

EASTER SUNDAY

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Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

READ: JOHN 20:1-18

Jesus said to her,
"Mary!"

REFLECT:

Alleluia! Christ is risen! The warmest of Easter greetings to you all.

For the second time now Easter Sunday finds us in lockdown, though we're beginning to emerge slowly. How appropriate it seems that today's gospel reading is the story of a meeting, a beautiful and emotional reunion, in a garden.

The truth of what has happened dawns slowly on the disciples. Even when Mary hears her name spoken in that familiar and friendly voice and her heart skips a beat... even then there is a "not yet" quality to the encounter. Jesus cautions her, in verse 17, "Do not hold onto me..."

This week the local news has been showing images of families meeting in person, in small garden gatherings, for the first time in many months. A grandmother got to meet the grandchild born during lockdown that she had only seen on screen. "I can't hold her, of course," she told the the interviewer, "but it's enough just to see her, just to look at her". The woman's wonder and delight were so evident as gazed smilingly across at the gurgling child.

Perhaps we can take comfort from the mixed emotions of joy, excitement, fear and uncertainty in this resurrection story. The passage begins while it's "still dark". Grief, and the trauma of all that has happened are still very much present. Jesus' appearance is a moment of intense joy; longed and scarcely hoped for. But what has been is not erased. Even his risen body bears the scars.

This Easter, may we rejoice in our reunions, even if we cannot hold our loved ones yet.

May we acknowledge the ways the past year has changed us, and grieve our losses.

May hope rise again, unquenchable, as we emerge once more from our homes, blinking in the sunlight of a new day.

CONNECT:

Here are a few ideas for celebrating Easter Sunday this year...

- Stay up or get up to watch the sunrise (there is a long Christian tradition of keeping Easter Vigil, and sunrise is accompanied by a wonderful dawn chorus around this time of year. Plus, with the clocks having changed, it's not *quite* so early!)
- Spend some time in a garden
- Sing your heart out! There are some wonderful, joyful Easter hymns and they sound great in the shower. We may not be able to sing together (yet), but we can still sing.

PRAY:

- For those who have lost much over the past year, and all who are grieving
- That our emergence from lockdown will be careful and safe, and for those making tough decisions about the easing of restrictions
- For joyful reunions



RESOURCES:

Our friends at Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website:
www.wheatleyurc.org.uk

SUPPORT:

Pauline and myself, and your elders, are here for you if you need someone to talk to, have a prayer request, or just fancy a chat! Ping us an email or give us a ring.