



**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Leigh Memorial
Uniting Church



**Rising above the brim
of contained existence**

11 APRIL, 2021

**But most people are
only very little alive**

*T S Eliot,
After Strange Gods*

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/5199089657>

WELCOME

A warm welcome as we gather together on this Second Sunday of Easter!

LIGHTING OF THE EASTER CANDLE

Today we light the Easter candle,
proclaiming the transforming power of God.
Today we celebrate: new life, new joy, new possibilities.
Christ is alive and living among us!

The candle is lit

THEME *Rising ABOVE THE BRIM of contained existence*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the Burrumattagal people of the Darug Nation, the first inhabitants of this place, as the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to their ancient culture, their elders past and present and their emerging leaders. We acknowledge the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside within this area. We honour them for their custodianship of the land, on which we gather today.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Easter is not over!
It lies ahead of us in every moment,
inviting the choice of new life.
It waits over every horizon,
when life's challenges close in on us,
or our faith runs low.
It is there, like a hidden gift within us.

***Come, accept the Easter day
which never ends.
Christ is risen
and calls us to receive new life.***



This God is now marked
by human suffering and injustice.

The risen Christ
carries our rawness forever.
The Spirit is scarred
in the passion of costly truth.

The peace of Christ is with us.

The peace of Christ will be with us.

HYMN *Praise to God, the world's creator (Tune: Abbot's Leigh 153)*

Praise to God, the world's creator,
Source of life and growth and breath,
Cradling in her arms her children,
Holding them from birth to death.
In our bodies, in our living,
Strength and truth of all we do,
God is present, working with us,
Making us creators too.

Praise to God our saving Wisdom,
Meeting us with love and grace,
Helping us to grow in wholeness,
Giving freedom, room, and space.
In our hurting, in our risking,
In the thoughts we dare not name,
God is present, growing with us,
Healing us from sin and shame.

Praise to God, the Spirit in us,
Prompting hidden depths of prayer,
Firing us to long for justice,
Reaching out with tender care.
In our searching, in our loving,
In our struggles to be free,
God is present, living in us,
Pointing us to what shall be.

J Berry

PRAYER

Risen Christ,
whose presence leaves us paralysed,
but whose presence is overwhelming:
breathe on us
with your abundant life;
that where we cannot see
we may have courage to believe
that we may be raised with you,
Amen!

(Janet Morley, All desires known, 15)

Loving Jesus, there is no place
which cannot be entered by your life.
You have travelled
into the darkest parts of our existence,
stayed in our most troubled silences
or the painful weeping
of our human realities.
And yet, we know
that we often try to avoid looking into your face
as though we may see there
condemnation rather than forgiveness.

***Enter every truth of our
humanness, Jesus Christ.
Come and bring healing,
come and transform us.***

You tell us to bring forgiveness
to others, reminding us that if we hold back grace, people
may never know of your mercy.
And yet, we often find that hard, O God, we are far from
your
loving kindness,
far from your generous heart.

***Enter every truth of our
humanness, Jesus Christ.
Come and bring healing,
come and transform us.***

MUSIC *Have mercy* - Sandra McCracken
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXCo4xo0rps>

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The cross of suffering
has become the cross of our salvation.
The tombs of death have opened before the faithfulness of
God
to each of us and all of us. We are forgiven.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN *“God – The Dance”*
(Tune: ‘Camberwell’, 65.65D) (Tune: TiS 231)

Do we have a picture of what God may be?
Is it one of power and authority?
Does it help inspire more discovery?
Can we think of dancing metaphorically?

God is Love – can help us into Jesus’ mind;
For this Jewish rabbi is a dance, we find
All his life reminds us what love’s all about;
Dancing in the gospels, he would sing and shout.

Jesus shows us dancing in a loving way;
Costly yet fulfilling; never just display;
Sometimes it’s not easy; we may need a prod;
For to dance with Jesus is to dance with God.

Love is never static, always finds a way
To be kind and gentle; to be warm each day;
Like a dance with rhythm, love is never still;
Lightens every burden and prolongs each thrill.

God, the Love Dance, call us – use your energy
To live every moment in a dance with Me.
Dancing solo can be quite a misery.
Dancing with Me helps you find your destiny.

(© George Stuart 2008)

SCRIPTURE READING *John 20: 19-31 (Inclusive version)*

In the evening on that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were gathered, for fear of the people.

Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw The Risen One, who said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As my God sent me, so I am sending you.'

After saying this Jesus breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven. For those whose sins you retain, they are retained.' But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Master." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Master and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Child of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Response

*O God our nurturer,
may your word live in us.
And colour our living. Amen!*

SONG *"I'm Alive", Kenny Chesney (feat. Dave Matthews)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B56UjiLuWkk>

[Chesney]
It's so easy to say that life's so hard
Everybody's got their share of battle scars
As for me, I'd like to thank my lucky stars that I'm alive and well...
It'd be easy to add up all the pain
And all the dreams you sat and watched go up in flames
Dwell on the wreckage as it smolders in the rain
But not me...I'm alive

Chorus
And today you know that's good enough for me
Breathin' in and out's a blessing can't you see
Today's the first day of the rest of my life and I'm alive
And well...I'm alive and well

[Dave Matthews]
The stars are dancin' on the water here tonight
It's good for the soul when there's not a soul in sight
This boat has caught its wind and brought me back to life now I'm
alive and well

Chorus

SERMON *Rising ABOVE THE BRIM of contained existence*

HYMN *In praise of doubt (Tune: Forest Green, TiS 316)*

Some people say, "To doubt is wrong"
We should not doubt at all;
To question our beliefs, they say
Could bring about our fall;
But doubt permits an honest stance
In those who are devout;
For those who think about beliefs
Can sing in praise of doubt.

The Thomas' story has been used



To judge, condemn, deplore;
But Thomas shows he is sincere;
He wanted to be sure.
For doubt can help and not deter
A vital turnabout;
Yes! Those who care about beliefs
Can sing in praise of doubt.

If our beliefs prevent our search
For new and different creeds;
Let us beware of narrow views
Where dogma often breeds;
With new, exciting facts we learn
Much love can come about;
Yes! Those who grow in their beliefs
Can sing in praise of doubt.

(Words: George Stuart, Volume 4 of Singing a New Song No. 50)

OFFERING An offering of our lives and the gifts of creation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

Rise among us here, O Christ.

Enliven everything we are and do, we pray.

Renew our love for others
so that we can truly love with the world
witnessing in this that you cannot be destroyed
by the powers of this time or any other.

***Take our hands and lead us towards
a life which follows in your footsteps, Jesus Christ.***

Give to us wisdom in walking this way
and preparedness to create, even small echoes,
of your brave and glorious journey.

***As our spirits lift in joy this day,
we hold these people and situations before you:***

The people pray

Bring to life the actions for good
which will make the changes that are needed, we pray.

***Speak through us, O Christ,
that our voices will be raised against injustice.***

Give to us all that we need
to understand how best to work with these longing people.

***Gather us towards all who feel
that no-one cares about them.***

Embrace the ones who believe that life is not worth living
and show us how to transform the deathly forces
which destroy their hope, we pray.

***Shine your risen life before us, Jesus Christ,
so that we may see and know
that you live in all creation in everlasting love.
Amen***

HYMN *"Easter 2" (Tune: 'Omni Die', 87.87) Tune: TiS 101*

Stripped of leaves trees tell the story:
naked possibility.
Colours, rampant, rage before me
reaching for eternity.

Now the cross is grazed and gory,
petals fall around its head.
Christ has suffered death, not glory,
buried in that stone cold bed.

No more cross, the tomb is empty,
leaves and petals mark the place;
place of hope and new creation,
barren earth, the ground of grace.

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BLESSING

Let us go, people of God.
Let us walk
through the locked doors of grief and pain.
Let us reach towards
the doubting hearts of the suffering of the earth.

And may the Christ
enter every place before us,
bringing peace and grace to all who wait.
May God the loving Parent
touch our lives with love
and the Spirit
rise in joyful life
in the harsh deserts of doubt.

Amen.

Liturgy adapted from Dorothy McRae-McMahon

