

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 9 April 2023
Easter Day**

Welcome to our Prayers and Reflections for Easter Day. After the dreadful darkness of Good Friday and the sad silence of Holy Saturday, we step into the glorious light of Easter morning. Jesus has risen! He is alive! And with us always and everywhere. Alleluia!

Alleluia! is such an uplifting word, isn't it? Saying it lifts our spirits. Hope dawns in our hearts as, once more, we look into the empty tomb and say, 'Alleluia!'

Jesus has defeated the biggest fear in our lives - death. If he can do this, he can give us the strength to live with our own and the world's problems. May these prayers and reflections provide a space in which you can offer what is on your heart to him: your hopes and dreams, as well as your fears too. May he fill you with love and peace and hope. May the light of Christ shine in your heart and home.

Happy Easter!

God bless,

Revd Katrina

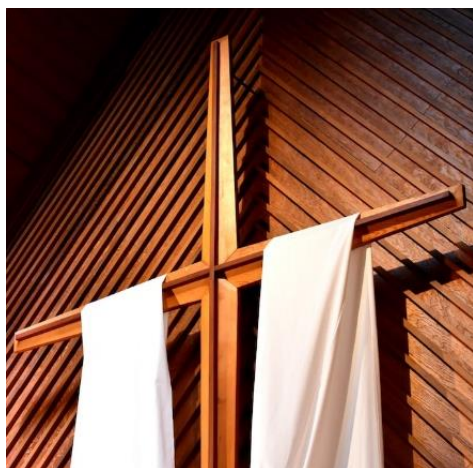
Vicar

Phone No. 01604 812907

Mobile No. 07710 464675

E-mail: katrinahutchins94@yahoo.co.uk

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

Edmond Louis Budry (1854-1932)
trans. Richard Birch Hoyle (1875-1939)

**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Easter Day
Surprised by God's love**

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. You may wish to light a candle or a lamp as a sign of our Risen Lord's presence with you in your room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready to renew your baptism vows. When you are ready, say this Easter greeting.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Easter Praise

Join your voice to creation's song by saying or singing our Easter hymn "Jesus Christ is risen today". Feel part of this benefice's Easter praise.

Jesus Christ is risen today, alleluia!
our triumphant holy day, alleluia!
who did once, upon the cross, alleluia!
suffer to redeem our loss, alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, alleluia!
unto Christ, our heavenly King, alleluia!
who endured the cross and grave, alleluia!
sinners to redeem and save, alleluia!

But the pains that he endured, alleluia!
our salvation have procured; alleluia!
now above the sky he's King, alleluia!
where the angels ever sing, alleluia!

Verse 1: Surrevit hodie (14th century)

Verses 2 & 3: J Arnold's Compleat Psalmodist (1749)



At this time of the year, the sun rises at 6am. You may have been fast asleep at this time. Even now, there will be echoes of the dawn chorus. Listen to the bird song. As you look out of the window, what can you see? Notice the signs of new life. Give thanks to our risen Lord for the gift of life.

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this Easter prayer is being said. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our loving Father who meets us where we are this Easter morn.

God of glory,
by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;
for a new day has dawned
and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

The Resurrection of Jesus

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the

cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:1-18

Surprised by God's love

I want you to imagine for a moment that you are Mary Magdalene. It is only the second day after Jesus was taken down from the cross. You're in shock. How can Jesus be dead? Gone? He was so full of life and love, and his words filled your heart with hope. Looking into his eyes was like looking deep into God's heart and seeing his love. You are heartbroken. We have all been there; experienced the loss of a loved one and ached to see them again... have one more conversation... hear them say our name. You will have shed tears like Mary's. Jesus has too.

It is why he surprises her with his love. He says her name, 'Mary!' And, she is bathed in his love. Her Lord is here. He's alive!

How? Why? What? All such questions can wait. It is enough that Jesus is here in the garden - alive! And, what is most wondrous of all, that he's come to find her and give her this most precious of gifts - his love. Filled to overflowing with joy and love, she reaches out to him. She wants to touch and embrace him but it is too soon for this.

Place yourself into this scene. Wait as Jesus, our Good Shepherd, comes to find you. Feel him say your name. How long does it take? Seconds, seconds of pure love. Receive his precious Easter gift of love. What can you offer in return? Your love.

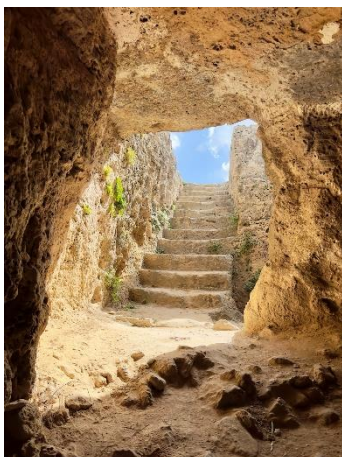


He lives, all glory to his name;
he lives, my Saviour, still the same;
what joy the blest assurance gives!
I know that my Redeemer lives!

Samuel Medley (1738-1799)

RENEWING OUR PROMISES

On Easter morning, we celebrate the new life our risen Lord offers to us. A life we received through the cleansing waters of baptism. We have been set free to live as God desires - with love in our hearts - knowing that nothing can ever cut us off from his love. Forgiven through the Son's death on the cross, we will always be clean in God's eyes. As Thomas Chisholm wrote in his glorious hymn - Great is thy faithfulness:



Pardon for sin
and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence
to cheer and to guide;
strength for today
and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine,
with ten thousand beside!

Thomas O Chisholm (1866-1920)

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me! is such a perfect response to God's gift of new life and to our risen Lord's promise to stay with us always. When we need him, he will come to find us just as he did Mary on that Easter morning. What love is this! Before you renew your Baptism promises, pause to ponder our risen Lord's gift of life and love. Offer him your thanks and praise.

When you are ready, answer these God-breathed questions.

Do you turn away from sin? **I do.**

Do you reject evil? **I do.**

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour? **I do.**

Do you trust in him as Lord? **I do.**



If you have a bowl of water before you on the table, dip your finger in, then make the sign of the cross on your forehead or palm. When you're ready, affirm your trust in God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God for us, I call you Father.

God alongside us, I call you Jesus.

God within us, I call you Holy Spirit.

You are the One who enables, enfolds, and enlivens my life,
making me who I am and who I will be.

I praise and thank you! **Amen.**

cf. Richard Rohr © 2016

OUR EASTER PRAYERS

Here are some Easter prayers. Feel free to add your own.

Risen Jesus, as I imagine that first Easter morn,
with Mary alone in the garden weeping,
broken, until you came and said her name,
my heart soars at the thought of your undying love for me.
You light up my life as you did Mary's,
Lord, receive my love and praise. Alleluia!

This week, help me to notice the sadness in the eyes of others,
so that I may light up their lives with my love.

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Jesus, you couldn't bear to leave your friends in pain,
you had to go and find them. You breathed new life and hope
into their hearts. You filled them with your peace. Come, Lord,
this Easter Day, and lighten the world's sorrows. I lift up to you...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Jesus, even in my darkest hours, I have hope.
Nothing can ever separate me from your love,
not even death. With you at my side, I can face any challenge,
any illness. Lord, come and give this hope, I pray to...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
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.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this Easter week.

Risen Lord, come and meet me where I am,
walk with me in the light and darkness of my life.
Show me how to radiate your love and joy and peace,
each day. Bless me and keep safe my loved ones, Lord, I pray. **Amen.**