



Order of service  
Date: Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Easter 2A

**We acknowledge that we are worshipping on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung people, of the Kulin nation, and pay our respects to elders past and present.**

Today like last week, I send you an order of service to help you work through the material better. I am including all the bits in the one document, so you don't have to chop and change from one to the other. It is kind of a long document as it contains everything, even the preaching if you choose not to watch the video of that or can't. It will not be quite the usual kind but have elements you will be familiar with.

I will give instructions in red for when things best happen. Remember you will need to read it on your computer to follow the links.

If however you just want to work through the material in your own way please feel free. A reminder you will need speakers to hear audio. And PLEASE call me or email me if things don't work.

Now let's get down to it.

Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed!  
Alleluia!

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

When doors were shut and the world was kept out,  
**resurrection found the disciples.**

When the church gathers and the world waits outside,  
**resurrection finds us.**

When fear grew and new questions were found,  
**resurrection found the disciples.**

When faith leads us into new questions about life,  
**resurrection finds us.**

When suffering remained and the city was hostile,  
**resurrection found the disciples.**

When Christ gathers with his followers in living worship,  
**resurrection finds us.**

Come, let us worship God!

**Sing** – TIS 370, Christ the Lord is risen today.

1

Christ the Lord is risen today:

*Hallelujah!*

Let the whole creation say:

*Hallelujah!*

Raise your joys and triumphs high:

*Hallelujah!*

Sing now, heaven, and earth reply:

*Hallelujah!*

2

Love's redeeming work is done;

fought the fight, the battle won;

vain the stone, the watch, the seal:

Christ has burst the gates of hell.

3

Lives again our glorious king;

where, O death, is now your sting?

Once he died our souls to save;

where your victory, O grave?

4

Soar we now where Christ has led,

following our exalted Head;

made like him, like him we rise:

ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

### **Opening prayer**

God of life,

The field is anointed with fresh light.

The dancing sun hangs ribbons in the trees.

The bush breaks forth in never-ending green and interruption of autumn hues,  
the raucous birds of praise fly up into your eye-blue sky.

Earth knows how to adore you:

she blossoms forth without her thought or strain.

We, too, no less than rising annuals,

are all ourselves your exaltation,

each raised up from our sleep,

each breathed to life eternal by your joy,

your joy in us, in us your life, your light.

The seeds and buds and bulbs and roots don't wait

for some far distant rescue to arrive;

they rise from life within, your passion's flow,

your pure delight embodied, just like us.

O Holy One, we are your resurrection,  
 we your beauty, we your Life made flesh.  
 May we then live this day, this season, this life, in gratitude  
 and love, your holy ones, your adoration.  
 In the name of the Lord of life, Amen.

**EARLY WORD** – Ralph tells a story.

(Hold CTRL button and left mouse click on the below link and it will open up your web browser and go straight to the YouTube clip. Just press play and enjoy.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5ss8RTyzrw>

(If you can't do this here is an outline of the story)

Ralph is in primary school. When Ralph's class writes stories, he thinks he has nothing to say. He gets bathroom passes and suggests that he could go help the lunchroom ladies – anything to get out of writing a story. One day, he remembers a time he found an inchworm but he can't seem to figure out how to turn it into a story. When the teacher calls on him to read his story, he walks slowly to the front of the room and reads his one sentence. But his fellow students' eager questions remind him that he has something to say about the experience he shared with that inchworm. He begins to tell his story (and it's a good one!) By the end of the book, you see pages from all the stories that Ralph has now been able to write about things that he has seen, done and experienced. It just took a little encouragement to loosen his mind and tell his stories.

(After you have watched the clip, or read the above work through the material below)

Ralph becomes a good witness for what he has experienced. Do you know what a witness is? It is a person who has seen an event and can tell what has happened. The sermon that Peter preaches in the Acts passage today reminds the listeners that they had seen the wonderful things Jesus had done, and they had seen that Jesus had been put to death. Everyone had witnessed the life and death of Jesus, but only the disciples were witnesses that God had raised Jesus. They had seen and talked with him.

Suppose the disciples had failed to be witnesses?

How would we know Jesus today?

What story about Jesus could you share? Write a short story (as short as you like) telling a story you remember, like or would like to share about Jesus. Just let your mind loose and tell it in your own words, then share it with someone. If you like you can send it to me (Scott) to share with the congregation.

I don't have a particular song for children today but if you can find "he is risen" from last week sing that one again.

## **READINGS:**

There are two readings today, firstly from Acts of the apostles, then from Matthew's gospel.

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32:**

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them...

“You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ “Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’ This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

**Matthew 28:11-20**

While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, “You must say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**PREACHING** – How then shall I live?

(Text supplied below.)

Well, it was a good Easter Day last Sunday don't you think? I mean, all things considered. Of course, not the one we would have expected when the year began, not the one we were planning for, nevertheless, it was the one we got. And some of us managed to Zoom-union together. (Yes, I just made up a word for communion by Zoom)

Yeah, all things considered pretty good.

So where do we go from that?

Some reckon the only way you can go from Easter Sunday is down.

In fact, that is what this Sunday is often referred to as – Low Sunday.

And I have to say, often after Easter and Holy Week I am worn out. This week I admit to being quite flat. You will understand why.

In the past, after the high of Easter day, traditionally a day of baptism and great rejoicing in the church through the ages, the following Sunday was quite the letdown.

In an attempt to combat this at some stage in the church's life, Holy Humour Sunday was introduced to combat this down feeling. It didn't really catch on.

Now of course I could give it a go and regale you with many a fine story and amusing joke.

However, I have come up with something else.

In light of the encouragement of Lent for us to "get up and do not be afraid", and the joyous message of Easter Day, I felt it might be useful from here to consider the question – how then shall we live?

Now that we are on our feet, not being afraid, (well, kind of), and basking in the light of the resurrection, what do we do next?

In other words – how then shall I live?

It is the most appropriate question to respond at this time. Particularly at this time. Each week during Easter season we will consider this question as we explore the readings.

Let's get started for today.

First let me say, the gospel for this week according to the lectionary was to be from John, the story of Thomas. I felt it worked better if we followed the Matthew reading from last week to its conclusion. The Matthew passage this week is immediately after the one read on Easter Day.

The passage starts in a conspiracy theory kind of way, with the story of bribing the soldiers to keep their mouths shut about what happened while a different version of what happened was spread.

Perhaps the punchline - And this story is still told among the Jews to this day - gives some clue as to the ongoing divide between the early followers of Jesus and the Jews.

But then the passage takes us into more familiar territory, the resurrection appearance.

Note by this time the women are left behind in the story. Perhaps they have played their part and now it is the men's turn.

It is important to note here an almost throw-away line - <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

This is really akin to what John does with Thomas. One author comments:

*Is it possible that Matthew was reminding us that, in the task of spreading the gospel and baptizing followers, we should always be mindful and respectful of those in the crowd who are struggling with doubt? What if faithful proclamation of the Good News demands the courage to acknowledge that faith isn't easy? Perhaps Matthew was counting on the fact that we can all, in fact, handle the inconvenient truth that faith and doubt are part of the same conversation. (Don Underwood,*

<http://www.patheos.com/Progressive-Christian/Inconvenient-Truth-Don-Underwood-06-09-2014>)

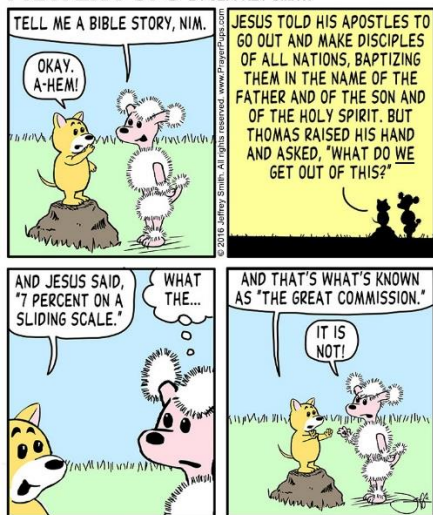
And then there comes the grand climax, not only of this story, but to Matthew's Gospel too, in the words we call the great commission. You will know it well. We use it at baptisms and elders commissioning - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

These are the words designed to send the church out.

After consoling the disciples on the mountain of transfiguration – get up and do not be afraid – here on the mountain of resurrection, he sends them out.

I would like to take a moment to clarify this great commission starting with what it is not, with the use of some amusing images.

**PRAYER PUPS** BY JEFFREY SMITH

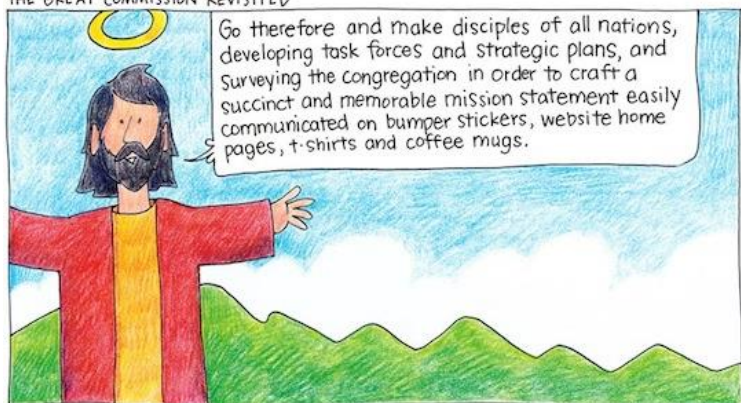


Ok so it is clearly not that.

Ok so it is clearly not that.

So how about this.

**THE GREAT COMMISSION REVISITED**



This is what we have come to think it means in this technological age, and not intending to undermine any work like this we have done, of which I am part, I don't think it means this either.

Then there is this.



This is also what some expressions of the church have taken the great commission to mean, but they of all of them are so far from what it means, it is not funny. (Even if it rings true)

So what does this great commission mean? Bill Loader gives us this:

*In Matthew's account of Jesus' ministry we see what he was authorised to do and in the commission we see what he now authorises others to do: 'teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.' The two correspond, just as earlier Matthew could use the same summary to describe the preaching of John the Baptist (3:2), Jesus (4:17) and the*

*disciples (10:7). It meshes together: the disciples are sent to teach what Jesus had taught them - all of it! That is their authorisation, their commission.*

*It is not that he means teaching beliefs, but teaching about God's will, how to live in accordance with God's will, how to develop the righteousness which characterises the kingdom of heaven. And what is the teaching? Read the story! Hear the message of compassion, the challenge of judgement and accountability and observe the lowly servant. To that the disciples are authorised and authorised to authorise others. That is the church's agenda.*

How does all this respond to the question – how then shall I live?

Maybe it is this:

Worship God; doubt if you need to; teach about God's will, how to develop right living; spread the message of compassion, the challenge of judgement and accountability; look at what Jesus does and says, and live out of these observations. In a more general sense, but no less important, it means this.



All of us have an individual comfort zone, and a collective comfort zone. This diagram is clearly showing what Jesus said all along.

Magic, change, new life, happens outside our comfort zones.

It is important in this time in our church's life that we hear this.

And I know you might be thinking how much more outside of our comfort zone do we have to get?

But even though we are pretty dis-comfited right now, that is not what I am talking about.

We cannot remain being the same kind of church, keeping on doing what we have always done, if we want magic.

We must embrace our “discomfort zone”.

That is exactly what Linnea Good in her song is inviting us to hear:

*Saw the world outside of my looking. Gazed upon the eyes of its soul.*

*Held the hopes and fears of tomorrow, found the pieces making a whole.*

If you ask me, the discomfort we are going through now, along with the rest of the world (but let's remember that our privilege makes our discomfort so much less than so many others in the world), it will hold us in good stead as we come out the other side, and begin to grapple with what it means to be the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also how to be church in a world that has shown us that things can turn in an instant.

Does this mean we have to be ready for any and every contingency?

No, I don't believe so.

I guess what it means is, we can no longer rest on our laurels, not that any of us have meant to, we just have, kind of hoping the magic would come back.

It hasn't.

We have to go find it, make it, be part of it when it happens.

Let me conclude by putting it like this:

*At first it feels like a circle closed,*

*a journey completed,*

*this reminder of the mountain where*

*Peter, James and John saw the Lord transfigured,*

*But the circle has not closed; the journey*

*has not finished, it is open-ended*

*open*

*as the mission that here Christ gives us,*

*as the promise he makes to be always with us,*

*from now to the end of days.*

*For disciples must be made*

*in and from every nation,*

*taught Christ's ways and words and sent*

*anew to serve the men and women of the earth.*

*See how the slanting sun, moving across*

*these Galilean hills,*

*See how, as we lift our heads in the gaze*

*that follows Christ's lifting from the earth,*

*we discover no mystifying cloud,*

*nor faces from only scriptural glory.*

*Rather see the shapes of the yet-to-be*

*appearing in the echoes of his words:*



*There we see Paul, in conversation with Peter;  
and there is Barnabas, and Phoebe, and Lydia  
speaking with Thomas, who will travel to India;  
we can see Boniface, and Patrick, and Columba,  
standing beside Francis and John and Charles;  
a little further over:*

*just a few*

*among hosts of other men and women  
come to this summit, hearts receiving  
Christ's commission for them; whose  
long shadows shine, but in whose shadow –  
look, just over here – stands another  
familiar figure who, like them, will be helping  
to re-shape the world*

*that so needs our obedience to Christ's love:*

*Yes.*

*It is you.*

*Amen.*

**Sing** – How then shall I live?

1.  
Took a walk outside of my walking. Stepped inside another's shoes.  
Walked the dusty borders between us. Paths I'd never chosen to choose.

*How then shall I live? How then shall I live?  
How then shall I live, O God? How then shall I live?*

2.  
Heard a sound outside of my list'ning. Felt the living hum of the ground.  
Waited on the voice of the spirit, singing with its new old sound. (R)

3.  
Saw the world outside of my looking. Gazed upon the eyes of its soul.  
Held the hopes and fears of tomorrow, found the pieces making a whole. (R)

4.  
Took a step outside of my walking. Found within a beat that we share.  
Walked with you the length of a lifetime and made of life a living prayer. (R)

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

We have seen our God! By God's grace and in God's own holy love, we turn our hearts to the divine that surrounds and upholds us.  
Yet we are called, not merely to see our God, but to help make our God visible in this world: to do the work of love put into action in service to the Body of Christ.  
And so, we pray for all for whom crucifixion still seems

a clearer reality than resurrection;

for those who are hungry, or unsure when and where their family's next meal will be,

**All: help us to be your light, O Christ.**

For those who are ill or in pain especially in regard to the Corona virus, and those who struggle still to receive adequate care,

**All: help us to be your light, O Christ.**

**One:** For those who are living with mental illness, who suffer all the more from stigma and shame and social exclusion,

**All: help us to be your light, O Christ.**

**One:** For those who work long hard days for inadequate wages, and for those who will not give up a bit of comfort so that all might have justice,

**All: help us to be your light, O Christ.**

**One:** For those who are living in places of violence and fear, where families have been torn apart, and trauma is a way of life,

**All: help us to be your light, O Christ.**

**One:** Help us to learn that even in the midst of despair, there may be love; even in the midst of fear, there may be comfort; even on Good Friday, even when it last too long, there is the seed of Easter Day.

May we nurture God's light and God's love into this world that is in desperate need of healing. May we be the active promise of new life in this community, and the blessing of God's love and grace to all who are in need.

May we receive the Good News: Christ is Risen!

Love has conquered death! and return to the work of discipleship with joyous hearts and praising hands.

Now, in a time of silence, let us offer our own particular prayers that sit deep within.

(Silent prayer)

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer, and hear the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**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**

**Sing – TIS 242, Lord of the dance.**

1

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun;  
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,  
at Bethlehem I had my birth:

*Dance then, wherever you may be;  
I am the Lord of the dance, said he;  
and I'll lead you all wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.*

2

I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,  
but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me.  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John,  
they came with me and the dance went on:

*Dance then,*

3

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame:  
the holy people said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,  
and they left me there on a cross to die:

*Dance then,*

4

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;  
it's hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone;  
but I am the dance and I still go on:

*Dance then,*

5

They cut me down and I leap up high,  
I am the life that'll never, never die;  
I'll live in you as you live in me:  
I am the Lord of the dance, said he:

*Dance then,*

## **BLESSING –**

People of God,  
Go out this day knowing that you are witnesses to the risen Christ.

**With our eyes open to wonder,  
with our minds attuned to goodness,  
with our souls aware of what fears and doubts still remain  
but with our hearts open to joy and forgiveness,**

**to love and serve the world.**

People of God, go as blessed people, blessed by the one who raises us to new life, blessed by the one who in turn is raised and rolls away our stones, blessed by the one who is breathed into us and shows us how we shall live. Amen.