

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES



The Church's prayer for Easter Sunday

God of glory,
by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;
for a new day has dawned
and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Bible readings and reflection for Easter Sunday

A reading from the book of Acts 10:34-43

34Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

A Gospel reading from the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 16 verses 1-8

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to

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the tomb?’

4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’ 8So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

A reflection from Revd Canon Alison Myers, Lordsbridge Team Rector and lead minister in Hardwick and Dry Drayton

A loss of confidence

How are you feeling this morning? Can you name what you are feeling? Tired? Or perhaps you’d say exhausted? Anxious? Worried? Angry? Flat? Peaceful? Joyful? Hopeful? Perhaps a little bit of one thing and echoes of something else?

We have experienced a year a long way from what any of us expected. For most of us, it has curtailed our freedoms and asked us to endure some difficult things. Many of us have experienced a kind of low-level trauma and have lived with a background of the anxiety caused by a feeling of un-safety. Some of us are grieving bigger losses; some of us have been confronted with greater traumas. We have shielded and supported each other and for that I am grateful.

But this Easter, despite the gradual opening up, many of us are feeling uncertainty, anxiety, unresolved heartache, grief, and emotional or physical exhaustion. And this is having an impact on our sense of confidence.

Have you noticed that too? I know that things I might have breezed through 18 months ago are giving me greater pause for thought now, or causing more anxiety. And from conversations I have had I don’t think I am alone in that.

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If we think that Easter is all about fluffy chicks and Easter eggs and yellow daffodils – wonderful though these things are – then it is easy to conclude that it has nothing to say in the face of this collective uncertainty and lack of confidence.

But I believe that Easter has a message about courage.

The disciples' feelings and loss of confidence

If we were to peek in at those close to Jesus this morning 2000 years or so ago. I wonder how they might answer that question – how are you feeling this morning? On Easter morning we can assume without much thought that all the heart ache, grief, uncertainty, and anxiety of the previous few days was resolved with the events of that morning. But was it?

When we look at the stories handed down to us, we read about how the disciples anxiously hid in a locked room fearful for their safety; about how when visited by Jesus they, understandably, couldn't get their heads around the possibility of his being alive; about the two who walked away on the Emmaus Road struggling with the trauma of what had happened three days before; about how those who were fisherman went back to fishing as if their adventure with Jesus was over. They must have felt buffeted by all that had happened: by their dashed expectations, their sense of betrayal, even their anger at Jesus for letting it all happen, for not being the kind of hero they wanted him to be.

It was at best a very slowly dawning hope. But there was still lots of uncertainty for quite some time. And even when they had begun to believe what they hardly dared hope was possible, that Jesus was indeed resurrected, they must have had little confidence in having a sense of what might happen next. It had all become so unpredictable. Despite the hope that they began to believe in, their confidence was, it appears, at a low ebb.

Confidence and courage

I have been thinking over the last few days about the difference between confidence and courage. Confidence often comes from expectations born out of experience, from an understanding of societal norms, from the mapping of a fairly predictable future, from a sense of one's own ability to navigate what life throws at you. Courage, on the other hand, comes from somewhere different.

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And when we are short of confidence, when we are held back by uncertainty or anxiety; when we feel hesitant or ill equipped for what has changed, when we feel damaged by trauma or depleted by loss, that's when we need the kind of courage that comes from somewhere deep and profound.

It took courage for Mary, a woman and therefore not normally considered to be a reliable witness, to tell the men that she had seen Jesus – 'what? are you mad?' It took courage for the disciples, when visited by Jesus in a locked room, to be open to the possibility of hope rather than closed down by scepticism or despair– 'don't be ridiculous!'

It was courage that drew Peter to wade from his boat to the shore to meet the Jesus whom he had earlier in fear and anger denied – how much easier it would have been to hide.

It was courage, and not yet confidence, that walked them all towards the brightening light of this new world's dawn.

Living with courage

On Easter day we say: 'all times belong to Him and all ages'. All times. Even the difficult times, even the angry times, even those times over the last year when we feel we have just been marking time and waiting for it all to be over. All our times belong to Christ. And that gives me courage.

On Easter say we say: 'Alleluia, Christ is risen'. Christ *is* risen. Because He and his resurrection do not belong to the past. They belong to today. They are for now. And for tomorrow and for the next day and the next. And that gives me courage. I need courage to face the still uncertain months ahead; courage to be open to hope and creativity despite exhaustion and trauma; courage to reach for new ways of doing and being that respond better to the fault lines now apparent in our society; courage to speak about the resurrection faith that holds us and draws into our future.

If you can't yet live again with confidence, then live with courage. And may the risen Christ be with you.

Amen.