

Welcome to
your Parish Church
in the Diocese of Birmingham



ALL SAINTS
KINGS HEATH

Uncontrollable Grace Holy Communion

Easter IV, Sunday 8th May 2022

We gather

At home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. Set your Bible alongside. You might light a candle.

We imagine everyone in their homes around the parish, united in preparing for prayer.

Music as we gather: [Alleluia! Jesus is risen!](#)

1. Alleluia! Jesus is risen!
Trumpets resounding in glorious light!
Splendour, the Lamb, heaven forever!
Oh, what a miracle God has in sight!

*Jesus is risen and we shall arise:
give God the glory! Alleluia!*

2. Weeping, be gone; sorrow, be silent:
death is defeated, and Easter is bright.
Angels announce, "Jesus is risen!"
Clothe us in wonder, adorn us in light.

3. Walking the way, Christ walking with us,
telling the story to open our eyes;
breaking the bread, showing his glory;
Jesus our blessing, our constant surprise.

(words: Herbert F Brokering; music: David N Johnson)

When the song finishes we stand in silence. We sing:

HYMN

[The strife is o'er, the battle done](#)

1. The strife is o'er, the battle done;
now is the Victor's triumph won;
O let the song of praise be sung: Alleluia.

2. Death's mightiest pow'rs have done their worst,
and Jesus hath his foes dispersed;
let shouts of praise and joy outburst: Alleluia.

3. On the third morn he rose again
glorious in majesty to reign;
O let us swell the joyful strain: Alleluia.

4. Lord, by the stripes which wounded thee
from death's dread sting thy servants free,
that we may live, and sing to thee: Alleluia.

*(words: Latin hymn [17th century], trans Francis Pott;
music: Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, adapt William Henry Monk)*

We acclaim:

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with us all. **Amen.**

WELCOME, BANNS and NOTICES

We pray: **Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known
and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of
our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may
perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

We seek forgiveness

CONFESSION

Deacon: Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to live in
love and peace with all.

Silence

**Lord God, we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your
salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

In church FORGIVENESS *is declared for all while at home we pray:*

May the Father of all mercies cleanse *us* from our sins, and restore *us* in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

We stand to give thanks for forgiveness, singing THE GLORIA

1. Glory be to God in heaven,
songs of praise and joy we bring;
thankful hearts and voices raising,
to creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you: Lord we bless you:
glory be to God our King;
glory be to God our King.

2. Lamb of God who on your shoulders
bore the load of this world's sin:
only Son of God the Father
you have brought us peace within.
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy,
now your glorious reign begin;
now your glorious reign begin.

3. You O Son of God are holy,
you we praise with one accord:
none in heaven or earth is like you,
only you are Christ the Lord:
with the Father and the Spirit
ever worshipped and adored;
ever worshipped and adored.

THE COLLECT for the Third Sunday of Easter

Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

READINGS [Acts 9:36-43](#) and [Revelation 7: 9-17](#)

HYMN [Restore, O Lord](#)

1. Restore, O Lord, the honour of your name,
in works of sov'reign power come shake the earth again,
that all may see, and come with rev'rent fear
to the living God, whose kingdom shall outlast the years.

2. Restore, O Lord, in all the earth your fame,
and in our time revive the church that bears your name.
And in your anger, Lord, remember mercy,
O living God, whose mercy shall outlast the years.

3. Bend us, O Lord, where we are hard and cold,
in your refiner's fire: come purify the gold.
Though suffering comes and evil crouches near,
still our living God is reigning, he is reigning here.

Repeat verse 1

(words & music: Graham Kendrick & Chris Rolinson)

We remain standing for the GOSPEL READING [John 10:22-30](#)

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end This is the Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

SERMON from David

The word widow, like the word meadow, has a melancholy beauty about it. There is something about the soft consonants beginning and ending, making possible the utterance of two very soft, open vowels, the d somehow gently anchoring the word. Perhaps having been privileged to have so much reflective time with women and men entering widowhood, learning to inhabit the word, that it is for me a word as full of beauty and interest and moving surprises as a meadow is full of flowers. It's a word full of quiet dignity and immense strength that I know often doesn't feel like strength from the inside. But that is not to romanticise. The tears, too, the pain, the frustration and worry is perhaps evoked in that hard d sound.

Those widowed have a quiet understanding of each other, not that all our grief is the same. We can understand why there might be an informal fellowship of widows in the young church in Lydda. They clearly encourage each other, under Tabitha's leadership, to turn their energies to good, creative work. Sustaining each other, they look outwards to the needs of the poor. But they were also in a group, probably because they shared experience of prejudice and economic disadvantage, no longer having a male to legally anchor their household. We catch a glimpse of the prejudice when Paul generalises about widows being gossips. While he may have had experience that led to the observation, it does ring with male fear of empowering female fellowship.

The women of Joppa are clearly dismayed by Dorcas' death. They call for one of the Apostles to come 'without delay'. There is no need to rush if she has died. It's important rather than urgent, but maybe they do feel an urgent need for some kind of authoritative affirmation. It is moving, then, to see Peter's response. He does come straight away. Anyone tempted to patronise such groups today should see how impulsive Peter was, how responsive and how the women's message got through. While we take the apostolic succession of ministry in the church very seriously, and will witness it movingly when Tariro is ordained next month, Luke does not want us to think that Acts is all about the Apostles. It should be called Acts of the Spirit, or Acts of the early people of the Way in the time of the Apostles. For Peter, like Paul, is being fed and supported by the fellowships all over the place. Local people are chosen to administrate the gatherings, so Peter, Philip, Paul are free to be impulsive, reactive, and to hurry off in response to

the needs of an increasing number of fellowships. Having ministered to people in Lydda, he comes to Joppa where, having met Dorcas, he's put up by Simon the Tanner. We catch so few of their names, but the apostles are nothing without these people: While they dash about giving us the plot of Acts, Simon, Dorcas, these widows are the substance and heart and body of the church. The fellowship were deeply grateful for apostolic ministry which they in turn made possible and meaningful by still going to work at the tannery.

Peter is learning to wear the word Apostle and to pray in new ways. His prayer often seems to be more a kind of listening than asking. Next week we will hear vividly about it, but here he prays beside Tabitha and seems to feel a prompt to address her directly and God acts.

What do all the widows feel as Tabitha is returned to them? We can only imagine their joy, but also their wistfulness that she returns but not the partners they had lost. Her coming back to life is a sign not a solution: it's a vindication of the importance of their fellowship in the life of the church and it's an affirmation of the sorrow that cries my lover should not be dead. One day we will indeed see each other again. For now, this is just enough of a sign that Jesus' resurrection means something for all of us; just enough of a sign to keep the hope of heaven alive.

Some decades later, St John will find that hope shimmering in his dreamlike vision of heaven which he shares in a vivid love letter to the whole church. We call it Revelation. In his dream God affirms the long journey of faith by the twelve tribes of Israel, but then the gift of fellowship with God burst out beyond them to the whole world:

This surprisingly universal blessing is already being experienced by the early church as John writes. Again, we'll dwell on that next week. Here he looks ahead to the culmination of discovery that God is for everyone, and will embrace people of every tribe and language and culture. All the strife between divided humanity is overcome not by force, but by the self giving gentleness of Christ who entered our most pointless suffering and embraced our terrified victimhood to prove God does not abandon us there. Like a sacrificial lamb he showed that God absorbs our worst and so liberates our best vulnerable selves. With dream like ease the Christ figure in Revelation can shift from lamb to shepherd. John remembers the shepherd imagery used by Jesus of himself. Again, the sacrificial blood of the lamb can, in his dream, bleach clothes white. This poetically turns the gruesome into the beautiful; something deathly into vibrant light.

In the Easter season, our readings allow us to feel the breathy excitement and rapid learning of the early church, feeling the empowerment of both the fact of Jesus resurrection and the lively presence of his Holy Spirit. Our calendar of readings allows us also to imagine how Jesus' sayings and deeds would be revisited and remembered after he had risen, turned over again and again as significance emerged the disciples had not appreciated at the time.

For instance, there was that encounter with the religious authorities that nearly got Jesus stoned to death, but did help propel events towards the crucifixion. Beneath the columns built in honour of Solomon's wisdom. Far from John's vision of universal blessing, the authorities frown at Jesus. Come on. Don't keep us in suspense. Are you the Messiah? His signs and teaching have already shown them enough to prove he is God among them: from creation of wine at Cana, to feeding five thousand without picking out the deserving from the undeserving hungry; from the healing of a sick slave to setting free a man disabled from birth, the signs and teachings have already shown how precious in God's sight is every human being. The authorities want to know who he claims to be because they want to keep control of who's in and who's out. They have guarded access to God and don't like the way Jesus seems to reach people irrespective of them. They have used religious life as a means to distance God. He

insists that they cannot pluck from God's hands the most precious thing: God's closeness to humanity as embodied in the life of Jesus Christ, the Word who became Flesh to prove every human can be counted a child of God.

The religious authorities are resentful that Jesus suggests God's love is uncontrollably gracious. Jesus does provoke them by working his I am the good shepherd metaphor again. The gracious tone of his voice is one that many instinctively follow, contrasting the controlling tone of the authorities. The Taliban imposing face coverings to conceal the image of God in women's faces on account of male incontinence is emphatically controlling. It has an accent of fear. Nearer to home, this week James Anderton died. He was once Chief Inspector of Manchester Police famous for his assertive homophobic views, his relishing corporal punishment, offering rather too eagerly to administer it himself, and deeply unsympathetic to anyone embroiled in crime. He claimed these views sprang from his deep Christian faith, even though to many of us their tone of bitterness brings the Gospel into disrepute. Like the Taliban, Anderton spoke with an avowedly controlling accent. This week he surely finds heaven a much kinder place than he hoped it would be.

Jesus, the lamb sacrificed for others' misguidance, now enthroned in John's vision, is the gracious one whose signs point to radical inclusion, powerful healing of wounded hearts and minds, offered even to those wounded by the kind of self-harm the above controlling attitudes represent. That dreamy enthroning of shepherd-lamb-sacrifice is there to assert the grace that looks so inefficient and vulnerable in the world's power hungry eyes. It affirms the grace that sends a man hurrying to comfort a group of grieving women. It celebrates the grace of the women who, from their disadvantage become the life blood of the church's mission. It is the grace of those who turn their grief into empathetic attentiveness. It is the grace of those who still pray when they might feel entitled to say in bereavement that God has let them down. It is the gracefulness of all who make the word "widow" beautiful and sonorous, their courage and dignity proving the Biblical saying that love is stronger than death. It is the human tenacity to cling to the hope of heaven, and the dream that the place where God promises to wipe away our tears will be busy with people we didn't think would be there.

We affirm our faith

We stand and at home, if able, we turn to look in the direction of Church, to affirm our faith in God, revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

Deacon: We stand to affirm our faith.

Though he was divine,

he did not cling to equality with God,

but made himself nothing.

Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness.

He humbled himself and was obedient to death,

even the death of the cross.

Therefore God has raised him on high,

and given him the name above every other name:

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

(From Philippians chapter 2)

INTERCESSIONS *Here are some prompts for prayer at home. In Church our intercessions are led by Diana Evans.*

Remembering the dispute between Jesus and the Religious Authorities we pray for the health of the Church: that when at risk of drifting carelessly, we will establish good order; when at risk of self-justification or exclusion, we will be surprised by grace. We pray for all women in Afghanistan and any men who are overbearing because of their unresolved fears.

Remembering the authorities' role in governance, we pray for all newly elected councillors and uphold Northern Ireland as politics reconfigures there.

Remembering Dorcas' service to the poor we pray for all agencies and individuals seeking to relieve poverty today.

Remembering her illness we pray for all who are unwell, including Brian Clucas.

Remembering the confidence she gave to the fellowship of the bereaved, we pray for all who grieve among us including the families of Canon John Waterstreet, Judith Best, Julia McCabe and Bill Gardner, and for the Bick Family remembering Gill and Tom.

THE PEACE

We pause to remember each other: those worshipping at home, and those worshipping in Church and those we care for who are far away.

Deacon: Jesus came and preached peace to those who were far off and to those who were near. We say to one another:

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

HYMN [The day of resurrection](#)

1. The day of resurrection! Earth, tell it out abroad;
the passover of gladness, the passover of God!
From death to life eternal, from earth unto the sky,
our Christ hath brought us over with hymns of victory.

2 Our hearts be pure from evil, that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal of resurrection-light;
and list'ning to his accents, may hear so calm and plain
his own "All hail" and, hearing, may raise the victor strain.

3 Now let the heavens be joyful, and earth her song begin,
the round world keep high triumph, and all that is therein;
let all things, seen and unseen, their notes in gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord hath risen, our joy that hath no end.

*(words: St John of Damascus [c750], trans John Mason Neale;
music: 'Württemberg Gesangbuch' [1784])*

*The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's Prayer
(below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared, first praying:*

God, we long for Communion. With this symbolic meal stir my hope for
the fellowship meal we cannot yet see, and help me wait for it with
patience. **Amen.** (cf Romans 8:2)

We tell the story of salvation

Priest: The Lord is here.

All: God's Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give
you thanks, almighty and eternal Father, and in these days of Easter to
celebrate with joyful hearts the memory of your wonderful works. For
by the mystery of his passion Jesus Christ, your risen Son, has
conquered the power of death and hell and restored in men and women
the image of your glory. He has placed them once more in paradise and
opened to them the gate of life eternal. And so, in the joy of this
Passover, earth and heaven resound with gladness, while angels and
archangels and the powers of all creation sing for ever the hymn of your
glory:

We repeat after the cantor:

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord!

God of power and God of might.

Heav'n and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes

in the name of the Lord most high.

Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.

We praise you, we bless you, loving Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; and as we obey his command, send your Holy Spirit, that broken bread and wine outpoured may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends and, taking bread, he praised you. He broke the bread, gave it to them and said: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. do this in remembrance of me.

A bell is rung

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine. Again he praised you, gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

A bell is rung

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did. In him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross. Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation, we proclaim his death and resurrection until he comes in glory.

Deacon: Great is the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died,
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life, help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth. Look with favour on your people, gather us in your loving arms and bring us with all the saints to feast at your table in heaven. Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Deacon: As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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.
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.**

Priest: We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All: Though we are many, we are one body.
 For we all share in one bread.**

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you. Eat in remembrance that he died and now lives for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

We sing: **Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
 Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
 Jesus, Redeemer of the world, give us your peace. (x2)**

We pause to remember all who pray at home, then share the bread, now for us the body of Christ.

We now have two points for distribution of bread. We make one line, but receive from alternate sides.

ANTHEMS *during Communion*

*His goodness shall follow me all the days of my life.
I will walk in God's kingdom forever.*

1. The Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I want.
Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me rest.
Near still waters he leads me he refreshes my soul:
he shows me the right path he is true to his name.

2. Though I walk through the darkness no evil I fear:
with rod and with staff you comfort my soul;
you prepare me a banquet in the sight of my foes.
My head you've anointed, my cup overflows.

3. Surely goodness shall follow me all the days of my life:
I will walk in God's kingdom, the house of my Lord:
singing praise to the Father and praise to the Son;
and praise to the Spirit forever. Amen.

(words & music: based on Psalm 23 and a trad Irish air, arr Chris O'Hara)

[Author of life divine](#)

1. Author of live divine, who hast a table spread,
furnished with mystic wine, and everlasting bread,
preserve the life thyselst hast giv'n, and feed and train us up for heaven.

2. Our needy souls sustain with fresh supplies of love,
till all thy live we gain, and all thy fullness prove,
and, strengthened by thy perfect grace, behold without a veil thy face.

(words: Charles Wesley; music: J D Edwards)

We are sent out

Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with your Word [and with the body of Christ]. Strengthen us in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

THE BLESSING

May God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen *us* to walk with him in his risen life, and give *us* patience to speak with the accent of grace, and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among *us* and remain with *us* always. **Amen.**

HYMN [Ye choirs of new Jerusalem](#)

1. Ye choirs of new Jerusalem,
your sweetest notes employ,
the Paschal victory to hymn
in strains of holy joy.

2. For Judah's Lion burst his chains,
and crushed the serpent's head;
and brought with him, from death's
domains,
the long-imprisoned dead.

3. From hell's devouring jaws the prey
alone our leader bore;
his ransomed hosts pursue their way
where he hath gone before.

4. Triumphant in his glory now
his sceptre ruleth all:
earth, heav'n and hell before him bow
and at his footstool fall.

5. While joyful thus his praise we sing,
his mercy we implore,
into his palace bright to bring
and keep us evermore.

6. All glory to the Father be,
all glory to the Son,
all glory, Holy Ghost, to thee,
while endless ages run. Alleluia! Amen.

(words: St Fulbert of Chartres [c1000], trans R Campbell; music: H J Gauntlett)

We acclaim:

Deacon: Alleluia! Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ, Amen.



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