

# **SA, SL, TS, and DSM United Churches**

***Easter Sunday – March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024***

**Prelude:** “I Know My Redeemer Liveth” – Christie Coatsworth

## **Welcome & Announcements:**

He is Risen! Hallelujah!

Today is Easter Sunday. Today we celebrate Jesus is alive! All of the Holy Week’s Services are on our websites at [southbuxton.ca](http://southbuxton.ca), and [talbotstreet.ca](http://talbotstreet.ca)

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

## **Call to Worship:**

**Eric:** Christ is risen!

**People:** He is risen indeed!

**Eric:** Christ is risen!

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**Eric:** Christ is risen!

**People:** He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

## **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

**Eric:** The risen Christ lives today!

**People:** We are witnesses to these things.

**Eric:** We sing praise to God incarnate.

**People:** May Christ’s love burn within us!

## **Opening Hymn:** VU 155 “Jesus Christ is Risen Today”

Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!  
our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!  
who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!  
suffer to redeem our loss. Hallelujah!

Hymns of praise then let us sing hallelujah!  
unto Christ, our heavenly King, hallelujah!  
who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah!  
sinners to redeem and save. Hallelujah!

But the pains which he endured, hallelujah!  
our salvation have procured; hallelujah!  
now above the sky he's King, hallelujah!  
where the angels ever sing. Hallelujah!

Sing we to our God above, hallelujah!  
praise eternal as God's love; hallelujah!  
praise our God, ye heavenly host, hallelujah!  
praise the Son and Holy Ghost. Hallelujah!

### **Opening Prayer:**

**God of grace and power, we have longed and prepared for this joyous day: on Ash Wednesday we humbled ourselves before you, on Maundy Thursday we learnt a new commandment, on Good Friday we cried at the foot of the cross, on Holy Saturday we kept vigil, and on this Blessed Sunday we rejoice in the risen power of love, hope, and new life. Make this rising real in our own lives. Let us be people of love, hope, and new life. Let us be people of joy. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

### **Children's Story:**

#### **Children's Hymn: B 299 "He Lives"**

I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today;  
I know that He is living, whatever men may say;  
I see His hand of mercy, I hear his voice of cheer,  
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

*Refrain:* He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me  
along life's narrow way,  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives?  
He lives within my heart.

In all the world around me, I see His loving care,  
And though my heart grows weary I never will despair;  
I know that He is leading through all the stormy blast,  
The Day of His appearing will come at last. *Refrain:*

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing,  
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!  
The hope of all who seek Him, the help of all who find,  
None other is so loving, so good and kind. *Refrain:*

### **Responsive Psalm: Psalm 118: 1 – 2, 14 – 24**

Tell the Lord how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful.

**Let Israel shout, "God is always merciful!"**

My power and my strength come from the Lord, and he has saved me.

**From the tents of God's people come shouts of victory: "The Lord is powerful!**

With his mighty arm the Lord wins victories! The Lord is powerful!"

**And so my life is safe, and I will live to tell what the Lord has done.**

He punished me terribly, but he did not let death lay its hands on me.

**Open the gates of justice! I will enter and tell the Lord how thankful I am.**

Here is the gate of the Lord! Everyone who does right may enter this gate.

**I praise the Lord for answering my prayers and saving me.**

The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone.

**The Lord has done this, and it is amazing to us.**

This day belongs to the Lord! Let's celebrate and be glad today.

### **Gospel Scripture: John 20: 1 - 18**

On Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran to Simon Peter and to Jesus' favorite disciple and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb! We don't know where they have put him." Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. They ran side by side, until the other disciple ran faster than Peter and got there first. He bent over and saw the strips of linen cloth lying inside the tomb, but he did not go in. When Simon Peter got there, he went into the tomb and saw the strips of cloth. He also saw the piece of cloth that had been used to cover Jesus' face. It was rolled up and in a place by itself. The disciple who got there first then went into the tomb, and when he saw it, he believed. At that time Peter and the other disciple did not know that the Scriptures said Jesus would rise to life. So the two of them went back to the other disciples.

Mary Magdalene stood crying outside the tomb. She was still weeping, when she stooped down and saw two angels inside. They were dressed in white and were sitting where Jesus' body had been. One was at the head and the other was at the foot. The angels asked Mary, "Why are you crying?" She answered, "They have taken away my Lord's body! I don't know where they have put him." As soon as Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know who he was. Jesus asked her, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener and said, "Sir, if you have taken his body away, please tell me, so I can go and get him." Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to him, "Rabboni." The Aramaic word "Rabboni" means "Teacher." Jesus told her, "Don't hold on to me! I have not yet gone to the Father. But tell my disciples I am going to the one who is my Father and my God, as well as your Father and your God." Mary Magdalene then went and told the disciples she had seen the Lord. She also told them what he had said to her.

### **Reflection: "Back to the Garden"**

Christ is risen! Hope is alive and moves among us! Help us God today to know that despair is not the end of your story. May God help us to live as an Easter people, who believe that God's love has no restrictions.

Some of the disciples cannot believe that Jesus is alive again! Indeed, people have wildly different reactions to Jesus' resurrection from the dead: Mary weeps, Peter runs away, and many of the disciples are full of disbelief. As we share the Resurrection today, people will still have a wide range of reactions and responses –

from disbelief, to being overwhelmed, to fleeing from the experience and the emotions.

The story in John begins with Mary looking for Jesus; she had gone alone to visit Jesus' tomb. The reading tells us of Mary's sadness and weeping as she sees the tomb empty. But the story does not end there – much like Jesus' story does not end there. John shares that Jesus calls Mary by her name, and she knew it was Jesus. After Mary sees Jesus, she is encouraged to go and tell others what she has seen and heard. According to John, Mary is the first to witness and proclaim the risen Christ. The reading offers hope amid a seemingly bleak situation and reminds us that Jesus Christ can deliver beyond our wildest expectations.

The astonishing news of the Resurrection transformed Jesus' followers into courageous preachers of the good news of Jesus Christ. In the good news of Jesus' resurrection, all that Jesus had shared with the disciples is finally making sense. All these events change the disciples.

We too are changed when we see Jesus! We are changed each Easter Season as we journey through Lent and into the Holy Week events. We know our lives are changed, because we believe in Jesus, his death and best of all Jesus' resurrection. We get so excited we go and tell others what has happened this Easter.

For many folks in our Western World, Easter is all about the Easter bunny, Easter chocolates, hot-cross buns and searching for eggs. While these are great ways to help our children understand new life, it can be challenging to move from Easter Bunnies to Easter resurrection. Yet Easter is a time to celebrate with good food, good friends and good treats. Easter is about new life!

After weeks of Jesus' journey and words towards his death, this Easter Day brings a new and an entirely unexpected situation. The tomb is empty! What are we to make of it? Those closest to Jesus were shocked and frightened, amazed and fearful. How might we respond, if our journey through Easter is not yet complete? Tradition has it that Easter Sunday is the pinnacle and culminating event of the Christian church calendar, full of celebration and joy at death conquered. And yet on that first Easter Sunday morning, was it so certain? Can we relate to the fear and surprise of finding unexpected things?

The disciples, including the women, have grieved, and head to the tomb early that Sunday morning to administer the traditional burial rites. When the women get

there, they are confronted by a radical new reality. The stone is rolled away, and even gardeners seem to wear dazzling clothes! Already they have begun a new transformational journey – a journey that cannot contain the Spirit of Christ within their plans, traditions, and expectations of how things should be.

This is a great Easter Message for us today! Encounters with the Risen Christ draw us into new perspectives, new directions, new understandings, new ways of compassion – even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century! We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

### **Reflection Video Hymn: “I Danced in the Morning”**

#### **The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving:**

**Eric:** Christ is risen!

**People:** He is risen indeed!

**Eric:** Lift up your hearts.

**People:** We lift them up to the Lord.

**Eric:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**People:** It is right to give our thanks and praise.

**Eric:** Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love, you are beyond complete knowledge, above perfect description.

**People:** Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit; Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love, you are creative and self-giving, generously moving in all the near and distant corners of the universe.

**Eric:** Nothing exists that does not find its source in you.

**People:** Through fear-filled days and aching nights when the powers of death have done their worst, your love has never deserted us.

**Eric:** Even when we turn away from you, you are with us; your presence never fails us, your gifts of hope and new life transforms us.

**People:** We praise you for Jesus Christ, risen to life, eternal as your love.

**Eric:** With the women at the tomb, we raise the strain of gladness.

**People:** Hallelujah! Life is stronger than death! The day of resurrection has come, scattering fear and gloom.

**Eric:** And so we rejoice with all your people of every time and place, and with angels and archangels, to proclaim the glory of your name:

Holy, holy, holy,

Lord God of Hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of your glory!

Heaven and earth praise you,

O God most high!

#### **Invitation to Share Our Gifts:**

**Eric:** The sharing of gifts is one way we can celebrate resurrection. Let us give in love!

**Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

**Offertory Prayer:**

**You, O God, are the Easter One. You are the holy source of resurrection. You are the dancing spirit of life. We offer these gifts in gratitude for hope returned, for the mystery of your grace, and for the promise of resurrection. In the Name of the Risen Christ, we pray. Amen.**

**Pastoral Prayer & Lord’s Prayer:**

**Remembering Jesus at the Table:**

**Eric:** It is Jesus, God incarnate, the Risen Christ, who joins us together as a community of broken, but hopeful believers:

**People:** **loving what he loved, living what he taught, and striving to be his faithful servants in our time and place.**

**Eric:** In this meal, we remember Jesus, his promises, and the price he paid for who he was, what he said, and what he done.

**People:** **On the night before Jesus died, he took a loaf of bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said,**

**Eric:** “Take and eat, whenever you do this, remember me.”

**People:** **After supper, Jesus took the cup and poured, saying,**

**Eric:** “This is the new covenant; remember me.”

**People:** **We do remember. We remember his life of love, his friendship, his teaching, his dying, and his rising to life again.**

**Eric:** In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:

**People:** **Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

**Prayer for Transformation:**

**People:** **Holy Mystery, God the Spirit, we call on you to transform these familiar things, as you continually transform the world around us.**

**Eric:** Bless this bread (*hold up the bread*) and this cup (*Hold up the cup*), the wheat and the grape, the farmer and the harvest, the seed and the sower.

**People:** **So that in the sharing of these simple elements in community, we may taste and see your goodness.**

**Eric:** The gifts of God for the people of God.

**People:** **Thanks be to God!**

*As we partake the bread together:*

**Eric:** The body of Christ,  
**People:** the bread of life.

*As we partake the drink together:*

**Eric:** The lifeblood of Christ,  
**People:** the cup of blessing.

### **Prayer After Communion:**

**Thank you, O Christ, for this feast of life. We are fed by your love; we are strengthened by your life. We are sent forth into this world to live your way and share your joy. We are now commissioned to feed as we have been fed, forgive as we have been forgiven, love as we have been loved. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn: VU 586 “We Shall Go Out...”**

- 1 We shall go out with hope of resurrection;  
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;  
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;  
tales of a love that will not let us go.  
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;  
we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed;  
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united  
within the vision of new life in Christ.
- 2 We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;  
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;  
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,  
expressive love alive in every heart.  
We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping,  
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,  
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story,  
including all in circles of our love.

### **Blessing:**

**Eric:** May the love of the risen Christ nourish and sustain us. May the eternal light of the world renew and inspire us to lives of care and compassion. May we go forward and be the body of the risen Christ, now and forever more.

### **Postlude:** “The Easter Song” – Christie Coatsworth

**Prayers:** - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service. It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.