**The Swiss Church in London**

**Easter Sunday, 4 April 2021**

**Welcome (Rev Carla Maurer)**

Jesus Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Hallelujah!

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And God’s grace was powerfully at work in them all.” (4:33)

“Und mit großer Kraft legten die Apostel Zeugnis ab von der Auferstehung Jesu Christi, und große Gnade war auf ihnen allen.“

“Avec beaucoup de puissance, les apôtres rendaient témoignage de la résurrection de Jésus Christ, et une grande grâce reposait sur eux tous.”

Together with Peter, Colin, Marianne, Geoff and Niccolo I would like to welcome you to this audio Easter Sunday service 2021. Who would have thought one year ago that we would still be listening to church services at home this Easter. I am sure that this is the right decision for our congregation, and as we are slowly coming out of lockdown that there will be soon a time when we will feel ready to come together in the church.

We are united in spirit, and for those who are in the Swiss Church whatsapp group, why don’t you send a message or a photo of something that fills your heart with joy today; or contact a friend to share your Easter joy.

Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!

**Prayer (Niccolo Aliano)**

All-powerful and invincible God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you have destroyed death and darkness and opened for all your people the gate that leads to everlasting life: We pray that you may fill our earthly lives with your grace so that we may rejoice in the wonders of your Son, Jesus Christ, and that, at the last, we may join in his glory.

Amen**.**

**Reading John 21:1-14**

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

**Sermon (Rev Carla Maurer)**

*The empty fridge*

Do you know that feeling when you open the fridge, and it stares back at you, empty. Some shooting potatoes, half an onion and some partly rotten carrots that really don’t look very appealing; and you sit down at the kitchen table with a sense of resignation, and you feel all doom and gloom wondering what you should eat tonight.

We know it’s not true. There is always something to eat in the house. And even for those whose fridges and cupboards and bags ARE empty and who do hunger, there is something to eat, because God provides for everyone, and the only reason there isn’t enough for some is our human greed.

Many of our days during lockdown have also felt like looking into an empty fridge. The days felt bland, one like to other, and it became increasingly difficult to find the motivation to do things.

Now imagine someone entering the kitchen, looking at you with that dreary look on your face, and he asks: “You have nothing to eat, have you?” – And you say: “No!” – And he says: “Why don’t you look in that cupboard over there to the right”, and although you don’t feel like it, you get up to open it, and suddenly you can see all the wonderful things you can do with your potatoes and half an onion and carrots, and the rice and the jars, and your evening turns into a feast, and you even have a guest.

*An easterly feast on the shores of the lake*

The disciples had just experienced their first Easter. Jesus, the giver of hope, the Saviour, has died, and after three days rose again and the victory of life over death was complete. He is alive! He has risen! He has risen indeed! Alleluja!

Earlier this week, the first social lockdown restrictions were lifted and so perhaps this year we can feel the disciples’ Easter joy particularly well. There is a sense of new life and change in the air right now in our lives. After three months of social isolation and many cold and long winter nights, the world is slowly opening up again, and nature awakes too. Although we may be bruised and exhausted, a sense of resurrection is felt everywhere.

Yet the week after their very first Easter it was back to life as normal for the disciples. They went out on their boat to catch some fish but found themselves standing in their boat as we are standing in front of that empty fridge, no fish in their net and nothing to eat.

Along came a man and as he stood on the shores of the lake shouted: “Nothing to eat, have you?” – And the disciples said: “No!” – And the man said: “Why don’t you cast the net on the right side of your boat”, and although the disciples thought that there was little chance of being lucky on the other side, they did, and their nets were suddenly so full, they could hardly lift them into their boat, and they recognised Jesus and went to the shores and made a fire and had a feast. The Resurrected was with them.

*Easter all year round*

In this past year we were thrown forth and back between hope and resignation, between promises and disappointments, sudden change and relentless routines.

“No plans for today?” – “No!”

“Any news?” – “No!”

The phones calls became shorter and the stretches between them longer. We were sitting at the kitchen table staring at the next day or the next week not knowing how to lift our spirits.

As lockdown restrictions are slowly lifting, and hopefully for good, there is a sense of relief, but there will also be a point when, like the disciples, we will return to life as normal; perhaps not normal as before the pandemic, some things have changed forever, but return to normality with our new routines and the presence of the people we now so miss, and for those who have lost someone, living with their grief. We might feel a bit deflated after the first enthusiasm. We have all changed during this time. We have experienced things differently, handled things differently, and this will impact on our relationships and on our way of life. We will need to recover, emotionally, economically and physically, and the speed of recovery will be different for different people.

One week after the resurrection, the disciples were standing on the boat, that day of sheer joy and unleashed enthusiasm slowly drifting into the past. It was back to fishing, back to making a living and back to a reality without Jesus.

But was it?

The resurrection of Jesus is not a one-off event. The resurrection is not the big finale of Jesus’ life, quite the opposite, it is the beginning of a new life for everyone. It took the disciples a while to realise this. Jesus came to appear again several times after Easter to make sure that the disciples understood his lasting presence, even after he was gone. It was now up to the disciples to continue to live in this new reality in Jesus – and it is up to us to this very day.

*Small changes*

“Cast the net on the right side of the boat”, Jesus said. It is a very small action that Jesus asked them to do. It isn’t even very logical because why would there be fish on the other side of their small fishing boat if there were none on the other?

If the fridge looks empty and the days ahead of us bland, let’s begin with small changes and gestures. Perhaps listen to a new piece of music and have a little dance in the kitchen. Get a new item for your house that makes you smile when you see it, perhaps a mug or a candle. Call a friend you haven’t spoken to in a while, or indeed, meet up for a cup of tea. And your net will be filled with fish. Jesus has risen. Alleluja!

Amen

**Announcement**

If you would like to make a donation to the Swiss Church you can find the payment details on our webpage. We are grateful for everything you can give.

In the name of the Swiss Church team and the Consistoire I wish you all a blessed Easter. May the light of Jesus shine in your heart.

**Prayers of Intercession (Geoff Fisher and Marianne Fisher-Hertig)**

CHRIST IS RISEN - HE IS RISEN INDEED

We declare again:

CHRIST IS RISEN - HE IS RISEN INDEED HALLELUJAH!

Thank you Lord you died and rose again; for us, for me, for each individual. For our sins, for the world’s sin and to offer us eternal life.

Dear Lord, may we realize again afresh today what your death and resurrection mean for us. Thank you for the victory and power in your name; for forgiveness, freedom, and the ability to walk with you through this fallen world into eternity. May we always find satisfaction in you and your willingness to offer yourself to us.

We confess our need for you. We ask that you renew our hearts, minds, and lives, for the days ahead. We pray for your refreshing over us.

Shine your light in us, through us, over us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. We pray that we reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing.

We pray for the people of countries ravaged by war, conflict and natural disasters, and that leaders will seek peace and reconciliation. “What does the Lord require of us? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God”. For you are a loving God, who commands us to love one another, whatever the cost. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly day by day.

Lord as we come out of lockdown, may we renew relationships and continue to reach out to those that are lonely, in need or in distress. Please bring healing to the sick and be with those who mourn. We ask your blessing on each one of us and that your Holy Spirit will guide us in a fallen world and a “new normal”.

Thank you God for your indescribable gift! To you be glory and honor, on this Resurrection Day, and forever.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.