

Surf Coast Uniting Churches
Sunday 12th April 2026
 Second Sunday of Easter



Introit 143 V 1 & 2 Immortal Invisible

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
 in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
 most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
 almighty, victorious, your great name we praise.*

*Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
 nor wanting, nor wasting, but ruling in might;
 your justice like mountains high soaring above,
 your clouds which are fountains of goodness and love*

Welcome

May the worship bless you on this wonderful Easter Day

Acknowledgment

This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here. We acknowledge the Wadawurrung people,
 traditional custodians of this land under God.

We commit ourselves again to working for reconciliation in this land.

Call to Worship

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!



Image T. Lyndon

Easter Prayer

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On Easter evening you came Lord to stand amongst us
 and say: *Peace be with you*

On Easter evening you came Lord
 to commission your disciples,
 to continue your ministry of reconciliation.
 You Lord breathe the Holy Spirit upon us
 and fill us with your peace.

As you welcomed the doubts of Thomas
 you welcome our doubts.
 You Lord fill us with your peace and courage
 so that despite the darkness of this world

and any trials that come our way
 we can rejoice and praise You.
 So that even when trials that come our way
 we can find you in the deepest darkness
 You Lord our living hope.

We believe Lord you have been raised up.
 We believe Lord you are here amongst us and with us
 breathing your Holy Spirit upon us.
 We believe Lord You have been raised by God. Amen

Prayer of Confession

We are invited to bring all that's on our hearts to the Lord in this moment of silence and to ask for healing, forgiveness and the grace to forgive others.

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
 "Our sins are forgiven"
Thanks be to God.

Hymn 390

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Give thanks to the risen Lord
 Give Praise to His name*

Readings

1 Peter 1:3-9

1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

1:4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,
 1:5 who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1:6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials,
 1:7 so that the genuineness of your faith--being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1:8 Although you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,

1:9 for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

John 20:19-31

20:19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

20:20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

20:21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

20:22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

20:23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

20:24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

20:25So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." 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."

20:26A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

20:27Then 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."

20:28Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

20:29Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

20:30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.

20:31But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Young at Heart

Polish Easter Eggs



Image Marilyn Wendt

Hymn 152 Joyful, Joyful

*Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, God of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.*

Sermon

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen



T. Lyndon

We do not live in a perfect world. There are times of trials when we become aware of the brokenness and darkness in the world. Today's readings talk about times of trial and fear that follow the

resurrection of Jesus Christ. The disciples are afraid of being arrested and are hiding behind locked doors on the Sunday Jesus had been raised up by God.

I wonder whether they believed Mary of Magdala's testimony, "*I have seen the Lord!*"

I heard someone preaching the other day, where they called Mary Magdalene a harlot and reformed prostitute. There is nowhere in the bible where Mary Magdalene is described as a harlot or prostitute. Jesus healed her by casting out seven demons. In ancient times seven was considered a whole number and symbolised wholeness, so perhaps, Mary was healed by Jesus and considered as made whole by Jesus, rather than seven demons being cast out.

At the time Mary of Magdalene lived people believed that when someone was physically or mentally ill, they were possessed by demons and must have sinned. This was the ancient mindset and belief.

Pope Gregory of the Catholic Church in 591CE labelled Mary Magdalene or Mary of Magdala as a harlot, prostitute and sinner. Pope Gregory misinterpreted the gospel in Luke 7:36-50. This gospel spoke of a Pharisee judging and labelling an unknown woman anointing Jesus' feet as a sinner. Pope Gregory taught that this unknown woman was Mary of Magdala.

This label remained as central to Christianity for over 1435 years. Mary Magdalene has been preached as a sinner and portrayed as a harlot and prostitute for centuries and is still portrayed as a sinner and harlot, by some churches.

The Catholic church retracted this misinterpretation and teaching in 1969 at Vatican II, where Saint John Paul II spoke of Mary of Magdalene as the first witness who saw the risen Christ and the first messenger who announced Christ's resurrection.

More recently Pope Francis and the Catholic Church published a new decree where the celebration of Saint Mary Magdalene feast day is now part of the church Calendar, affirming Mary Magdalene as first witness to the resurrection who declared to all disciples he has risen and named her as one of the apostles.



Rev Sharon Valentino

What do we make of the disciples hiding in fear behind locked doors after hearing Mary's testimony?

Jesus appears amongst the disciples. Locked doors don't keep Jesus out. Somehow, he is not flesh anymore. Jesus says, "*Peace be with you*" and he shows them his wounds and says again: *Peace be with you.*" Then Jesus commissions the disciples to continue his ministry of reconciliation.



Revised Common Lectionary

Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them, and they receive the Holy Spirit and become a new creation in Christ.

We don't know who was there. We do know Thomas was not there. When the disciples told him, "*We have seen the Lord*" he refused to believe them.

*Revised Common Lectionary*

Thomas insisted on putting his hands into Jesus wounds and scars, before he would believe. The following Sunday, like today, Thomas is with the disciples in the same house and the doors are shut, not locked and Jesus appears amongst the disciples.

Perhaps Thomas spent the week struggling with his doubts, listening to the other disciple's accounts of the risen Jesus. Perhaps he explored Jesus' teachings and tried to think through things.

Jesus says, "*Peace be with you.*" He invites Thomas to touch his wounds, his scars and says, "*Do not doubt but believe.*"

Thomas sees Jesus, his wounds, and knows him for the first time, declaring, "*My Lord and my God.*" Jesus said to Thomas, "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.*"

We have not seen Jesus, yet we believe. We are blessed. We have not seen Jesus. Like the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, who looked into the empty tomb, we believe.

Peter wrote a letter to the churches about not seeing Jesus but believing. He wrote this letter when the early church was facing persecution. Perhaps he wanted to encourage people to believe that even in the midst of the darkness of the world we can find Jesus, our living hope.

I wonder whether many of long to see Jesus, before we can believe. Perhaps it is good to struggle with doubt and chose to explore our faith, like Thomas did. It may help us, like it helped Thomas, to deepen our faith and allow it to mature, like Thomas's faith grew to maturity, as he struggled with faith and doubt.

Perhaps some of feel our way through to the truth like the disciples on the road to Emmaus when they encountered the risen Jesus. Perhaps there is another part of us that is soulful and knows the truth, deep within us.

Our soul helps us know His presence. We may know his presence during times of crisis when we feel someone praying for us and feel comforted, safe and held. We know his presence when in the midst of dark times in the world, we still feel joy and peace and confidence in Jesus, that all will be well.

I looked in the gospels for descriptions of the risen Jesus. The transfiguration, a witness account in Matthew 17:2 described Jesus' face as shining like the sun and his clothes as bright as light. In the

gospels we hear about the disciples touching Jesus in Matthew 28:9 and in Luke 24:42 eating with the disciples and in Acts Paul seeing Jesus as a light from heaven flashing around him and in today's gospel as passing through locked doors.



Images James Tissot

These are paintings by James Tissot, who spent his early career painting fashionable society in Paris and London. In 1885 Tissot experienced a vision of God that led to a renewal of his ties to the Catholic church of his youth and a dramatic shift in his artistic focus. He spent ten years illustrating the New Testament and travelled to Egypt, Syria, and Palestine during 1886-1889 to portray the Holy Lands. He exhibited 270 of his water colours in a 1894 Paris Exhibition and produced an illustrated bible of the four gospels based on the King James Bible which became known as the "Tissot Bible" which became one of the most widely purchased books of its time. I have a copy of a book called, *The Life of Christ*, with some of his illustrations. He painted a total of 350 water colours which offer us images to ponder about as we explore our faith. Images that are a little like those of the transfiguration, and in Revelation.

Most of us have had something happen to us or an experience that has convinced us Jesus is God with us and has risen. I think of the time when I have explored the darkness of grief. I visited Gethsemane in the early 1990's. It was one of the saddest places I've ever been to, and I began crying when I arrived. I asked a Franciscan monk if I could sit on the large rock Jesus is said to have prayed on which is inside a church and has chains around it. The monk removed the chains around the rock, and I sat on it and prayed and as I prayed, I explored the darkness I'd experienced in life and was feeling. After what seemed a very long time, two words came to me, *'Living hope'*.

I explored these words when I came home and discovered they came from 1 Peter 1:3. Over the years I have come to know when we explore the darkness, whatever form it takes in our life, we find Christ. He is there in the darkness with us, bringing hope, light, joy and peace. We can rejoice, even when we are experiencing dark times and trials.

We naturally look for the light of Christ in one another. Over the years people have given me prayer cards and symbols of the light. We are naturally drawn to the light. We know there is light at the end of the tunnel. We have a candle we light in our church that symbolises the risen Christ and his presence with us. At the dawn service we are invited to light our candles from the fire beside the empty Cross and bring the flame home to our church.



Image - Surf Coast Gospel Union

This is an image of the beach where we celebrated the Easter Dawn service.

Let us pray. And so, we cry out *the risen Lord*:

Glory to you,
our resurrection,
our light,
and our peace!

Lord, give us understanding
that with Thomas we may cry out to You
"Glory to You, my Lord and my God!"

Moment of quiet reflection

Offering

Lord, giver of every good thing, we bring to you our lives, gifts and resources for the building up of your kingdom and church. We give thanks for blessings and transformation that come through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

Prayers of the people

Prayers for peace, for the world and for those who are grieving and suffering from health issues

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

Communion

Sending

Send us Lord into the world
to witness to You as the risen Christ

Send us Lord into the world
to be bearers of Your light

Send us Lord into the world
to bless and to be a Blessing
in your name, amen



Image - Surf Coast Gospel Union

Hymn 778 Shalom be with you now