

The Swiss Church in London **Easter Sunday service, 12 April 2020**

Good morning everyone. Peter, Marianne, Colin and I, and Niccolo who has now also joined our audio service team from Edinburgh, are delighted to welcome you to this Easter Sunday service from the Swiss Church in London.

Jesus says: "Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have come to believe. Do not doubt but believe." (John 20:29.27)

Jesus sagt: „Glücklich sind, die nicht sehen und doch glauben! Sei nicht ungläubig, sondern gläubig!“

Jesus dit: „Heureux ceux qui n'ont pas vu et qui ont cru! Ne sois pas incrédule, mais crois!“

These are the words that Jesus had addressed to his disciple Thomas after his return from the dead. Thomas wanted proof and so Jesus invited him to touch his wounds. This is how Thomas believed that the miracle of all miracles had happened: Christ is risen.

Do not doubt but believe. Believe in life. Believe that death does not have the final word. Believe that love will prevail. Believe that our loved ones who have already transitioned into this new existence are at peace. Believe that our pain will be lifted from us. Believe that we are forgiven. Believe that the Kingdom of God is already here.

From the bottom of my heart I wish that the joy of the resurrection lightens up your home and your soul. God is everywhere, with us right now, wherever we are. We are the branches attached to his vine, connected through the holy spirit. Amen

Reflection by Niccolo Aliano

From East Coker, by T.S. Eliot

The wounded surgeon plies the steel
That questions the distempered part;
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
The sharp compassion of the healer's art

Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

Our only health is the disease
If we obey the dying nurse
Whose constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.

The whole earth is our hospital
Endowed by the ruined millionaire,
Wherein, if we do well, we shall
Die of the absolute paternal care
That will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere.

The chill ascends from feet to knees,
The fever sings in mental wires.
If to be warmed, then I must freeze
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars.

The dripping blood our only drink,
The bloody flesh our only food:
In spite of which we like to think
That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood—
Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.

Though this section of T.S. Eliot's second of Four Quartets is rather about Good Friday than Easter, it ends on a positive note that, despite death, we call the day of our Lord's crucifixion "good." Jesus has risen, and that fills our hearts with hope, that with him we will also eventually rise. Hope is at the core of Easter, and during these difficult times Easter needs to be our guide. We may be experiencing a sort of Good Friday on this unusual Easter Sunday, but the real end is not now—it is two days away. Let us rejoice in the Resurrection!

Let us pray.

O God, who by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought to light life and immortality: Grant that we, who have been raised with him, may abide in his presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal

glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading John 20:11-18

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 around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" 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.

Reading John 21:20-25

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" So the rumour spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Reflections by Rev Carla Maurer

Some things never change

From my office window at the vicarage I can see the yellow star-shaped heads of two daffodils. In German we call this flower Osterglocke (Easter bell). These two unassuming daffodils reminded me that some things never change.

A few weeks ago, our organist Peter Yardley-Jones has sent a beautiful thought on this topic to the Swiss Church whatsapp group. This whatsapp group has helped us to stay in touch, send ideas and words of encouragements to our Swiss Church friends, both here in England and back in Switzerland. Peter has shared the following thought with us: "When the social distancing started, it felt that someone shut down the whole world. But then you look outside and nothing stopped, they only shut down the material world. There are still flowers in bloom, the trees are peaked with buds, the rain still falls, the birds still sing, the sun still shines. The world didn't change a single bit because of this. We did! And because of that the waters are running cleaner, the air is fresher, animals are coming back to their homes and people are kinder now, more united."

These thoughts are so true and a beautiful message for this Easter Sunday in the midst of a lockdown.

People fall in love. Birthdays are celebrated and children are born.
Some things never change.

The daffodils in my garden remind me of all these things, and I am grateful. I am grateful as well that as a church community we have found ways to carry each other through this time in many different ways and perhaps our bond has never been so strong.

Mary and John

I have chosen today two readings from the Gospel of John. The protagonists of these readings are Mary and John. Both had an encounter with the Resurrected. Mary was at Jesus' tomb and discovered that the tomb was empty. She was in tears and Jesus saw her tears. "Why are you weeping, Mary?", he said, "I am here." Then he called her by her name, and Mary recognised him. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was following Jesus and Peter from a distance. At some point Peter turned around and asked: "What about him?". Jesus said: "He will remain." Both, Mary and John, were called by Jesus by their name. They were called out of their loneliness. They found

comfort in the fact that they felt God close to them. Jesus had called them by their name. He knew them. He knew their fears and hopes. He knew they were there.

God knows about us. We are called by our name out of our loneliness. Our feelings of disappointment and joy are shared. Christ has risen and we are lifted up with him.

On this Easter Sunday we pray, God of life and power and love, open our soul to your living presence, so we may glimpse your glory and discover the sacredness of each moment.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession by Marianne Fisher-Hertig

Lord,

You loved this world so much that you gave your one and only Son, that we may be called your children too. We thank you for this. Father, help us to live in the gladness and grace of Easter Sunday, everyday. Let us have hearts of thankfulness for your sacrifice. Let us have eyes to look to your grace and let us rejoice in our salvation. Help us to walk in that mighty grace and help us to tell your good news to the world.

Kyrie eleison

Our Father,

We live in a troubled world at present. We don't claim we understand fully what is going on; why so many people are ill; why so many people are dying; why this virus restricts every single person's life; why so many families are separated from loved ones and cannot meet up over the Easter break. Our hearts are heavy, our tears flow easily.

But we do know You are amongst us; You are never changing; You comfort us; You pour out your love and grace into us. We thank you for that. We are grateful for people who do recover from Covid 19. We are happy for the smile a stranger gives us. We appreciate unexpected help and kindness from neighbours. Thank you Father for the goodness which is out there.

Kyrie eleison

Our Lord,
We lift up our Swiss Congregation to you. We are sorry we can't meet physically, but are glad for modern technology which keeps us in touch. We pray for people who find it really tough at present. We pray for people who are mourning. We pray for our friends who are physically suffering. We pray for the ones who are lonely.

In a moment of silence please pray for people whose needs are known to you. We give you thanks Lord for Carla and the Leadership team of our Swiss Church who tirelessly are concerned for us. Bless them and give them strength. We ask God, fill us daily with your love and cuddles. Thank you for giving your son for us to have full life.

With faith and confidence we declare:
Amen. Christ has Risen - Hallelujah He has risen indeed!

Communion

I would like everyone listening at home or reading this service to join in with the sharing of communion. If you don't have any red wine or grape juice in the house, take some water or any kind of juice. Take a piece of bread, a cracker or some cake and put it next to your glass or mug. We will bless the wine and bread together and we will share communion as a sign that the grace of God becomes alive through us.

As I speak the words that Jesus has spoken to his disciples when they shared the meal, you may hold up your glass to give thanks, break the bread and hold the palms of your hands over the wine and bread for the blessing as you see me doing at church.

Heureux les invités au repas du seigneur! En partageant le vin et le pain nous nous souvenons que nous sommes une communauté fondé sur la foi que l'amour et l'espoir grandissent si on les partage.

Wir sind alle eingeladen an Gottes Tisch, Frauen und Männer, Jung und Alt, Reich und Arm, Leichterzige und Schwermütige. Brot und Wein bringen uns in Berührung mit dem, was unaussprechbar ist und mit dem heilsamen Wirken der göttlichen Gnade.

Prayer

God of life, who loves and embraces us in mercy and acceptance,
We recognise those places in our lives where we have been hurt and rejected.

And we offer them to you.

We recognise those times when we have hurt and rejected others.

And we offer them to you.

And we recognise the ways that we have failed to believe in your forgiving power.

Help us to live in the strength that comes from your never ending love.

Amen

In a moment of silence, let us think of times when we have been hurt and of times when we have hurt others.

In der Nacht als Jesus verraten wurde, sass er mit seinen Freunden und teilte mit ihnen das Mahl. Er nahm das Brot, dankte dafür, brach es, gab es seinen Jünger und Jüngerinnen und sprach: Nehmt! Esst! Das bin ich für euch gegeben.

Dann nahm er den Kelch, dankte, gab ihn seinen Jünger und Jüngerinnen und sprach: Nehmt! Trinkt alle daraus! Das ist das Zeichen für den neuen Bund mit Gott.

Das tut zu meinem Gedächtnis sooft ihr zusammen seid.

Gott, segne diese deine Gaben Brot und Wein, Früchte deiner Erde und unserer Arbeit, die uns tragen von Generation zu Generation.

Que le saint esprit soit present maintenant que nous partageons le vin et le pain. Par cette communion tu renouvelles nos forces.

If you live with other people you may now share a sign of peace.

Lord's Prayer – Unser Vater – Notre Pere

Blessing

God bless us and keep us; God let his face shine on us and be gracious to us.
God lift his countenance upon us and give us peace.