

**ST STEPHEN'S HOME SERVICE**  
**11<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2021- SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**WE BEGIN WITH A SHORT ACT OF REMEMBRANCE FOR THE LIFE OF HRH PRINCE PHILIP, THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH**

We pause for a moment at the beginning of our worship to remember before God Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; to give thanks for his life; and to pray for God's comfort for all who mourn his loss.



O God, our sovereign and shepherd,  
who brought again your Son Jesus Christ  
from the valley of death,  
comfort us with your protecting presence  
and your angels of goodness and love,  
that we also may come home  
and dwell with him in your house for ever.

**Amen.**

*Reflect for a moment on your memories of Prince Philip, and give thanks for his years of service to this nation and in support of good causes with global impact.*

God of our lives,  
we give thanks for the life of Prince Philip,  
for the love he shared among us,  
and for his devotion to duty.  
We entrust him now to your love and mercy,  
through our Redeemer Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Merciful God, be close to all who mourn,  
especially The Queen and all members of the Royal Family.  
May they know the hope of your promises  
and the comfort of your love,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

May Christ our Lord give us peace.  
**Amen**

## **INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S SERVICE**



The Church's celebration of Easter may have been more subdued again this year, as social distancing prevents us from sharing fellowship as we would like to, and the pandemic is far from over. But the message of Easter hope has never been more needed. Today's readings remind us how that hope changes lives. We hear the uplifting account of the believers who were of one heart and soul, testifying to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We will also hear the account of Thomas' encounter with the risen Christ and what that means for us as believers.

As followers of Christ, we too, are called to share the story. And to keep on sharing the story of our risen Lord Jesus. Otherwise, as St Paul asked, 'How can people hear about him unless someone tells them?'

Pause for a moment now. Reflect on where in your life or the wider world you sense a real need for hope. And give thanks to God for the hope we share because of the Resurrection of Christ.

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

God of our days and years  
**we set this time apart for you.**  
Form us in the likeness of Christ  
**so that our lives may glorify you.**  
**Amen.**

## **TURNING AGAIN TO GOD**

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make your face to shine upon us.  
Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, have mercy.**

May your ways be known on the earth,  
your saving power among the nations.  
Christ, have mercy,  
**Christ, have mercy.**

You, Lord, have made known your salvation,  
and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of love  
bring us back to himself,  
forgive us our sins,  
and assure us of his eternal love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **IN PRAISE OF LIVING IN HARMONY – PSALM 133**

How wonderful and pleasant it is  
when brothers live together in harmony!

**For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil  
that was poured over Aaron's head,  
that ran down his beard  
and onto the border of his robe.**

**Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon  
that falls on the mountains of Zion.**

And there the LORD has pronounced his blessing,  
even life everlasting.

### **NEW TESTAMENT READING - Acts 4.32-35 (NRSV)**



Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the

proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Thanks be to God.

### **Pause for Reflection**

Jesus is risen from the grave,  
Jesus is risen from the grave,  
Jesus is risen from the grave,  
ALLELUIA.

Thomas will stop his doubting...

Jesus is here among us...

### **GOSPEL READING**

#### **John 20.19-31 (NRSV)**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, 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 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."

A 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." 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 Lord 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 Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

This is the Gospel of the Lord  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **REFLECTION (by Margaret Mandrell)**

My car is now 11 years old, and the battery was causing concern. Would this be the time when the car would not start? How easy would it be to replace an 11 year old battery? Last week I finally bought a new one and had it fitted. What a transformation! The car is running beautifully. I had not realised that



there had been a progressive decline in performance. This may be an unusual place to begin thinking about the gospel message, however, just as my battery was failing to adequately perform, after the last year, many are feeling similarly worn out. Many people have found this last enforced lock down very hard and are longing for a return to what was previously enjoyed as a normal part of life.

The disciples were together, fearful of the Jews, and the risen Jesus appeared bringing hope and peace to them. He gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to them and transformed their fear to faith.

Then we have the account of Thomas, absent when Jesus appeared, and doubting the reality of his presence. Jesus entered the room a week later and

spoke to Thomas directly. Thomas then acknowledged him and believed. I always feel sorry for Thomas, the doubter, remembered for 2000 years in this way, rather than for his confession of faith "My Lord and my God".



In a book called "Celebrating the Saints" there is a reading by Gregory the Great which talks of divine mercy and how by touching the wounded flesh he, Thomas, healed the wound of our unbelief as well as his own. Gregory says, "Thomas' scepticism was more advantageous to us than was the faith of the other disciples who believed. When he was

led to faith by actually touching Jesus, our hearts were relieved of all doubt, for our faith is made whole." Thomas should be remembered as a witness to the reality of the resurrection – the one who recognised the reality of the man and testified that he was the invisible God.

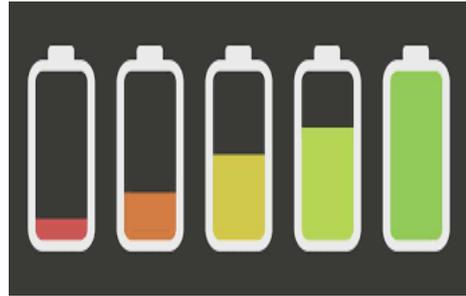
These same disciples went on to spread the gospel courageously throughout the Roman world, and to create new ways of living together and being, which greatly influenced the society in which they lived. They went from being fearful to proclaiming the risen Christ to whoever was willing to listen. They lived in community, sharing what they had, and were full of the Holy Spirit.

"There is no ideal community. Community is made up of people with all their richness, but also their weakness and poverty, of people who accept and forgive each other, who are vulnerable with each other. Humility and trust are more at the foundation of community than perfection."

"A community is only being created when its members accept that they are not going to achieve great things, that they are not going to be heroes, but simply live each day with new hope, like children, in wonderment as the sun rises and in thanksgiving as it sets. Community is only being created when they have recognized that the greatness of man is to accept his insignificance, his human condition and his earth, and to thank God for having put in a finite body the seeds of eternity which are visible in small and daily gestures of love and forgiveness. The beauty of man is in this fidelity to the wonder of each day."

— **Jean Vanier**, [Community and Growth](#)

We, as part of the community of believers, share in this inheritance of grace, God's love freely given and know that we can cast our burdens on Him, and He will give us rest. For those who are weary, whose batteries are run



down, there is the offer of peace and restoration. I pray that in the days to come those who are discouraged and worn out will find comfort in God's love and hope for the future in the promise of new life.

### **RESPONDING TO THE WORD**

Let us declare our faith  
in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he was buried;  
he was raised to life on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
afterwards he appeared to his followers,  
and to all the apostles:  
this we have received  
and this we believe.  
Amen**

### **PRAYERS**

Knowing that the risen Christ is here among us,  
Let us pray in his name  
For the church and for the world.

Father, we pray your for your blessing  
On every group of Christians worshipping today  
All over the world;  
And we pray for all who feel that doubt prevents them trusting in you.  
We pray that our hearts may be set ablaze  
With love, and that we may walk as children of light.  
*Silence*

My Lord and my God!  
**My Lord and my God!**

Father we pray for all the areas of your world  
Which are torn apart by hatred and violence,  
Famine, disease or religious differences;  
We pray for an end to war and a deeper commitment to peace.  
*Silence*

My Lord and my God!  
**My Lord and my God!**

Father, we pray for those who face family rejection  
if they become Christians, and for all families divided by beliefs  
or persecuted for their faith.  
We pray for the children of our church  
and all who seek to encourage them;  
that they may grow up strong in the faith  
with good role models to guide them.  
*Silence*

My Lord and my God!  
**My Lord and my God!**

Father, we pray for all who are weary and discouraged,  
all who are fearful and worn out by this pandemic.  
We pray for those who wake up  
to the prospect of another day filled with pain;  
for those who long for someone to spend time with them,  
enjoying their company;  
and we pray for sight that notices needs.  
*Silence*

My Lord and my God!  
**My Lord and my God!**

Father, we pray for those who work to support our community,  
in our hospitals and care homes, and for all carers.

We pray for all who are in any kind of need, especially; Adrina and Alan Price, Pam Mallaber, David New and Anna Clements.

And in a moment of silence we hold before you those who are on our own hearts and in need of prayer.

*Silence*

My Lord and my God!

**My Lord and my God!**

Father, we pray for those who mourn,  
that they may know your comfort and peace,  
especially those who have lost loved ones during this pandemic.

We remember those who have recently died, especially John Cragge and David Walker.

And we remember with love and gratitude: Emily Jones, Brian Purvis, Barbara Irvine, Jim & John Hellicar, David Phillips, Tom Roberts, Mike Niccolls, Irene Everett-Perkins, Eric Orton, John Smith, Peter Manning, and Howard Cotterill. Grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

*Silence*

My Lord and my God!

**My Lord and my God!**

Father, we give thanks for all those who have inspired us  
by their lives of service.

Make our voices one with all your people  
in heaven and on earth.

Lord of life

**hear our prayer**

**and make us one in heart and mind**

**to serve you with joy forever.**

**Amen.**

We pray the Lord's Prayer together as Jesus taught us, saying:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,**

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy 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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory, for ever  
and ever.  
Amen.

### **Pause for Reflection**

In Christ alone my hope is found;  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This cornerstone, this solid ground,  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My comforter, my all in all—  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save.  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The arms of heaven are opened wide;  
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—  
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain;  
Then bursting forth in glorious day,  
Up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory,  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;  
For I am His and He is mine—  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—  
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand;  
Till He returns or calls me home—  
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

## **SENDING**

God of power,  
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,  
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,  
may the gifts of your Spirit equip us to serve and worship you  
now and always.

**Amen.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, evermore.**

**Amen.**

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