

**Email Order of Service 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – Easter 3**  
**Including optional Holy Communion – have bread and wine ready, please.**



*Last Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April*

*Greeting-*

Christ is risen: he is risen indeed!

*Call to Worship -*

The risen one came to the disciples on the Emmaus road and turned their sadness and despair into hope. With joy in their hearts, they returned to Jerusalem with the words: "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed."

*Prayer -*

We bring to you, O God, our troubles and our fears this day. We have tried to celebrate Easter and Anzac Day but we miss the presence of others around us, reminding us of the story and the glory, the sadness and the relief. May this time of worship be our Emmaus road, the time we meet the risen Christ and our hope is born anew. In our questions, in our searching and wondering, walk with us Jesus and let the Holy Spirit help us to understand God's ways once more, for we ask through your Holy name, Amen.

*HYMN-*

AHB 502 Abide with me (by Henry Francis Lyte)

*Scripture Readings-*

1 Peter 1: 17-23; Luke 24: 13-35

*Prayer of Confession-*

Jesus Christ, hear our confessions this day.

When we become so absorbed in our own concerns and forget to look for your presence: forgive us, Lord and open our eyes to see your work in the world.

When we become fearful and prefer to walk a known, well-worn path rather than respond to your call to us: forgive us, Lord and open our ears to listen to your voice and obey you.

When we feel only confusion and our minds race with questions: forgive us, Lord and open our minds to hear your great story in Scripture and let your Holy Spirit teach us wisdom, for we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Words of Assurance-*

God has never left God's people abandoned. God is with us on our journey and Christ Jesus walks beside us. In his name I remind you: your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!



*Sermon – Stay with us*

I am wondering if you have heard that plea “Stay with us”. Was it from young children wanting you or another to stay and play with them a little longer, instead of leaving them alone? Was it at bedtime when they wanted another story or company because they were afraid of the dark?

Was it from a friend or family member inviting you to stay at their home when visiting their city? Or a friend just offering you a meal with them when your

visiting time was over? Was it a child begging a parent to remain with the family when their relationship with their spouse had turned sour? Was it a friend inviting you to remain at the bedside of a dying loved one for both your comfort and theirs? Was it your cry to God at a time of great fear? Or was it a silent request to a loved one in a dream?

It is not uncommon for a bereaved person to dream about their loved one being alive again and meeting them or seeing them in the distance coming towards them. My personal experience of seeing my father created great excitement. 'Oh daddy, I am so glad you are not dead!' but as the familiar figure got closer, it turned out not to be my father and I woke up, disappointed but calmer and more willing to accept his death.

I do not think that the couple of Jesus' followers were dreaming when they walked to Emmaus and met a stranger walking the same way. Walking and talking together was a common part of Jesus' teaching time with his disciples. Today, going for a long walk with a good friend can result in some wonderful, deep sharing of ideas and experiences. The action of walking stimulates the brain and somehow opens up new pathways of understanding if we have a wise companion with us. Cleopas and his wife? companion? did not recognize the stranger who joined them. The resurrected Jesus was not merely a resuscitated corpse but a figure of mystery.

The stranger listened to their pain and confusion, asking open-ended questions as a wise counsellor would. Then the Teacher spoke into their confusion explaining the Scriptures – connecting the dots, interpreting the past faith with a new viewpoint. I can imagine their enthusiasm to have this wise interpreter of Scriptures stay with them longer. It was only normal hospitality to offer shelter for the night and a meal in their home.

Once again, good hospitality invited the visitor "Would you say the blessing for us, please?" In that familiar ritual of the blessing and then breaking of bread and sharing it with them, at last their eyes were opened – they knew the stranger to be the Lord. Have you had the experience of seeing a familiar action trigger a memory? Hopefully that is what happens each time we gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper at church – we remember past experiences of it and collectively go back, not just to the Last Supper before Jesus was betrayed and crucified, but also to this meal with Cleopas and his wife/companion when they knew the Risen Christ at that meal table. It was for them, a transformative experience and they rushed all the way back to Jerusalem to

share their news with the other disciples. This was still the first Easter Sunday night.

Stay with us, Jesus. Let us see you in your resurrected form! But for those beloved followers of Jesus, his appearances were fleeting and yet purposeful. As we heard/read from John 20:29-31 and 1 Peter 1: 8-9 last Sunday, the church is a community of those who believe in and love the Lord, without ever seeing him in the flesh – yet recognise all our neighbours as made in his image for all are our brothers and sisters through Christ. What we do to and for them, we do to and for Him. Stay with us, Jesus, teach us more about God's way.

I have had the privilege of being in the company of many Jesus-like followers whose wisdom was shared with me around a meal table, or in a lounge room informal gathering, or at a church camp site as leaders enjoyed supper together and talked of the day's activities. At Union Theological Seminary in New York, Prof Will Kennedy and his wife, Frances, were generous hosts especially to visiting colleagues from the World Council of Churches or fellow professors from other universities. Their 'open house evenings' were open to faculty and students and it was fascinating to listen to the learned conversations and to be able to ask questions that you would not dare to do in a lecture room.

Who have been your occasional teachers – your Jesus Stranger figures who moved your faith forward, who helped you to see God's way in a new light? May you offer some of that wisdom and witness in sharing hospitality in the future in your homes or at after church morning tea times when we can sit together again. Alternatively, today, you might send an email or share on the telephone your appreciation for wisdom shared with you in the past which enables you to live more abundantly right now. God bless and keep you. Amen.

*HYMN- AHB 189 We have a gospel to proclaim. (by Edward Joseph Burns)*

*Offering-*

A) Cheques to be made out to 'St Lucia UCA Parish account' and posted to 7 Hawken Dr, St Lucia Qld. 4067, please. OR

B) direct deposit to 'St Lucia Uniting Church' BSB: 334 040 acct#: 553 842 259 (St George Bank)

*Prayers of Thanks and Holy Communion:*

Gracious God, your gifts to us are many and varied. For the gift of families and good friends with their wise counsel, we give you thanks. For the gift of hope, renewal and second chances, we give thanks. Holy God of Easter, you give new

opportunities when we feel anxious and hopeless. You give wisdom when we feel only confusion. You grant us connection and relationships when we feel alone or isolated.

Your grace flows freely from your love for all people and so we would meet you at our table now, as you met with your disciples in Emmaus. As we break bread with you, reveal your presence with us. As we take the cup, nourish us with your wisdom and wash away our doubts and fears as your blood washed away our sins.

Jesus Christ, Messiah and Lord, we praise you for your steadfast love which does endure forever down through generations. We join with all creation in praising you saying: "Holy, holy, holy Lord. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord."

We remember now the times we gathered around the Lord's table at church: saw bread broken and then shared; saw the Cup lifted up, and then shared, doing all in remembrance of Jesus Christ whose body was given for us, whose blood was shed for us.

We eat now and remember Jesus and our times of gathered worship together. *(eat your piece of bread and drink your 'wine'.)*

*Hymn: AHB 435 Be known to us in breaking bread*

*Prayer of Intercession-*

God of the Emmaus journey, we take this time to pray for the journey of life. For those just beginning new adventures and those who are facing endings.

**Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.**

There are many situations in our world that need turning around through your grace. We pray for those whose choices are damaging themselves, others and the world. Help them find new paths of grace that healing may be possible.

**Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.**

In a world where loneliness leads to pain and depression, we pray for deeper relationships, wider connections and open communities where everyone finds a place to belong.

**Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.**

For some life is a struggle and companionship of the journey is essential.

We pray for those who are rebuilding lives and communities in the face of tragedy; for those who are suffering and grieving; for those recovering from abuse or bullying. We name before you special people in need....

**Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.**

Finally, Jesus Christ, we pray for our own journeys.

May we walk daily with you, sharing our lives in conversation, learning and relationship.

## Be present in our midst, Jesus Christ.

*The Lord's Prayer-*

Pray the Lord's Prayer.

*HYMN-*

AHB 385 The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord (by Samuel John Stone)

*Benediction-*

God is with us on the journey, never leaving us abandoned, always surprising us with resurrection moments.

Wherever our path may lead us, may God our creator be our source of love,  
May Jesus Christ, our companion, be our Light,  
And may the Spirit, our friend and sustainer, be our guide,  
This day and forevermore. Amen.

Resources used in this service include *Words for Worship* Easter year A 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020 by MediaCom (subscription of Rev Dr Elizabeth Nolan) and *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2020* edited by Mary Scifres and B.J. Beu, Abingdon Press, Nashville USA (owned by EN); *gathering Lent- Easter Year A 2020*, United Church of Canada (EN subscription); and *Uniting in Worship People's Book* by Uniting Church Press (JBCE) 1988 Melbourne and *The Australian Hymn Book* multiple copies owned by the St Lucia Uniting Church congregation. Copyright license 217268.

