



Easter, April 9th, 2023

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Wild, uncontainable God
you break free,
you raise up,
you release new life.

In Christ sin and death are defeated
and we are no longer bound.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Alleluia.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Singing - Halle, halle, halle ... TIS 720

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing - Christ the Lord is risen ... TIS 370

Prayer



Footsteps in the cool of early morn,
darkness not yet broken.
Hushed talking,
Birdsong beginning,
the crunch of earth underfoot.
First rays of light appearing on the horizon.

Earth erupting
unsteadying feet.

Light blazing,
Soldiers frozen,
awe bewildering,
As God's messenger makes an entrance.

Wild holy God,
You raised Jesus from the clutches of death.
The power of sin and death is broken.
Truly he is the Christ. Truly he is Emmanuel.
All this for us.

Love came down.
Love that rescues us
from our selfishness and greed.
Love that infects us
with Christ's righteousness.
Love that awakens us
to our true selves.
Love that cleanses and renews.

**We have died with Christ
and our life is safe with Christ in God.
In Jesus the Christ we are forgiven
and receive new life,
we are born again! Thanks be to God!**

Passing the peace

Peace to you. Do not be afraid. He is risen.
Alleluia, Christ is risen indeed!
Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Listening

Read: Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (responsive)

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say,

"His steadfast love endures forever."

The LORD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.



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**There are glad songs of victory in the tents
of the righteous: "The right hand of the
LORD does valiantly;**

the right hand of the LORD is exalted; the
right hand of the LORD does valiantly."

**I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.**

The LORD has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.

**Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.**

This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

**I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.**

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

**This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.**

***ALL: This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.***

Read: John 20:1-18

For these words of faith,
and for Jesus the living Word,
Thanks be to God, Amen.

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

This Easter, Australians will spend an estimated \$1.7 billion on Easter related food including hot cross buns and Easter eggs. The economic value of Easter is such that manufacturers and bakers endlessly innovate to come up with exciting new variations (this year including sticky date hot cross buns, burger sauce hot cross buns and mango/passionfruit Easter eggs) to encourage us to buy more.

Easter, for many Australians, has become just another holiday with the bonus of some culinary indulgence. The meaning of Easter has been lost for these people, very often through ignorance or indifference as many Australians have had little or no religious education. Unlike previous generations, very few have been sent to Sunday School when they were children and only a minority have attended church on a regular basis. Many Australians do not even know the basic facts of the Easter story, let alone its life changing significance.

This to me is incredibly sad, as for me Easter is a commemoration of the pivotal moment in human history when God in love reached out to change everything.

That original Easter was a day of great mystery and power, unfathomable even to those who were part of it until the gracious light of God's presence began to help them see that the inexplicable really had happened, and that truly Jesus had been raised from the dead, and he was alive! When Mary Magdalene was greeted by Jesus a whole new world began to open up. A world in which death had been defeated.

For when Jesus was raised from the dead by God on Easter morning it was in order that they and we may know God's love and forgiveness, and be brought into a new relationship with God. And through this relationship be guided and strengthened by God's Holy Spirit in order that we might live lives worthy of the Gospel, and be granted eternal life in the presence of God

In the resurrection, we have God's promise that life is stronger than death, that love is greater than hate, that mercy overcomes judgement, and that all the sufferings and difficulties of this life are transient -- real and palpable and sometimes painful, for sure, but they do not have the last word and do not represent the final reality. And overarching over it all is the immeasurable love of God for humanity.

This is really important for us not only to understand and hold onto not only for ourselves, but also to share with others especially those who are despairing in these difficult days.

The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.



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The famous British Methodist minister W.E. Sangster contracted an incurable disease that caused progressive muscular atrophy. It was one of those dreadful illnesses where muscles waste away, where the voice fails, and swallowing gradually becomes impossible. Nevertheless, Sangster continued to throw himself into his work in British home missions until he could not go on. His legs became useless and his voice went completely, but he could still hold a pen shakily. On Easter morning, just a few weeks before he died, he wrote in a letter to his daughter: "It is terrible to wake on Easter morning and have no voice with which to shout, "He is Risen!" – but it would be still more terrible to have a voice and not want to shout."

I pray that you are privileged to know that love, that forgiveness, that hope, and that transformation this Easter day; and that you are able to rejoice in the good news of Easter and cry with joy, "Christ is risen!"

But let us also think of all those we know who do not share this transformative knowledge and faith, and pledge to do all we can to share this good news with those for whom Easter is merely another holiday.

For we are called to share the good news of God's love and forgiveness offered through the risen Christ. For if we do this, hopefully next Easter those with whom we share this good news might know that transformative love of God in their lives, and join with us in proclaiming "Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!" Hallelujah! Amen.

Singing - Yours be the glory, ... TiS 380

Offering

Wild extravagant God, we give you grateful thanks for the many ways you have blessed us. We bring ourselves to you. Bless these gifts we offer and teach us your ways; bringing unbounded love where there is death, unending hope where there is hatred, and peace that passes understanding. Amen.

Notices

The final report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was signed on **April 15th, 1991**. Read more about it here: <https://antar.org.au/issues/justice/deaths-custody/> You could commit to learning just one or two of the many, many names of First Nations people who have died in custody in more than 30 years since the report was completed.

Prayers for World & Community

May this be the day
wild compassionate God
when you break out of the boxes that we
construct for you in our minds.
Roll back the stones that block us
so we can see and hear and experience you
in our everyday walking-around lives.
God who brings new life, hear our prayer.

May this be the day
wild earth erupting, glory blazing God
when your light pierces the darkness
of war and oppression, of hate and greed
of famine and disaster.
The day when the stone is rolled back
and the way is opened
to release those held captive
by sin and death,
by hunger for power
and greed that consumes others.
**God who brings new life
out of places of death, hear our prayer.**

May this be the day
wild courageous God
when you shake up your church
and send out witnesses
to proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord of all.
Witnesses who testify to your power
active in the world today
– your power of love that reaches out
to the lost, the vulnerable, the hurting...



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May we see with your eyes,
and respond with your grace,
with generosity and kindness,
compassion, and gentleness.

**God who brings good news
to those who are confused and afraid,
hear our prayer.**

May this be the day wild passionate God
when we are open to you in new ways,
to be awakened to the promise of our life
hidden with Christ in you.
Life beyond this life,
where we also
will be revealed with Christ in glory. Amen.

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Singing - At the dawning of salvation TIS 392

Blessing

from Colossians 3:1-4

People of God, Sin and death no longer have
power over you. You have been raised to new
life with Christ, fix your mind on him. Set your
thoughts on the things of God, Don't be
preoccupied with the anxieties of living in this
world because that chokes God's life out of
you.

Christ is your life, and you are in him, safe and
alive in God. So do not be afraid. Go and tell
others "Jesus Christ is Lord of all."

And may the crucified risen one walk
mysteriously with you on your way this week
opening your eyes to the wonder of the wild
God all around you.

Amen.

Singing - Halle, halle, halle ... TIS 720

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A note from Veronica about the liturgy.

My thinking in writing this liturgy has been influenced
by the book "Church of the Wild: How Nature Invites Us
into the Sacred" by Victoria Looz. It is also influenced
by the fact we live near Victoria's largest coastal
wilderness area and great "wild place" Wilsons
Promontory National Park. References to "wild" in this
liturgy refer to God being uncontainable, free, not
domesticated, not tamed by our desires. For me wild
God is God allowed to be who God is – altogether other,
mystery.