

Celebrating the Great Fifty Days of Easter

It might interest you to know that Easter in our church calendar is not just one day. It is not just on Easter Sunday that we celebrate the amazingly good news of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our church tradition we celebrate “The Great Fifty Days of Easter” that begin on Easter Sunday/Easter Vigil and end on the Feast of the Pentecost. Jesus did not appear just once after he died. He appeared in many different ways to Mary Magdalene, Peter, James, Paul and Thomas, over a period of forty days. On the fortieth day, his body was lifted up to heaven in front of the disciples on the day we will celebrate on Ascension Day on May 13. On the fiftieth day, Jesus gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit that we celebrate on The Feast of the Pentecost on May 23.

I invite all of you to join me in extending the great joy of Easter Sunday and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Great Fifty Days of Easter. ***Mother Carol+***

Love Your Church Day: Saturday, April 10 (Rain date: April 17)

Every spring and fall, we have a “Love Your Church Day” when we gather on a Saturday morning to help out with things that need to be done in our church buildings and grounds. As progress is being made in vaccinations and we have been able to return to in-person worship, we look forward to the time when we can have more people attend safely and host events in our Parish Mission House. So we want our church buildings and Parish Mission House to look the best that they can be.

We need help painting the “green room” (the old office) in the church building. There is a lot of “spring cleaning” to do in our church yard and flower beds. There are some repair jobs to be done in our buildings as well.

We will start at **9:30 a.m.** Please bring a sack lunch and we will provide coffee, beverages, pastries, and fresh fruit. Due to COVID safety guidelines, we cannot yet have communal meals. For more information about the work to be done on our Love Your Church Day, please contact **Leslie Farris**.

Sing We Now of Easter



When I was growing up in the Presbyterian church, “*Jesus Christ is Risen Today*” was always the processional hymn on Easter Sunday. So, for my first Easter service as organist at Christ Church, Richmond, I chose that to open our service—only to be informed by my predecessor that for fifty years, the Easter service had *always* begun with “*Welcome Happy Morning*,” implying that it should continue to do so. I was careful not to make that mistake again and ever since, we have opened our service with “*Welcome Happy Morning*” and closed with “*Jesus Christ is Risen Today*.” But whether opening or closing, these two Easter hymns are not just a long tradition at Christ Church/Church of our Saviour. In fact, their history dates back centuries.

“*Welcome Happy Morning*” comes from a long poem by Venantius Honorius Fortunatus written in Latin and dedicated to the Bishop of Nantes shortly before the Bishop’s death in 582. It became a popular processional hymn in the medieval church with variations for various occasions all beginning with the line “*Salve festa dies*” or “hail thee festival day.” But wait—isn’t that a different hymn? Yes

and no. Our hymnal has versions of “*Hail Thee Festival Day*” for Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. But “*Welcome Happy Morning*” is also a paraphrase of “*Salve festa dies.*” First published in 1869, it repeats the first line as a refrain, similar to the repeated refrain in its counterpart. Verses two and three, drawn from the original, speak of the coming of spring and the idea that the renewal of nature symbolizes Christ’s victory over death. Perhaps unfortunately, the *Hymnal* gives us permission to omit these and we usually do. The melody was written by Sir Arthur Sullivan—yes, the Sullivan of Gilbert and Sullivan—who also wrote the melody for “*Onward Christian Soldiers.*”

“*Jesus Christ is Risen Today*” is not quite so old. Its roots only date back to 14th century Bohemia and a Latin hymn starting with the words “*Surrexit Christus hodie, Alleluia.*” An English translation first appeared in London in 1708 as part of a move to break away from the reliance on Psalm-singing that was in vogue at the time. It was explained as “a desire for a little freer air than the grand movement of the Psalm tunes” and as fitting to use at the Easter celebration for which there was no truly appropriate Psalm. It was set to a somewhat more “florid” version of the tune with which we are familiar. Several alterations were made to the melody, to make it easier for congregations. and to the words, but by 1816 the hymn was what we sing today but with an interesting addition. The fourth verse, a doxology, was originally written as a single stanza and optional addition by Charles Wesley in 1740, but soon became a fixed part of this hymn. Part of the hymn’s festive nature comes from the ending of every line with “alleluia” following the Lenten season with no alleluias--and it is one of the most widely used Easter hymns across denominations today.

In this pandemic year, whether you attend our live service and can only sing along in your mind, or watch at home on your computer where you can sing loudly and joyfully, know that you are joining not just with others from the Church of Our Saviour but also with Christians who have joyfully sung these hymns in one form or another for centuries! –**Jane Rainey**

Sources:

Church Pension Fund, *The Hymnal 1940 Companion*, 3rd edition. 1951.

<https://sermonwriter.com/hymn-stories/jesus-christ-risen-today/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ_Is_Risen_Today

<https://wordwisehymns.com/2014/11/07/welcome-happy-morning/>

Report from the Evangelism Committee

We have lots of activity going on in the Evangelism Committee. We want the congregation to be aware of these.



First, we have a design for new tee-shirts that can be worn when we are out in public. The shirts have a beautiful design and will help us in outreach, letting people know who we are. Both short and long sleeve shirts will be available. Information on ordering will be released in the next few weeks.

Second, we now have a design for a sign that will be placed near the road in the front of the church. The sign will be carved on both sides with lettering identifying the church, along with information about the service times, our web site and phone number, and an invitation welcoming all. This information will soon be made available to the Vestry.

Third, we are going to make individual videos for our website. Different videos will discuss why we are Christians, why we are Episcopalians, and why we are members of Our Saviour. Six members of different ages have volunteered to share their personal stories.

Fourth, a trifold is being designed to give to local realtors and visitors to our church.

Finally, we are currently involved in a program on evangelism from the national church. "Embracing Evangelism" will help us learn to be evangelistic. The committee has now completed one of the six videos that are part of the program. We want to present the program to the entire congregation beginning in June.

We hope you will find the news about our activities as exciting as we do! **Glen Click, Chair of the Evangelism Committee**

How Can I Keep from Singing?

Another Easter Sunday has been celebrated. With the virus still threatening, I may not be worshipping in person for the second year in a row. But one thing I do know, whether in church or online, I'll be singing and humming the beloved Easter hymns all the day long. How can I keep from singing?



Please be assured that I am not auditioning for Our Saviour's stalwart choir. I wasn't born a nightingale, more like a warbler. But I do love those Easter hymns, especially the ones with the al-le-lu-ias. My personal favorite, "Jesus Christ is Risen Today, Al-le-lu-ia..." For me, that hymn is the Easter Gospel in song. Al-le-lu-ia! No wonder it's been published in 450 hymnals.

Looking through our hymnal, I see that some of the old hymns are a bit gloomy with words like "terrors," "prisons," "Satan," and "death's strong bands." I prefer the happy, joyful Easter hymns because, after all, aren't we all happy on Easter? On your way to the Easter service, either in the car or in front of your TV or computer, don't you just tingle with joy that Easter Sunday is here at last? That's why I love this hymn so much: "Welcome, happy morning! Age to age shall say: hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!"

I could go on, so keep your six-foot distance from me, mainly to protect your hearing from my terrible singing. I'm already warbling the words to "Hail thee, festival day! Blest day that art hallowed forever, ..."

But for me, the most triumphant moment in Easter services or concerts occurs whenever I hear the majestic strains of Handel's beloved *Hallelujah Chorus* from the world's most famous oratorio, **The Messiah**. The people stand, singing those immortal words as congregations have since the **Messiah's** debut in Dublin 275 years ago. Why do we stand? Legend has it that King George II on hearing the *Hallelujah Chorus* for the first time in 1743 was so moved by the beauty of the music that he impulsively stood. Seeing the King standing, the audience stood with him, and we've been doing it ever since.

How Can I Keep from Singing? This is a real song that folk singers, choirs, and Sunday School children have been singing since Robert Lowry, a minister, wrote it for an 1869 song book, *Bright Jewels for the Sunday School*. Although not an Easter hymn, it could be. Just listen to these words in the first two verses:

My life goes on in endless song
Above earth's lamentations,
I hear the real, though far-off hymn
That hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear its music ringing,
It sounds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing?

Sandra Plant

Lunches for Homeless



The members of our Outreach Committee continue our vital ministry of providing lunches and face masks for the homeless men, women and children in Richmond. You can support this ministry by bringing to church on Sundays or on our Love Your Church Day individual snacks (crackers, granola bars, etc.), bottled beverages (juices, Gatorade, water), and fruit cups. We are providing lunches for between 15 and 25 homeless persons/families every Friday in downtown Richmond.

Heartfelt thanks are extended to **Louise, Ollie, Phoebe, Michele, Janie, Pat, Leslie Farris, Leslie Berger, Linda and Laura**, who are working so hard to make this ministry such a success. Thank you.

Upcoming Celebrations: Birthdays in April

Leslie Berger April 3rd
Michele Gore April 2nd
Ollie Jordan April 2nd
Ian Feedback April 2nd
Karon Click April 8th

If you have any upcoming birthdays, anniversaries, or any good news that you would like to share, please contact me at rukasa05@aol.com.



Parish Calendar



Saturday, April 10: Love Your Church Day at Our Saviour (Rain date: April 17)
Monday, April 12: Vestry Meeting, 7-8 PM
Thursday, April 22: International Earth Day
Saturday, May 1: Vestry Retreat
May 6: National Day of Prayer
May 9: Mother's Day
May 10, 11, 12: Rogation Days

Ancient Joke of the Week

Young Ernie and his family were invited to have Easter lunch at his Grandmother's house. Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When Ernie received his plate, he started eating right away. "Ernie, wait until we say Grace!" demanded his father. "I don't have to." Replied the 5-year-old. "Of course, you do Ernest!" his mother insisted rather vehemently. "We always say a prayer before eating at our house!" "That's at our house!" Ernie explained. "But this is Grandma's house and she knows how to cook!"

A father was reading Bible Stories to his young son. He read "The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee the city, but his wife looked back and was turned into salt!" His son asked, "What happened to the flea?"