



# Kaurihohore Historic Church

Email: [kaurichurch@gmail.com](mailto:kaurichurch@gmail.com) Phone: 946 0813



## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 14 April 2024 – Easter 3

The service this morning is led by Rev Freddy De Alwis

### **Welcome to Kaurihohore Historic Church**

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

***Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.***

**Curiosity:** we are committed to a life of learning, questioning, and exploring the mystery of God, Jesus, and the Bible.

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**Please join us after worship for a cup of coffee or tea in the kitchen or on the deck.**

**Community time** during the service is a good opportunity to ask for prayers for yourself or others. If you, or someone you know, would appreciate a visit from one of our **Pastoral Network Team**, please speak to the service leader.

### **Welcome and Introduction:**

**Song HFTC s 28: [This is the Day](#)** (Les Garrett)

### **Call to Worship:**

We adore you risen Lord Jesus.  
As Brothers and sisters gathered together from different cultures,  
languages and families yet part of the worldwide family of God;  
We re-affirm as one voice,

**We adore you risen Lord.**

The darkness is gone

**Bright light floods into this new day of hope.**

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

Those who went to the tomb received good news.

**Christ was not there!**

Christ is risen in our hearts and our spirits!

**Christ is risen from the dead! Alleluia! Amen!**

**Hymn HFTC 260: [Great is Your Faithfulness](#)**

*(T.O. Chisholm 1866-1960)*

### **Celebrations and Notices**

**Prayer of Confession:** (based on Luke 24:36ff)

We gather here as a fellowship of people who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. One of the major marks of this fellowship is the sense of joy we experience as we gather to worship God, to give thanks for Jesus Christ and to witness to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Yet, we admit that there are times when we feel afraid, abandoned, and lonely; when faith leads to doubt and questions rather than a sense of joy or peace of mind. Lord Jesus Christ, unlike those first disciples, we cannot touch you or see you, and so it is all too easy to become downcast and given to despair.

**Forgive us when, like the disciples, we find the truth of Easter hard to believe.**

Come to us, risen Christ, come through the closed doors of our hearts and minds and take away our fears and doubts;

**Come to us, risen Christ, breathe on us  
and fill us with the joy and peace of your presence.**

Bless us all as people, who have not seen you,  
but who believe that you are truly the risen Christ, Son of God.

Hear the good news: "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"....

So I declare to you: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn HFTC s 19: Make Me a Channel of Your Peace**

*(from the Traditional Prayer Sebastian Temple)*

1. Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.  
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord  
And where there's doubt true faith in you.

CHORUS.

*O Master grant that I may never seek,  
so much to be consoled as to console.  
To be understood as to understand.  
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

2. Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope.  
Where there is darkness only light  
And where there's sadness ever joy.

CHORUS.

*O Master grant that I may never seek,  
so much to be consoled as to console.  
To be understood as to understand.  
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

3. Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.  
In giving of ourselves that we receive,  
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

CHORUS.

*O Master grant that I may never seek,  
so much to be consoled as to console.  
To be understood as to understand.  
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

Repeat V.1

**Reading:** Luke 24: 36-49

**Reflection: “Peace be with you”**

Our Lectionary readings for this Sunday are Luke 24:36-48 & Acts 2

Soon after the death and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, his followers were locked in the upper room in Jerusalem. They were overwhelmed by **fear**, **uncertainty** and **confusion**. They could not see any possibility of hope. They were unable to get over the horrific scene of the crucifixion. They were disappointed, discouraged, feeling betrayed and now living crucified lock-down lives.

In our reading we see Jesus suddenly appear in the midst of them. He gave them the eastern greeting “Peace be with you”, according to John 20:22, then he breathed the **Spirit** into them. The **breath of Christ** brought life back to these men and women.

It doesn't matter what situation you are in, in any situation or context Jesus brings life to the people who are in the midst of **uncertainty and fear**, and also those who are living in the shadow of the cross. In the same way, the disciples were driven out of their fearful isolated safe locked room, and later they began to proclaim the **HOPE**, the Good News of Jesus' resurrection; they proved the assurance of HOPE that dry bones can live; that life comes from death and in Christ there is always HOPE!

Our Gospel reading this morning also talks about **doubts**. When we talk about doubts, it has a negative connotation, but realistically it can be hard for us to be honest about **our doubts**. I have found conversations about doubt often beginning with “I don't think I believe all of this stuff.” or “I'm not sure I believe in God.” or “Am I going to hell because I question the resurrection?” How are we going to respond to these questions?

Most of us, in our desire to follow Christ, earnestly want to get it “right.” Many of us have been raised in traditions where we are encouraged to make a personal proclamation that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour. Some of us were scolded for questioning or doubting the tradition as it had been handed down. Others have been taught that every word in the Bible is the word of God. And so if we doubt, we experience shame, condemnation or exclusion etc. Why can't I just believe the way everybody else does? Why do I question so much? We find in the disciples, a company of doubting; Mary Magdalene doubted when she saw the empty tomb. Peter doubted when he denied Jesus. All of the disciples doubted when they locked themselves in the room that Easter evening.

Yet of all the disciples, the one we most associate with doubt is Thomas. He refused to believe when he heard the resurrection account from the other disciples. Reflecting the doubts of so many of us, he bravely declares, “Unless I see it for myself, I will not believe it.” Theologian Paul Tillich, in his classic book Dynamics of Faith, claimed that doubt is in fact **an inescapable and essential part of faith**.

According to Tillich, faith is what happens when a finite being is 'grasped by and turned to the infinite.' Because we are limited in our understanding, there will always be things about the infinite nature and character of God that we cannot understand, try as we might. Yet, ... it is important to try... an unquestioning faith is no faith at all, because it shows a lack of engagement and the lack of honest dialogue with the divine." This engagement is risky though, because we may question and hear no answer, or we may hear an answer that we don't want to hear. Following in the footsteps of Thomas, we find we can doubt, and still have our faith; in fact, doubt may strengthen our faith. Thomas sees the resurrected Christ who somehow walks through walls and also bears the wounds of the crucifixion.

Christ meets us where we are too. Friends, I don't want to talk too much of the current COVID 19 situation, which has not yet left us, but we manage to live with it. Another fact is the there are millions of people who have no hope for the future. Today, there are about 32 million children who have been uprooted from their homes, including Ukrainian children with this on-going war. Look, what is happening in Palestine including children, over two million were internally displaced. Another factor in our world is millions of families left their homes and became refugees in unknown countries and are also internally displaced within their home countries - all together, 65 million refugees and asylum seekers. All of them are living under the shadow of the Cross.

Each day, wars, disasters, climate change and extreme poverty drive people from their homes to the Cross. COVID-19 only adds to their miserable vulnerability. What can I say, I was listening to American senate member **Tim Walberg (ordained Pastor)**. In his address he said this "***We shouldn't be spending a dime on humanitarian aid. It should be like Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Get it over quick.***" What we see and hear that Palestinians have no value as human beings, thinking these are disposable, vulnerable sectors of the Modern society and also prone to be call collateral, when they were killed.

It is true that there is going to be a worldwide economic downturn. Nobody can say how long this is likely to last. I am very concerned about the bad situation in my home country Sri Lanka and even in New Zealand. The economic depression can cause drastic declines in output, severe unemployment in almost every country of the world. This thought might pre-occupy our hearts and minds, and it may bring **fear, uncertainty, confusion and depression**. It is the same thought in the minds of the disciples when they lock their doors.

When Jesus entered the room where the disciples had been gathered in lockdown, or in their bubble, Jesus came to them with a greeting of peace. When Jesus said, "**Peace be with you**", he was reminding them of the peace he had promised to them before he had been crucified. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. Just as "the Lord had formed man/woman out of the dust of the earth and breathed life into their nostrils."

Just as Ezekiel was commanded to breathe new life into the dry bones, “Jesus breathed his own Holy Spirit into the disciples, giving them eternal life.” And then, filled with his peace, filled with his Spirit, they could spread HOPE, the Resurrection News to the world.

Love is stronger than hate.

Light is stronger than dark.

Life is stronger than death.

The Resurrection News spread like wildfire. We know from the letter to the Hebrews, “... faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

My friends, I want you to understand that doubting and questioning are a part of the faith journey. So is hope. In my own life, I have found that every time I go through a “dark night,” or a period of feeling unsure, I come out the other side with a new and deeper understanding of God. The time of doubt is dark, but not something of which we should be ashamed...

Now we are in the midst of questioning WHY Lord, WHY? Please continue to pray and wonder, and question. It is a way to be in relationship, even when we are not sure. But question with hope. Hope for even in the midst of fear, uncertainty. Believing God’s grace will carry us through this difficult period, the assurance is the Spirit of Christ comes to us where we are - maybe not in our timing or in the way we expect, but trust that belief is possible. God’s grace is persistent and greater than our disbelief. Trust that God will grasp us and turn us into people of resurrection, HOPE and the infinite.

Blessed are we who have not seen, as Mary Magdalene, Peter, Thomas, and the 500, saw, and yet believe—even if we can only believe in the possibility of believing. The Spirit Christ breathed on the apostles, is breathed on YOU and ME as well. It gives us new life to live as messengers of HOPE.

Leonardo Boff speaks of resurrection as a process when he writes: “He penetrates the entire cosmos, pervades the whole world, and makes his presence felt in every human being”. The resurrection is a process that began with Jesus and that will go on until it embraces all creation. Wherever human life is growing in the world, wherever justice is triumphing over the instincts of domination. Wherever grace is winning out over the power of sin, wherever human beings are gathering in social life together, wherever love is getting the better of selfish interests, and wherever hope is resisting the lure of cynicism or despair, there the process of resurrection is being turned into a reality. The resurrection is not only an event in history; it is a process embracing YOU and ME, and all of creation at this very moment, and for all eternity.

May God bless you and keep you safe.

**Peace be with you.**

**Amen**

## **Hymn HIOS 111: Peace Be With You**

*(Shirley Erena Murray)*

1. "Peace be with you," says the risen Christ,  
Peace be with us as we hold the word,  
Peace determine us, peace affirm in us  
Ways to honour what our hearts have heard.
2. Peace be with us in the day-to-day,  
Peace connecting all our dreams and drives,  
Peace the patient thing, peace that draws the sting,  
Potent healer of our broken lives.
3. Peace be with us in the hour of death,  
Peace in darkness on the way of trust,  
Peace in letting go all we have or know,  
Peace, the presence of the living Christ.

## **Prayers of the People & Intercessory Prayers:** **Lord's Prayer:**

### **Offertory Prayer:**

## **Hymn HFTC 169: [I Know That My Redeemer Lives](#)** *(Samuel Medley, 1738-99, Tune: Duke Street)*

## **Benediction and Grace:**

Go in Peace to love and serve!

**We go in Jesus' name**

Let us greet one another with grace!

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.**

**Amen, Amen, Amen.**