

Maundy Thursday 2025

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia

As we all know, there are distinctive hallmarks that make us Anglican. We are proud members of the Church of England, where we claim for our own things like The Book of Common Prayer, Cranmer, the great archbishops, a quite resolve in our faith, our love of good hymn tunes, Anglican chant. But there are few things quite as Anglican as knowing where we sit in church, and making sure that we get the same seat every time we come in.

I am pleased to let you know that I have firmly established for myself where this seat is here in St Mary's. It's not the president's throne behind the altar, where I find myself on a Sunday morning. No, it's a spot I first sat in a number of months ago when I came to look round this beautiful parish. It happened to be – without any great thought – the seat I sat in on my first morning for morning prayer, which we say daily in church at 9am – do come along if you don't already!

There was no reason I chose this seat, particularly, except that it wasn't at the front and it wasn't at the back. If I'd thought a bit more carefully about it, I might have chosen a seat nearer a comfy pillar to lean on, or a heating vent. I might have thought really I should demonstrate myself as a bit keener and sat nearer the front, or

whatever. But I didn't. For better or for worse, I chose where I chose because I did. And now, that will – likely – be where I sit for the many decades I intend to be here. Because I'm an Anglican.

But sitting there has some fantastic benefits. It is about the first seat in the Langton Chapel to be bathed in the early morning sun, when it creeps round from the East End. So, in that sense, I see the sunrise, as the south wall's clockface finally wakes for the day. I feel the warmth, find my eyes startled by its brightness each day, as we pray at the day's opening, 'O Lord open our lips'.

Easter Day is a day of seeing the dawn, whether we're up early for [this / the] dawn service or not. When we meet Christ this morning, he comes to us as the sun first breaking into warmth on a spring morning.

The Vigil itself [- for those who missed it -] originates in a service that would begin with sunset the previous evening, following a serious period of fasting. It would then continue all night with the fire and candle being kindled at the first light of morning; it's for that reason that we change the start time for the service to be sure that it does start in darkness. [The service then continues with readings, mainly from the Old Testament, telling of the story of our salvation, and the liberation that we find in God.] All the readings we now read, not in darkness, as the service was originally intended, but after the fire and the light have been lit, symbolising that these stories we read and interpret by the light of Christ.

[The Easter candle remains at the front of church for the whole season of Easter, reminding us that Christ's light, kindled at Easter, is the light that remains with us in our daily living. After that, it moves to beside the font, symbolising the light that we find in Christ being the light of all baptised Christians.]

And so on this Easter day, as Christ's morning light beams into our lives, we wake to the possibility of all life now illumined by his goodness and love.

We come to church today, as the women do in the Gospel account, not sure what we will find. Perhaps we come here expecting everything to remain as it was before; perhaps we come hoping against hope that something will have happened. On that first Easter morning, they were greeted by the light of angels, pointing them to the realities of risen life.

In our daily living, we see not angels, but signs nonetheless. Angels flit from heaven to earth and back again. They are messengers that take messages from God, of course, but they also see the things of earth. They see and feel the joy of earth, knowing that it is united with the source of all goodness. They see and feel too the pain of earth, and that is also received into the heavenly courts.

So when we call ourselves Easter people, full of life and hope and light for the world, we are changed. The journey to church today is

the journey of our lives; it is the experience of coming looking, hoping, dreaming, wanting. But here, all these expectations have been met and so much more.

Because today, this morning, Christ is risen, and angels are here to point the way.

This dawn is the same dawn of every day, but the heat, the light, the signs of God that we see this day are different. They are changed by knowing that in Christ rising, death is defeated, hope lives forever, and God's coming to earth is good news for every day.

Our lives are not the same after seeing the empty tomb, the angels pointing, and the light emanating from this place. Wherever we find our seat here, however comfortable or familiar it is, whatever feels like routine and pattern to us might just bring us to a place where we see the dawning of a new day every day.

And so our Alleluia is a cry of thanksgiving, of joy, of love. Because in the risen Christ, our hungers are satisfied, tears are wiped away, and life is renewed.

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