



Sunday April 27th , 2025 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

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

Psalm 118:14

What is this
that amidst our fears
and locked places
you breathe peace
upon us weary ones?

Peace, though war rages;
peace as we are torn within;
peace when hope seems lost;
peace; blessed and
longed for peace!

Help us to see
and believe
and say in renewed hope:

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

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded lands and waters. We pay respect to Elders past and present. 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 - Where wide sky rolls down TiS 188

OR: You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord TiS 48
OR: Praise with joy the world's creator TiS 179
OR: Morning has broken TiS 156



Prayer

God of life and death,
of beginnings and endings,
and surprising hope,
we offer our thanks and praise
for all you have given us.

Words often fail us
and perhaps they should
as you stun us with life;
you awake us from death;
you light us up with hope
when hope seems impossible.

Even as we utter words
incomprehensible,
we still say:
you have become our salvation.

We know we need it. Have you really become our salvation?

Forgive us when we lock ourselves away.
Sometimes that is in literal spaces
that barr access to others.
Sometimes we appear to function on the outside
as though we are coping, that things are normal,
yet so much within is locked away.

Forgive us when we doubt that
you bring us to life, that
you offer us peace, that
you breathe upon us the
spirit that is your life within.

Help us to see,
with eyes and hearts,
in spirit and in love,
until we see as fresh as the morning
that you have
become our salvation.

Siblings in Christ,
give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

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In Christ,
through Christ, and
because of Christ
we are made new.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

Listening

Read: Acts 5:27-32
John 20:19-31

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

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

Jerusalem is the setting for the events depicted in two of our readings today. The John reading describes two encounters between the risen Christ and the disciples on the evening of Easter Sunday and then a week later. In the first encounter, the disciples are fearfully huddled behind locked doors when the Risen Christ appears in their midst. To say that they were shocked is an understatement. They were frankly, terrified! They thought that he was a ghost!

After a time, Jesus was able to calm the disciples down enough for them to stop panicking and be able to listen and comprehend. He was able to convince them that he truly had been raised from the dead. However, Thomas, who was absent from this encounter, was not able to be convinced of the reality of the resurrection by their testimony. Jesus then appeared to the disciples again a week later. This time Thomas was convinced of the reality of the resurrection, but only after encountering the Risen Christ for himself.

Clearly, the resurrection of Jesus was such an unexpected event that the witnesses struggled to comprehend its reality, at least for a time. These early witnesses were generally convinced by hearing the voice of their beloved teacher, and by the sight of his ravaged body.

Resurrection is a mind-blowing, incredibly difficult concept for humans to comprehend. It goes against everything we have experienced in our lives. Daily we are exposed to the reality of the finiteness of life, whether it be human, animal or bird, fish or plant. We are surrounded by the circle of life and death. We see new life in babies, in plant shoots emerging from the ground, in frogs spawning and baby birds hatching from eggs. And we see growth to maturity, and we see death in all of its harsh reality. We know that the dead remain dead.

And yet, we who are Christians hold on to the mind-boggling promise that not only was Jesus raised from the dead to new life, but one day, we too, will experience resurrection. Resurrection is such a difficult thing to believe that it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to have faith and believe that this is true. That is why, in events recorded in the Book of Acts, some of the same disciples who shook with fear when the risen Christ appeared in their midst were now confidently proclaiming the truth of the resurrection to any one who would listen.

This was only possible because they received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The gift of the Holy Spirit gave them the assurance, courage and strength to proclaim the Gospel. This is amazing to behold when we think of the dangers and the persecution that those disciples faced from the authorities who wanted them silenced. In events that took place just before today's reading from the Book of Acts, Peter and the disciples had been arrested whilst preaching in Jerusalem. They had been thrown in jail, but mysteriously had been freed from jail in the night by an angel who told them to go to the Temple and preach the gospel. It was whilst they



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were preaching at the Temple that they were arrested again.

In the episode we read, they were brought before the High Priest and the Scribes and admonished to stop preaching. But they refused. Instead, Peter and the apostles/disciples witnessed to the truth of the resurrection, and to the forgiving, saving power of God through the Holy Spirit. On this occasion the disciples' punishment was a flogging, although it could well have been worse except for the intervention of a Pharisee named Gamaliel. Gamaliel had the wisdom to realise that if their preaching and actions came from human origins they would ultimately fail, but if it came from God rallying against them would be futile, and that those opposing them risked fighting against God.

We know that Peter would ultimately pay the price of his life for his dedication to preaching the Gospel and building up the Church. As did others in that courageous band of believers. But their ministry became the foundations on which the world-wide church was built.

May we, who are their successors in the Christian faith, be willing to be guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit to continue that proclamation.

Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

Singing - This is a day of new beginnings ***TiS 653***

OR: I danced in the morning TiS 242

OR: These things did Thomas count as real TiS 649

OR: My daughters and my sons hear tell TiS 363

Offering

God of Jesus, the risen Christ, even in our wonder and struggle to understand we celebrate the mystery of the inbreaking Christ, especially in our fears and longings for life.

As we respond to life, may it echo the abundance you have given us. May these gifts be blessed and become abundant in your name. May our lives become abundant blessings to others, again in your name. Amen.

Notices

May 1st is International Workers' Day.

May 3rd is World Press Freedom Day.

Prayers for World & Community

Inbreaking God, we pray for a world in need of your peace, a world starved of beloved breath and life and hope.

For all who lock themselves away in bunkers and safe houses, we pray. We pray for those who fear the strike of others. We pray for those who struggle within and cannot quell the fear they feel.

We offer our own prayers in silence for a world that needs the inbreaking of your peace...

In-breaking God, we pray for our country, close now to a federal election that will impact on the hopes and fears of many. Be with all who have lost hope in leaders. Be with leaders who have lost hope in the system or themselves. Be with people who need peace because the circumstances of life are difficult. Be with all who fear that peace will not come.

We offer our own prayers in silence for a country that needs the inbreaking of your peace...

In-breaking God, we pray for the church, in need of peace and locked away in our own fears of what the world thinks of us; or what we think of ourselves. May your peace and the breath of your spirit be known within, that we may remember you are the architect of the risen Christ, of salvation, of life and renewal.



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*We offer our own prayers in silence for a church
that needs the inbreaking of your peace...*

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 - Yours be the glory TiS 380

OR: Love divine all loves excelling TiS 217
OR: Faith will not grow from words alone TiS 691

Blessing

Peace be with you.
My peace I give to you.

The risen one offer peace
in the form of breath and spirit.

As you take a breath,
it is the spirit that is your breath.

As you take a breath,
it is the spirit that is your life.

God breaks in to whatever is locked within us,
to breathe us back to life.

Go in the life God gives you.
To bless and be blessed
in the name of the
Creator,
Redeemer and
Sustainer. Amen.

Reflection: Rev Sandra Houghton
Retired minister - Sale.



Liturgy: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
Leongatha, Korumburra, Loch-Poowong

Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon
St John's Cowes
revjenniegordon@gmail.com