



# Salford Methodist Circuit

**Easter Morning - 4th April 2021  
Preachers of the Circuit**

Happy Easter Everyone!

Welcome to our service this morning as we celebrate the day of hope,  
the day of joy, the day of resurrection.

Jesus was dead, but is alive - alive again in this world

Alive in our world of today.

Death is overturned.

Love has won!

Hallelujah! He is Risen. **He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**

Our preachers' team has worked together on this service for today  
in which we will explore what resurrection means; means for us here and now.

**Hymn: Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!**

*Christ the Lord is risen today; Alleluia!*

*Sons of men and angels say: Alleluia!*

*Raise your joys and triumphs high. Alleluia!*

*Sing ye heavens thou earth, reply: Alleluia!*

*Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!*

*Fought the fight, the battle won; Alleluia!*

*Vain the stone, the watch, the seal; Alleluia!*

*Christ hath burst the gates of hell: Alleluia!*

*Lives again our glorious king; Alleluia!*

*Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!*

*Once he died our souls to save Alleluia!*

*Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!*

*Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!*

*Following our exalted head; Alleluia!*

*Made like him, like him we rise; Alleluia!*

*Ours the cross, the grave, the skies: Alleluia!*

*King of glory! Soul of bliss! Alleluia!*

*Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!*

*Thee to know, thy power to prove, Alleluia!*

*Thus to sing, and thus to love: Alleluia!*



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Let us share a prayer of adoration:

God of resurrection, ever renewing, ever reviving,  
we adore you for your life-giving presence.  
Son of Man, newly risen, sorrow made joy,  
we adore you for your sacrificial living and dying.  
Holy Spirit, breezing among us this Easter morn,  
we adore you for breathing new life into us. Amen.

A prayer of confession:

Lord, we love the joy of Easter Sunday, but we may not have walked through Holy Week.

We may not have been humbled by Jesus' hands washing our feet.

We may not have tasted the bread and wine of his last shared meal.

We may not have known the primal fear of Gethsemane, or the bewilderment of the disciples at his betrayal.

We have not known the way of sorrow to Golgotha, the blood, sweat and tears of a crown of thorns and the weight of a cross that will bear our dying body.

Therefore, Lord, we confess our failure to feel at one with Jesus in his dying and in his resurrection life.

As we celebrate our risen Lord, we remember the man of sorrows who died for our sins, and we bow our heads in penitence. Amen.

Lord, in the warmth of your hands washing human feet, we are forgiven.

Lord, in your willingness to drink the cup of suffering for us, we are forgiven.

Lord, in the wide embrace of your arms upon the cross, we are forgiven.

Risen Lord, in your emerging from the tomb,  
death is defeated. We are forgiven. Alleluia! Amen!

Let us share together 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.***



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## Bible Reading: John 20: 1 - 2

### ***The empty tomb***

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"*

## Hymn: Christ Is Alive

*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.*

*Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.*

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

## Bible Reading: John 20: 3 - 10

*So Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. Both of them were running. The other disciple ran faster than Peter. He reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there. But he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him. He went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there. He also saw the funeral cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place. It was separate from the linen. The disciple who*



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*had reached the tomb first also went inside. He saw and believed. They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.*

In thinking about the sadness of Good Friday we are lucky to know of God's plan and the rejoicing of the resurrection, although Jesus' followers were in doubt they would ever know why all this had happened. It was all too much for them to take in.

For me this is about love in sorrow, love in anxiety, and love in celebration; of the great love of our God giving His only begotten Son to take our sins from us.

Thinking of this I remember my Granddaughter when she was little came for a sleep over bringing with her the much beloved guinea pig in his cage. She was happily playing with him and suddenly she was calling out, he'd gone and sobbing her heart out. We searched for what felt like ages but in reality probably about 5 minutes when we spotted him. She picked him up and for a minute looked at him as if she couldn't believe we had found him, then she started to talk to him saying she loved him and he was safe. It was her love for her pet that made her sad that she might not find the pet she loved so much, and it was love that was so very obvious when she found him. It was overall the pain of not knowing for certain that we would find her pet which caused us to be so upset and anxious.

Any situation when we are unaware of the outcomes is in itself a time of being anxious and fearful for the future. I am sure there must have been so many emotions of dreadful sadness, anxiety, and fear with all the happenings of Good Friday and the wait on the Saturday only to find the tomb empty on the Sunday. Our reading tells us of Mary going to tell Peter who was with John that the tomb was empty. Despite Peter appearing at times to be weak and unstable, not to mention his denial of Jesus, there must have been something about him as he was still seen as the leader of Jesus followers. Hence Mary took the news to Peter. On hearing the news both Peter and John began running to the tomb to see for themselves that which Mary had seen for herself.

John was first at the tomb, remaining outside of the tomb but when Peter who was always the impetuous one arrived, he went straight into the tomb and found it empty. John looking into the tomb found the grave clothes as they would be as if Jesus had somehow evaporated out of them. They were not folded and still in the exact places they would have been in if Jesus was still in them. Love played a role here as Mary who loved Jesus - and Jesus loved Mary - and John who also was loved by Jesus were the first to be at the tomb. What John saw for himself convinced him and he was the first to believe in the Resurrection.

Oh what great joy the followers of Jesus were to discover and ultimately inspiration to take the good news into many places. Love gave John eyes to see the signs and a mind to understand. As Christians we take Jesus to heart and



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mind in our day to day lives. We know as Christians we are called to love our neighbours. Both in and out of this pandemic we can have the opportunity to show love and care for those needing help, reassurance, a listening ear or just to know someone cares. We are called to be Easter People; to take the Good news in love to those who need to hear it by word and by deed so they too can feel valued and to come to know the love and peace of God.

## Hymn: Now The Green Blade Rises

*Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain ;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been :  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.*

*In the grave they laid him, Love who had been slain,  
Thinking that he never would awake again,  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.*

*Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
He that for the three days in the grave had lain,  
Quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen,  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.*

*When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
Then your touch can call us back to life again,  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.*

Having heard the passage from John 20 verses 3 to 9 we have heard how the disciples in their grief, after hearing of the empty tomb, run to see for themselves.

We have heard how seeing they finally believed. John, though not fully understanding, knew that God had been at work, and he realises that Jesus is still alive.

Prior to the crucifixion, Jesus had spoken many times to his disciples, foretelling of his death, describing what would happen, and how he would rise again. They failed each time to understand. Only now with the tombstone rolled away, the linen wrappings lying neatly folded on the bench, did these words begin to make sense.

In the coming weeks in the Upper Room, the disciples will hear Jesus comfort them for the time when they will not be able to see him. He will tell them that His death is the means by which they will forever dwell with Him. He will also



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comfort them by describing how in the time of His physical absence He will be evermore present with them though the sending of the Holy Spirit, to dwell not among them, but within them.

Jesus' death is not the problem; it was, and is, the solution. Jesus' violent death paid the price for all people's sins so that we can all live forever in the presence of God.

For the last year or so many of us have lived in fear day to day. Fear of infection. Fear of not being with those whom with love. Fear of being without work, or finances to care for our families. Fear perhaps of not worshipping together as one. Fear of being so alone, lost, maybe in the darkness. Many of have known the loss of love ones to this destructive virus and live with grief.

All of us have had to live differently, locked behind closed doors. Working virtually. Perhaps not working at all. Parents having become teachers, teachers have motivate students via Zoom or Teams. And each and every one of us have communicated from behind masks.

Yet the last year has also taught us many things. The greatest of which is we can move forward. We have learnt new ways to worship. New ways of being with those whom we love. New ways to work. New ways to be safe. New ways to stand alone.

For the past week I have been playing a difference set of tunes in my car. And the one that echo's constantly in my waking hours, and the one I have sung loudest to goes a little like this in the chorus:

*Crucified, laid behind a stone  
You lived to die, rejected and alone  
Like a rose, trampled on the ground  
You took the fall  
And thought of me  
Above all!*

These words written by Michael W Smith speak loud and long to me. I have been saved, my sins have been forgiven, He took to fall, laid my sins aside so that I and you can live eternally. Surely this removes the fear from living knowing that we only have to reach out, to ask and we will be comforted or given the courage that we need.

Knowing that there is no fear in death, Jesus has taken that hit for us, saved us from our sins, and prepared us for that heavenly banquet, we can live this life without fear. What ever lies before us, in whatever shape or form, if we reach out to the Lord our God, listen for the whisperings of the Holy Spirit abiding within us and live life as Jesus did, we can live this life without the fear knowing the glory and everlasting peace that waits for us beyond this life.



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Hymn: I Know That My Redeemer Lives

*I know that my Redeemer lives  
- what joy the blest assurance gives !  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;  
He lives, my everlasting Head!  
He lives, my everlasting Head !*

*He lives, to bless me with his love ;  
He lives, to plead for me above ;  
He lives, my hungry soul to feed ;  
He lives, to help in time of need,  
He lives, to help in time of need.*

*He lives, and grants me daily breath ;  
He lives, and I shall conquer death ;  
He lives, my mansion to prepare ;  
He lives, to lead me safely there,  
He lives, to lead me safely there.*

*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!  
I know that my Redeemer lives!*

## Bible Reading: John 20: 11 - 18

But Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she cried, she bent over to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white. They were seated where Jesus' body had been. One of them was where Jesus' head had been laid. The other sat where his feet had been placed.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said. "I don't know where they have put him." Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't realize that it was Jesus.

He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. So she said, "Sir, did you carry him away? Tell me where you put him. Then I will go and get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."



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She turned toward him. Then she cried out in the Aramaic language, "Rabboni!" Rabboni means Teacher.

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me. I have not yet ascended to the Father. Instead, go to those who believe in me. Tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news. She said, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

My goodness, what a story, what a setting, such emotion, such reality within what seems a surreal situation. Jesus' friend Mary, and she was a friend, someone who loved and cared for Him so very much despite the way she was likely to have been treated by others because of their friendship: she was blinded by the pain that she was suffering, she was blinded by the sheer extent of what she personally had gone through. Yet her eyes and ears were opened to the sight and sound of two angels who engaged her in conversation. This was a very pastoral moment. Angels sent from God say to Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?". And she tells them exactly what is troubling her, no beating about the bush simply the rawness of that moment in her grief and despair of Jesus not being there she says, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Jesus then asks the same question, "Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" She pleads with Him, not recognising Him at that moment, until she was able to speak with him from the heart saying, "tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away." She wanted Jesus to be returned to her, to be released to her but he was already there, right there with her.

In his death he was offering to Mary a new hope, a new life, a new freedom that had been brought about by his death. She could not see it at that moment. Through his death and now in his resurrection it was He who was offering Mary to be released from the pain etc that she was holding onto. This day may have been to many just an ordinary day in 'human' terms but to Mary it was anything but ordinary. We even today as we look to Jesus as our risen Lord must accept that the extraordinary will happen. Things that we may find hard to understand but somehow, like Mary, we can simply but surely turn around and see Jesus as He is for us today alive and present here with us. We do not need to hold onto Him physically, but we need to hold onto the new life that he offers to us today and has offered to us in the many ways that we have needed it most. There is something to be said about the freedom that we feel when we have been bound by the hands that try to hold us back from letting us be the people that God has planned for us to be. Today, we celebrate our Lord Jesus being released and rising to this new life that one day we too hope to encounter. This is a new life that we can't possibly understand fully just now but our faith and our belief in Jesus brings us to a place, that no one else can. It brings us to a place where we need to be and we need to simply trust that this is just so. We seek the Risen Lord. Amen.

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## Hymn: See What A Morning

*See what a morning, gloriously bright,  
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;  
Folded the grave-clothes, 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!*

*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!*

*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!]]]*

So many times in our churches we have prayed for the church around the world, living in hiding, fearing; the church not free, because of repressive regimes and religious intolerance. We never ever thought we'd find ourselves lacking freedom in our own lives. We've always just got on with our lives without giving our freedom a moment's thought, until suddenly, just over a year ago it was taken away from us. This past year has challenged every one of us, in a whole host of different ways. It's challenged the very way we live. And on the whole, it's been a time of frustration, loneliness, isolation, anxiety, and great sadness. The world as we have always known it has shifted on its axis. And we long for the return of our freedom. I think we can all see hope in that direction. Everything points to the very real possibility of our release before long, and the resurrection of life as we have always known it. We don't want to hurry that process, because we want that release to be a release without the risk of further setbacks and lock downs.

So after the experiences of this past year, what will resurrection mean for us? What will it mean to move around freely, to go where we want to go, to be with each other and with the people we have longed to see and touch and hold in this past year? It will be amazing! Everything we have longed for given back to us! I wonder whether the losses that we have experienced in terms of freedom in this



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past year will give us a fresh appreciation of all that has been good throughout our lives; things we have taken for granted.

What will it mean to be church as we find ourselves able to make choices about how we spend our time and how we exist as churches? Only time will tell the shape of our churches moving forwards.

Jesus was dead, and all his friends and followers knew it. But on the day of Resurrection they saw him alive again, and were able to touch him and talk with him and eat with him. But it didn't mean that everything picked up just exactly where it had left off. The past three years of ministry, teaching, healing and learning at the side of Jesus, had far more meaning than that. The way ahead was going to be different, more challenging, more demanding, more dangerous, but full of hope and of good news. Because Jesus had turned everything on its head through his dying and rising. His mission could now spread far and wide across the whole world, no longer bound in one place and by the presence of one man. Now he was alive and with his followers in every place that they went. And the good news of resurrection and hope went with them wherever they went. Of course they still had some things to learn about that, but from that first Easter Sunday the world was a very different place for them. Jesus was alive and there with them, bringing hope and purpose and direction.

Jesus is alive still! He is with us still! And we too have good news of hope and purpose and resurrection to share! There will be a moment of sheer joy, as our lives return to a more normal pattern. But if we think we haven't been changed by the experiences of the past year, we may be in for a shock. Jesus was changed by his experiences of suffering. But out of those experiences, and the experiences of his followers, came the energy, supplied by the power of God's Spirit to grow a church from an unpromising handful of uneducated and fearful followers in an occupied country a very long time ago. It's a church which still exists and grows and thrives today, and we are part of it.

So as we celebrate the Resurrection today, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as we look forward to the resurrection of our lives in the not too distant future, let's do so, empowered by that same Spirit, the Spirit of the living Christ. May God in Christ release us into our changed world ready to amazing things in his name, with his guidance and in his strength. I end with some words from the 1st letter of Peter:

*All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance - an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power. So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead.*

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## Hymn: Easter Jubilation

*Easter jubilation fills the streets and towns, celebrations have begun,  
Hear the music and the dancing now. join the laughter and the fun.  
Oh - raise a joyful shout, clap your hands and dance - let your feelings  
out.  
Oh - hear what it's about - Christ the Lord has come to set us free!*

*Put aside your sorrows, wipe your tears away, for a better time will come.  
There's a promise of a brighter day, Join the laughter and the fun.  
Oh - raise a joyful shout, clap your hands and dance - let your feelings  
out.  
Oh - hear what it's about - Christ the Lord has come to set us free!*

*La, la, la, la, la....  
Oh - raise a joyful shout, clap your hands and dance - let your feelings  
out.  
Oh - hear what it's about - Christ the Lord has come to set us free!*

*Easter jubilation fills the streets and towns, Celebrations have begun,  
Hear the music and the dancing now. Join the laughter and the fun.  
Oh - raise a joyful shout, clap your hands and dance - let your feelings  
out.  
Oh - hear what it's about - Christ the Lord has come to set us free!*

We come now to our prayers for others, which have been written by Ian Huddleston, one of our local preachers in the Circuit. Let us come before our Lord in prayer.

Loving God, we bring before you this morning those who seek release in our societies. We think of prisoners, prisoners of conscience, hostages, and those in bondage. Help us to assist those who need our aid to be released.

We think of those who seek release from the pandemic that we are in the midst of. For those infected by disease, those who now have long term health issues as a result of infection. We give thanks for those who have worked tirelessly to alleviate those suffering and to prevent further outbreaks of the virus. We pray for all who have been unable to go to work, school, shopping and play out in their normal way. For those who have concerns about their finances and jobs. We thank you for giving us the resilience and fortitude to withstand all the limitations placed on us, although we have grumbled from time to time, and we now look forward to our release in due course.



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We think of those who seek release from sickness of body and of mind. Those who suffer from anxieties and fears. Those who are called to look after those who suffer.

We pray for the healing of our divided societies, that we may be released from discrimination, bias and hatred, that we may all live in harmony and share equally in the world's resources.

We offer our prayers for all who have lost loved ones. Grant them release from grief and pain, let your love shine on all who mourn, grant them the peace that your love brings.

Lord, we bring all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, long and short, wordy and simple to your precious throne, and ask for release from all that holds us back from loving you as we should.

In the name of Christ, Amen.

Hymn: Thine be the glory

*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.*

*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.*

*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 Risen, conquering Son;  
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*

*Thine be the glory Risen, conquering Son;  
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.*

Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,  
Endless is the victory thou o'er death has won.



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May we see your glory, and the hope of resurrection in your church,  
In your world, and in our own individual lives.  
And may we live in the confidence of your presence, love and peace,  
This day, in the days and weeks ahead, and for ever more.

Amen.

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Christ The Lord Is Risen Today - Charles Wesley

Christ Is Alive - Brian Wren

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