surprise when they don’t know until they open it.

Another alternative if you have one is a ‘Jack in the box’ which jumps up as a surprise when you wind the handle.

Next, show a picture of a cocoon and ask who knows what it is.
Explain that it is a hidey hole for an insect.
Even though it looks dead, there is a live insect inside.

Ask who knows what happens next.

Now, show a picture of a butterfly (or use an origami butterfly or toy butterfly) and explain that the butterfly comes out of the dead-looking cocoon.
That is a surprise!

Alternatively, you might read the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle which is readily available in bookstores.

Easter is full of surprises.
Would you expect a bilby or a bunny to leave chocolate eggs?
That is a surprise!

On that first Easter morning, some women went to Jesus’ tomb and had a good surprise. Jesus had been killed by some people who didn’t like what he was teaching. They crucified him on a cross, and his body had been put in a cave. A huge stone was placed in front of the entrance to the cave.

When those women went to see the tomb, I wonder what they might have been expecting to see?

Answers might include... the cave... the stone... the body...

But some unexpected things happened. Did you hear what they were?
an earthquake... an angel... the stone rolled away...

Ask what the women may have been expecting to find.
Jesus’ body, where they had left it.

How do you think those women felt?
Scared!

The angel told them not to be afraid, that Jesus had risen and everything was going to be ok!
The women hurried off, and saw Jesus, and were filled with joy.
That was such a good surprise!

This is the good news of Easter, that Jesus is risen and is with us always.

Prayer

Loving God, we give thanks for good surprises at Easter time!
We give thanks for Jesus, who is risen and promises to be with us always.
Help us always to be open to the good surprises that you bring.
We pray in Christ, Amen.

Children's Craft Activity

You might organize a craft for the children to make butterflies. There are a variety of options to be found on the internet.

(eg <https://modernsmalltownmama.com/caterpillar-to-butterfly-craft/>)

Music Suggestions

Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord *Together in Song* 390 / *Scripture in Song* 276

Roll the rock away *All Together Whatever* 445 / *God Gives Songs for Kids* 16

Mighty to Save *Hillsong Music*

Christ is risen from the dead *All Together for Good* 544

This is our God (Phil Wickham)

Living hope (Phil Wickham)

Sermon

Adapted from the Moderator's Easter Message 2023

available on the UCA SA Synod webpage at <https://sa.uca.org.au/easter/>

“Do not be afraid... for Christ is risen.”

We live in a time when are justified in feeling afraid, in a world of uncertainty and turmoil. Natural disasters are causing devastation; we see increasing environmental destruction; conflicts are destroying people's lives and communities; the global pandemic continues to take its toll on vulnerable health systems; people are experiencing financial pressures; racial discrimination continues to undermine people's lives. It can be difficult to find good news in our world.

“Do not be afraid... for Christ is risen.”

That first Easter morning, two women went to look at Jesus' tomb. We can imagine that the events of the past week may have caused grief, trouble and uncertainty, as they had seen their teacher and friend arrested, convicted and killed. We can imagine them fearful of what might happen next, afraid perhaps for their own safety.

And then, we hear, an earthquake, an angel, the guards so afraid that they shook and became like dead men, a stone moved like magic, and an empty tomb. We can imagine that those women could only have been terrified!

“Do not be afraid... for Christ is risen.”

This brings, perhaps, a moment of surprise, an unexpected proclamation of good news, a glimmer of hope that maybe things will turn out ok after all. We hear that the women hurried away from the tomb, “afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”

We live in the in-between time. The time of ‘already but not yet.’ We proclaim the mystery of our faith: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again. Yet the fulfillment of God’s kingdom, in all it’s glory, is yet to be fully realised.

Even so, in the uncertainty and darkness and pain of our world, we too experience glimmers of hope - moments of unexpected good news. We hear of the father finding his son alive after four days underneath a collapsed building; we see the person in the queue at the checkout paying for the groceries of someone who doesn’t have enough money; we find ourselves part of groups of people addressing climate change and contributing to the healing of creation; we witness peacemakers speaking up and acting in the midst of conflict. People who by their small actions can make a surprising difference to what is happening around them.

So often, life is unpredictable. Many things don’t go as we expect. Events take us by surprise, sometimes bringing unexpected good news of great joy. At Easter we celebrate the transformation of the despair and fear of death into the unexpected joy and hope of new life, a new beginning and a new relationship with Jesus the Christ.

In Christ, we are given courage and strength to face the fears of our lives.

“Do not be afraid... for Christ is risen.” We have the assurance of his presence with us. The good news is that joy can overcome fear, life is stronger than death, love is greater than hate, grace covers judgement, and that the sufferings of this life are transient and do not represent the final reality. While fear and joy, despair and hope, doubt and faith are all a part of our world and our lives, the Easter message is that ultimately joy, hope and faith will prevail. The light will shine in the darkness, and the darkness will never put it out.

The women at the tomb saw this. In their fear, they glimpsed this Easter truth. “Afraid yet filled with joy,” they ran to tell the others this unexpected good news. As we experience this truth for ourselves, we too are called to share this good news with others. When we make time to love each other unconditionally, to feed the hungry, to make friends with the poor, to turn the other cheek, we are sharing good news, bringing joy, sharing our faith, that they too may find courage, and experience hope for themselves.

“Do not be afraid... for Christ is risen.”

This Easter, may you hear the unexpected good news bringing healing and hope, and may you be the bearer of unexpected good news to others.

Christ is risen indeed!

RESPONDING

Music Suggestions

This is a day of new beginnings *Together in Song 653*
Christ is alive! Let Christians sing. *Together in Song 387*
Christ is risen! Shout Hosanna! *Together in Song 394*
In Christ alone *Townend/Getty*
Come, let us with our Lord arise *Together in Song 375*
Joyful the morning when Jesus Christ is risen! *Together in Song 383*

Affirmation of Faith

together

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
We proclaim Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen One,
confessing him as Lord
to the glory of God the Father.
In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
we acclaim Jesus as the Lord of the Church,
the Head over all things,
the beginning of a new creation.

We acknowledge that we live and work
between the time of Christ's death and resurrection
and the final consummation of all things
which he will bring.
We are a pilgrim people,
always on the way towards a promised goal;
on the way Christ feeds us with word and sacraments,
and we have the gift of the Spirit
in order that we may not lose the way.

We will live and work within the faith and unity
of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church,
bearing witness to that unity
which is both Christ's gift and his will.

We affirm that every member of the Church
is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified.
Together with all the people of God,
we will serve the world for which Christ died.
And we await with hope the day of the Lord Jesus.
- *Adapted from the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia*

from Uniting in Worship 2

Offering

We bring our gifts to you, Lord God,
in gratitude and hope.

In dedicating them, we dedicate ourselves again
to be your people in the world,
in the strength and enabling power
of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

- from Uniting in Worship 2

Notices

as per local custom

Prayers for others

We give you glory and praise, O God,
that in the uncertainty and darkness of our lives,
we find an unexpected message of joy.

“Do not be afraid”, we hear,
“He is not here; he has risen!”
In this timeless Easter message we find hope,
and the opportunity for a new start.

We pray for those who live with darkness and despair...
pause for silent prayer
...that we may find in you courage and strength and life.

We pray for those who live with bitterness or anger...
pause for silent prayer
...that we may find in you courage and strength and life.

We pray for those who live with illness and grief...
pause for silent prayer
...that we may find in you courage and strength and life.

We pray for those in situations of cruelty or injustice...
pause for silent prayer
...that we may find in you courage and strength and life.

We pray for those in situations of conflict or fear...
pause for silent prayer
...that we may find in you courage and strength and life.

Christ is risen indeed, let us not be afraid.
Fill us with your joy, your hope and your faith,
we pray.
Amen

Communion

INVITATION

On this Easter Day of celebration,
we share in Holy Communion together.
This is the Lord's table,
and no matter our age or gender or background,
no matter whether we worship regularly or occasionally or rarely,
if we seek the risen Christ, we are invited to share in this feast today.
In this sacrament of his broken body and outpoured blood,
the risen Lord feeds us.
We are his pilgrim people
on our way towards a promised goal.
Through faith and the gift of the Spirit,
we proclaim the Lord's death,
we grow together into Christ,
we are strengthened for our participation
in the mission of Christ in the world;
we rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom
which he will bring to consummation.

CONFESSION

Shall we come before God confessing our frailties:

Let us pray:

God of all mercy,
give us grace today to make a fresh start.
We know we have not loved you
with our whole heart,
nor have we loved our neighbour as ourselves.

As we hope to be forgiven,
teach us how to forgive;
and lead us forward in a new life
where neither grudges
nor resentment have a part;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

If we confess our sins,
God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins

and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
'Your sins are forgiven'.

Thanks be to God.

PRAYER OF APPROACH

Be present, risen Lord Jesus,
as you were with your disciples,
and make yourself known to us
in the breaking of the bread;
for you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All thanks and praise, glory and honour,
be yours at all times, in every place,
holy and loving Father, true and living God.

We praise you that through your eternal Word
you brought the universe into being
and made us in your own image.
You have given us this earth to care for and delight in,
and with its bounty you preserve our life.

We thank you that you bound yourself to the human race
with the promises of a gracious covenant
and called us to serve you in love and peace.

Above all, we give you thanks for your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ;
born as one of us, he lived our common life
and offered his life to you in perfect obedience and trust.

By his death he delivered us from sin, brought us new life,
and reconciled us to you and to one another.

Therefore with angels and archangels,
with apostles and prophets,
with holy men and women of every age,
we proclaim your great and glorious name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy God, we thank you
for these gifts of your creation, this bread and this wine,
and we pray that we who eat and drink them
in obedience to our Saviour Christ,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
may be partakers of his body and blood,
and be made one with him and with each other
in peace and love.

NARRATION OF STORY

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread;
and when he had given you thanks
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
'Take, eat. This is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me'.

After supper, he took the cup;
and again giving you thanks
he gave it to his disciples, saying:
'Drink from this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant
shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me'.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded:
proclaiming his offering of himself
made once for all upon the cross,
his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming again,
we celebrate, with this bread and this cup,
his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice
for the sins of the whole world.

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

God of all power, breathe your Holy Spirit upon us,
and upon these gifts of bread and wine,
that they may be for us the life of Christ
and that we may make that life visible
through our faithful witness to him.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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

BREAKING THE BREAD

*The minister takes the bread and breaks it in full view of the people and says:
Christ is the bread of resurrection,
new life for all.*

*The minister lifts the cup in full view of the people and says:
Christ is the cup of salvation,
wounded for our healing.*

*The minister holds out the bread and the cup to the people and says:
The gifts of God for the people of God,
bringing us into eternal life.*

LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.

Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.

Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.

Grant us your peace.

Draw near in faith,
and take this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ
in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts with thanksgiving.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

as per usual custom

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

This has been no ordinary meal. It has been one in which we have been fed and nourished with the life of Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord. May we go from here, refreshed and rejoicing, eager to share that life with others, to proclaim that Christ is indeed risen, and all things are made new. Amen

BLESSING

Go in peace, and remember:
goodness is stronger than evil;
love is stronger than hate;
light is stronger than darkness;
life is stronger than death;
victory is ours
through Christ who loved us.
Amen.

- *Communion liturgy adapted from Uniting in Worship 2*

SENDING OUT

Music Suggestions

Yours be the glory *Together in Song 380*
All things new Hillsong
Christ the Lord is risen again *Together in Song 365*
I know that my redeemer lives *Together in Song 376*
My Redeemer lives *Morgan*
How great thou art

Benediction

responsive

Do not be afraid, for Christ is risen:
Christ is risen indeed!
We go to tell others of the risen Christ:
To share our unexpected good news of joy.
The tomb could not contain him:
Christ is present with us now, and always.
He gives us courage and strength:
In Christ we know joy, hope and faith.
We rejoice, and give thanks:
for the power and glory of God!