

This Easter whilst we may not gather at church, we still gather as the church

Call to worship

Beloved church, behold the victory of our God:
Jesus, our Lord, has conquered the grave.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

This is the day that the Lord has made:
Let our homes resound with joy.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Sing/ Read /pray: Christ the Lord is risen today

- 1 Christ the Lord is risen today ; *Alleluia!*
All creation joins to say : *Alleluia!*
Raise your joys and triumphs high ; *Alleluia!*
Sing, you heavens ; let earth, reply : *Alleluia!*
- 2 Love's redeeming work is done, *Alleluia!*
Fought the fight, the battle won ; *Alleluia!*
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal ; *Alleluia!*
Christ has burst the gates of hell : *Alleluia!*
- 3 Lives again our glorious King ; *Alleluia!*
Where, O death, is now your sting ? *Alleluia!*
Once he died our souls to save ; *Alleluia!*
Where's your victory, boasting grave ? *Alleluia!*
- 4 Soar we now where Christ has led, *Alleluia!*
Following our exalted Head ; *Alleluia!*
Made like him, like him we rise ; *Alleluia!*
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies : *Alleluia!*
- 5 King of Glory ! Soul of bliss ! *Alleluia!*
Everlasting life is this, *Alleluia!*
You to know, your power to prove, *Alleluia!*
Thus to sing, and thus to love : *Alleluia!*

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayer of Adoration

Let us pray.
Glory to you, O God:
you raised Jesus from the grave,
bringing us victory over death
and giving us eternal life.

Glory to you, O Christ:
for us and for our salvation
you overcame death
and opened the gate to everlasting life.

Glory to you, O Holy Spirit:
you lead us into the truth
and breathe new life into us.

Glory to you, Father,
Son and Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

If we have fallen into despair,

Lord, forgive us.

If we have failed to hope in you,

Lord, forgive us.

If we have been fearful of death,

Lord, forgive us.

If we have forgotten the victory of Christ,

Lord, forgive us.

May the living God raise us from despair,
give us victory over sin and set us free in Christ.

Amen.

Jeremiah 31: 1-6

The Joyful Return of the Exiles

At that time, says the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

Thus says the Lord:

The people who survived the sword

found grace in the wilderness;

when Israel sought for rest,

the Lord appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Again I will build you, and you shall be built,

O virgin Israel!

Again you shall take your tambourines,

and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

Again you shall plant vineyards

on the mountains of Samaria;

the planters shall plant,

and shall enjoy the fruit.

For there shall be a day when sentinels will call

in the hill country of Ephraim:

'Come, let us go up to Zion,
to the Lord our God.'

Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

A Song of Victory

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

Let Israel say,
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'
The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

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 marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

Alleluia! Hear the Gospel of Christ
Glory to Christ our Saviour. Alleluia!

Matthew Chapter 28 verses 1:10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone

and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

Alleluia! This is the Gospel of Christ
Praise to Christ our Lord. Alleluia!

Reflection

Do not be afraid: Matthew has used these words before. They were spoken to Joseph when he discovered that Mary through the Holy Spirit had conceived. To fulfil what the prophets had said – Emmanuel: God with us. (Matthew 1:20)

Do not be afraid: These are the words that Jesus spoke to the Twelve before appointing them to mission; reminding them that they are valued especially in the eyes of God. (Matthew 10:31)

Do not be afraid: These are the words Jesus uses to reassure the disciples that he is not a ghost, when he greeted them as they were crossing the lake and Peter stepped out of the boat. (Matthew 14:27)

Do not be afraid: These are the words Jesus speaks to the three who accompanied him up the mountain as they heard the voice of God "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" (Matthew 14:7)

And now in this passage Matthew records how the words 'Do not be afraid' are spoken by another angel, and to two different Marys (who the 'other' is we do not know, but it is most likely not to be Jesus's mother Mary) as the earth quakes with the rolling away of the tomb stone revealing the place where he had laid.

Do not be afraid: These are the words received from the lips of the Risen One as they worshipped.

And it's into *this* Easter, an Easter like no other, we hear once more Jesus speaking these words to us 'Do not be afraid'.

Do not be afraid: These words don't mean that the Christian life is easy, is not assurance that nothing can go wrong, because often things do go wrong. It is not assurance that everything turns out for the best, because, if we are honest about it, it seldom does. When was it ever plain sailing (pardon the pun) for those who 'fished' as they followed Christ?

Do not be afraid: These words don't mean that we shouldn't pay attention to the medical and government advice at this time, the reality of the risk to life for ourselves or others during this time of isolation. For there shall be a day...

Do not be afraid: Rather these words offer us the assurance that, whatever may happen to us, whatever this day, or any day may hold, God has the power to strengthen us and uphold us; that whatever we must face, we do not face it alone; that nothing we encounter is stronger than God's love; we echo the psalmist declaration 'his steadfast love endures for ever.'

Do not be afraid: These words ultimately tell us that God gets the last word; that in the end—and sometimes even before the end—God's love is triumphant.

Do not be afraid: **Christ is Alive! Alleluia!**

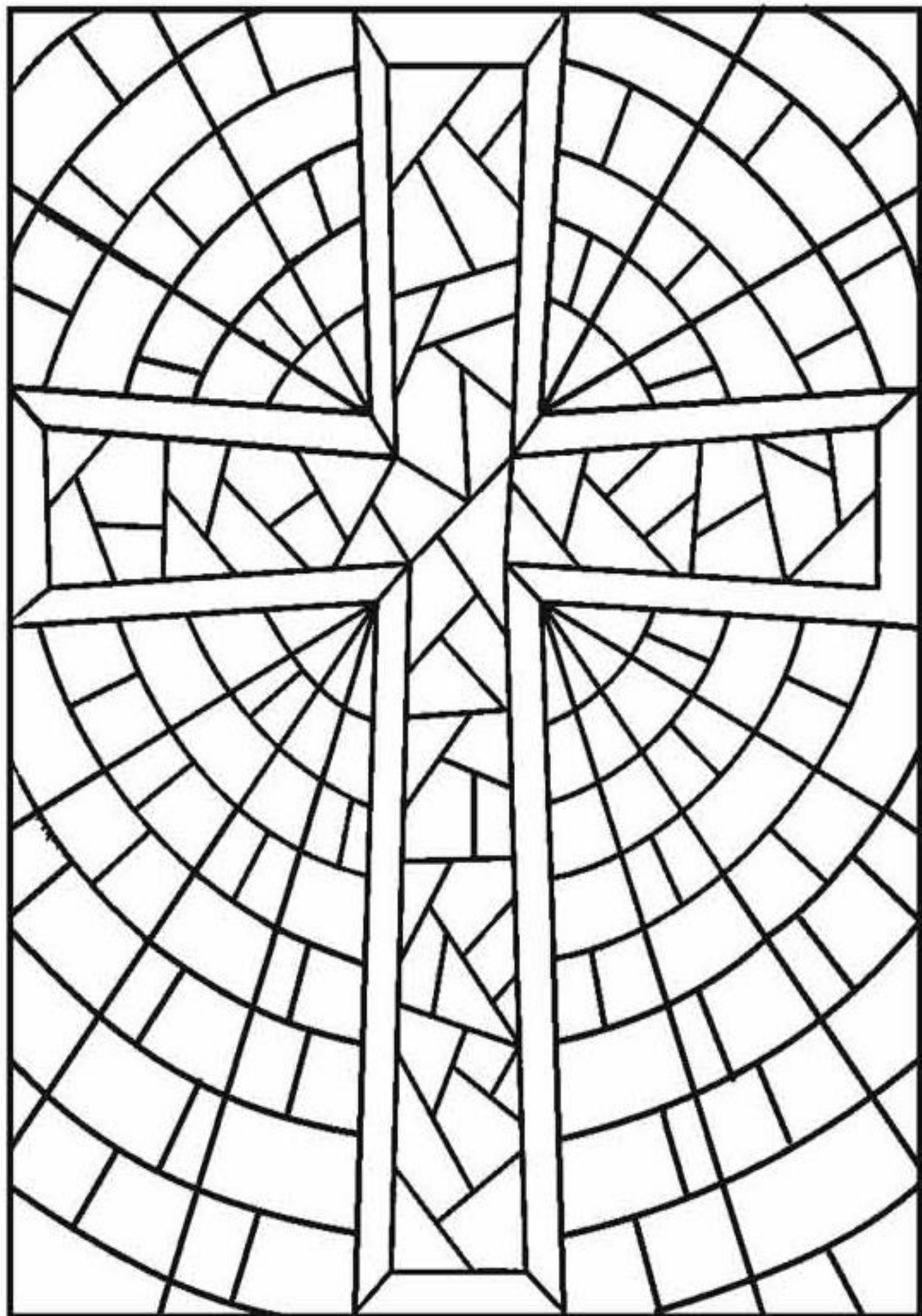
Sing/ Read /pray: Christ is alive! Let Christians sing

- 1 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.
- 2 Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.
- 3 In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.
- 4 Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.
- 5 Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

Brian Wren (*b.* 1936)

Prayers of Intercession.

(you are invited to use these, or any prayers to help inspire you in colouring/decorating the enclosed cross – you may wish to then display it in your window as a statement of faith at this time)



Colour us red, passionate God

For the cross stands empty in support of those who hunger and thirst for justice and peace, especially when they are ignored, overlooked, rejected and silenced.

Colour us yellow, resurrection God

For the cross stands empty in support of those who are seeking your presence, encourage and support us as we look for you in new and unexpected places.

Colour us pink, nurturing God

For the cross stands empty in support of those keyworkers who endeavour through long hours to bring new hope, new love, new life into your world.

Colour us green, creator God

For the cross stands empty in support of those who yearn for the wellbeing of all creation: for the health of the land, the seas, the air and all its inhabitants.

Colour us orange, enduring God

For the cross stands empty in support of those who cannot assemble for worship, not just during this time of distress but also for those who undergo lifetimes of religious persecution.

Colour us purple, suffering God

For the cross stands empty in support of those who fear the present and the future, for those who the message 'stay home: stay safe' involves hunger, risk and not reassurance.

Colour us blue, weeping God

For the cross stands empty in support of those who mourn for their losses, of loved ones and loved employment, those who are quarantined or stranded away from those whom they love.

God of covenant promise, colour us your rainbow people.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer: An Easter Version

This day we enter into your joy, Father, at the resurrection of Your Son!

We rejoice that because He is alive,

He has demonstrated the holiness of your name,

Established your kingdom and accomplished your will!

Assist us, the Body of Your Son, to complete what He has begun.

Help us, we pray to respond to Your Spirit so that we would do what Jesus did and to keep doing what Jesus is now doing in answer to these requests.

Because of His resurrection, we have received all we need.

Let us use the provision, the forgiveness, the leadership, and the deliverance we have received from you to cooperate with you

In seeing the complete fulfilment of your plans, which you began to unfold at the empty tomb

We see what a morning that was!

And that it will continue to be so, forever more!

Amen

Sing/ Read /pray: See, what a morning,

- 1 See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the graveclothes, tomb filled with light,
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ, the Man,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!
- 2 See Mary weeping, 'Where is he laid?'
as in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!
- 3 One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty;
honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with him,
death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

Stuart Townend (*b.* 1963) and Keith Getty (*b.* 1974)
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A Spiritual Communion

Our Roman Catholic friends as well as other Christians have a tradition of "Spiritual Communion" as a means of grace for those times when they are not able physically to receive this sacrament.

In the unprecedented circumstances in which we find ourselves today, it may be that this is a tradition in which Methodists too may experience God's grace.

Spiritual Communion is a practice where we entrust ourselves to God in prayer, pledging ourselves to God once more as disciples and praying that God might give us spiritually the same grace we share when we physically receive Holy Communion.

In making an act of spiritual communion, you may wish to think about the first time Jesus came 'alive' for you. Has your faith and wonder in Jesus' resurrection grown or diminished over the years?

When you feel ready pray as you are able.

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

God of salvation,
thank you for uniting me with the risen Christ
and with all who love him on earth and in heaven.
Strengthened by his grace,
may we each serve you faithfully all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

1 Thine be the glory,
 risen, conquering Son,
 endless is the victory
 thou o'er death hast won ;
 angels in bright raiment
 rolled the stone away,
 kept the folded grave-clothes
 where thy body lay :
 Thine be the glory,
 risen, conquering Son,
 endless is the victory
 thou o'er death hast won.

2 Lo, Jesus meets us,
 risen from the tomb ;
 lovingly he greets us,
 scatters fear and gloom ;

let the Church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth,
death hath lost its sting :
*Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.*

3 No more we doubt thee,
glorious Prince of Life ;
life is naught without thee :
aid us in our strife ;
make us more than conquerors
through thy deathless love ;
bring us safe through Jordan
to thy home above :
Thine be the glory,

Edmond Budry (1854–1932) *translated by* Richard Birch Hoyle (1875–1939)
Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 313.

May Christ, the risen and conquering Son,
be known to live among us,
may the peace, joy and love of the Father
be upon each of us
may the guiding of the Spirit
prompt us to share the Good News

Sin and death shall reign no more.
Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Please be assured that we are still here if you need anything at all during this time.

The circuit staff can be contacted by calling
01933 312778, 01933 622137, 07305 893449

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