



**KAURIHOHORE / KAMO**  
**CO-OPERATING PARISH**

[kaurichurch.methodist.org.nz](http://kaurichurch.methodist.org.nz)

[kaurichurch@gmail.com](mailto:kaurichurch@gmail.com)

(09) 946 0813

59 Apotu Road, Kaurihohore



**Sunday 5 April 2026 – Easter Sunday**

Our Service today is led by Kimberley Nielsen,  
one of our Lay Preachers.

**Welcome to our service this morning.**

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

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

**Sustainability:** we care for and strive to restore the integrity of the Earth and all of creation.

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

Video playing before the service as people are coming in –  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjCzPp-MK48&t=1s>

## Welcome

Kia ora, and welcome to church this morning – Easter Sunday. My name is Kimberley, and I am one of the lay preachers here at Kaurihohore.

Today we celebrate the risen Christ, whose life cannot be contained by tombs or endings. In the joy of the empty tomb, we hear a new rhythm of hope and love, calling us to join in and to share this life with others.

## Opening Words

Before new life springs from the ground

**there is a seed...** (silence)

Before the sun shines on a new day

**there is the setting of the moon...** (silence)

Before we know the joy of community

**there is aloneness...** (silence)

Before music is heard

**there is stillness...** (silence)

Before Easter alleluias are shouted

**there is a time to remember...** (silence)

## Hymn – [Christ the Lord is Risen Today](#) (Complete Mission Praise 76)

1. Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Mortal tongues and angels say: Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, glad heavens, and earth reply: Alleluia!

2. Let the Victor's people sing, Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now your sting? Alleluia!  
Dying once, Christ lives to save, Alleluia!  
Where your victory, O grave? Alleluia!

3. Love's redeeming work is done. Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids Christ rise, Alleluia!  
God has opened paradise, Alleluia!

4. Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
Made like Christ, like Christ we rise, Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

## **Candle Liturgy**

The light which the world tried to extinguish cannot be put out. Today we light the candles again, proclaiming the transforming power of God. As the light returns, we give thanks that God's transforming love has been, is now, and will ever be at work within us. Today we celebrate: new life, new joy, new possibilities. Christ is alive and living among us!

As we light the candles, we acknowledge that there is still pain and suffering in the world, but we place our trust in God and in the way shown by Jesus Christ. In the midst of darkness, there is light. In the pain of death, there is life. In the face of what appear to us to be overwhelming odds, God is at work in us and in the world, working for justice and peace, compassion and love, and life abundant. Christ is risen; Christ is risen in us, for wherever we gather in his name, he is there.

*(All candles are re-lit.)*

**Alleluia, Christ is risen; Christ is risen indeed!**

## Call to Worship

Christ is alive,

**Moving among the living.**

Christ is risen,

**Inviting us to rise in fullness of life.**

Christ is calling,

**Proclaiming life and hope for all.**

## Opening Prayer

O God, we come as Easter people to open our eyes to new sights and sounds.

We come to find resurrection even when Good Friday hangs so heavily in our world.

We come to be changed by songs of birds and angels and find new signs of life all around us.

We come to find that we can be different when we open our eyes and ears to joy.

We come to touch and smell the good news and find that you, O God, make all things new again.

We come to praise you with all of our whole bodies. Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

**Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia!**

## Hymn – [Because He Lives](#) (*Complete Mission Praise 52*)

1. God sent His son,  
They called Him, Jesus;  
He came to love,  
Heal and forgive;  
He lived and died  
To show that love wins,  
An empty grave is there  
To prove my Saviour lives!

*Chorus*  
*Because He lives,*  
*I can face tomorrow!*  
*Because He lives,*  
*All fear is gone.*  
*Because I know*  
*He holds the future,*  
*And life is worth the living,*  
*Just because He lives!*

2. How sweet to hold  
A newborn baby,  
And feel the pride  
And joy he brings;  
But greater still  
The calm assurance:  
This child can face  
Uncertain days because He Lives!

*Chorus*

3. And then one day,  
I'll cross the river,  
I'll fight life's final  
War with pain;  
And then, as death  
Gives way to victory,  
I'll see the lights of glory  
And I'll know He lives!

*Chorus*

### **Prayer of Centring & Renewal**

Oh God, we stretch out our hands  
to you in this early Easter darkness.  
We need you to pull us up and set us  
on our feet again,  
for we are weak and tired.

God, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Spirit, have mercy.

God, on that first Easter morning  
while it was still dark,  
one woman went alone to the tomb  
to do what could be done to honour you,  
though hope had drained away.  
Two bright angels met her there, and then –  
*how is it possible?*  
you were there. fully alive, beyond belief.

Blessed are we who stretch out our hands  
to you  
in doubt and grief,  
in sickness of body and mind and spirit,  
our prayers not fully realized,  
rejoicing... anyway.

For that is what makes us Easter people:  
carrying forth the realized hope of the  
Resurrected One,  
singing our alleluias great and small,  
while it is still dark.

Christ is risen. Christ will come again.  
Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

*(Source: Kate Bowler, The Lives We Actually Have)*

### **Reading – Matthew 28:1-10, The Message**

<sup>1-4</sup> After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move.

<sup>5-6</sup> The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed.

<sup>7</sup> "Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, 'He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message."

<sup>8-10</sup> The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "Good morning!" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there."

**Hymn – Psalm 117** - (<https://psalms.seedbed.com/psalm-117/>)

(Tune: [Amazing Grace](#))

*(Sing the whole psalm through twice)*

Praise give the Lord, you nations all;  
All peoples, praise now bring.  
Extol the Lord, you peoples all,  
Extol Him—praise and sing!

His lovingkindness does abound;  
His love toward us is sure.  
The Lord's great faithfulness endures  
Forever—praise the Lord!

**Contemporary Reading: Hope is a Spark, by Colin Buchanan, illustrated by Serena Geddes (Rory)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFHEf2g4lrs>

## **Reflection**

As I began thinking about this service a month or so back, I was struck by the thought – Do we still need Easter? Or, to put it another way, what does Easter have to offer the people of Aotearoa New Zealand?

New Zealand is now a post-Christian country - According to the 2023 census, there are now more people in NZ who identify as non-religious than religious; our recorded rates of Christianity continue to drop (there were 32.3% self-reported Christians in 2023); Jesus has been removed from the parliamentary prayer; and just this past week our laws have changed to allow the sale of alcohol over Easter – these are not issues I feel particularly strongly about either way, but I believe they show that Christianity is no longer considered culturally significant.

Some academics suggest that this drop in self-reported Christians is because people are now less likely to identify as Christian if they don't attend church regularly, whereas before they would tick the box if their Grandmother was Anglican and she sometimes took them to church on Easter. This certainly could be one explanation, but we also know that across all denominations congregations are getting smaller and older.

I recently listened to a podcast where [comedian Trevor Noah interviewed Zohran Mamdani](#). Mamdani made international headlines last year when he, a 34-year-old Ugandan born Muslim, was elected 112<sup>th</sup> mayor of New York City. Because New York is one of the most expensive cities in the world, and approximately 25% of New Yorkers live in poverty, Mamdani campaigned on 3 issues: Universal free childcare; making public busses faster and free; and freezing rent. There's a point in the interview where he tells Trevor that people often came up to him to say they liked his policies, but he'd never be able to make them happen, they had no hope that things would ever get any better.

Trevor responds with "I sometimes think it's because of the decline of religion on the left." Like New Zealand, and many other western countries around the world, America is also experiencing the rise of the nones, that's N-O-N-E-S, those who are non-religiously affiliated.

Mamdani agreed, saying:

"Republicans have a limitless imagination. And as Democrats, we're constructing an ever-lowering ceiling of possibility. You know, and we are robbing ourselves of ambition and imagination, and we're telling people that their choice is between settling or sacrifice. And neither of these are enough. You have to have an affirmative vision of how life can be better than this, because this life already is suffocating people."

Putting aside the American political context, I couldn't help but feel this choice between settling or sacrifice is still a very relatable scenario for many here in Aotearoa. If anything, our recent Building Better Communities series shows that, for many, sacrifice appears to be the only option, even when everything else is already being taken from them. Even for those of us who have enough financial stability to roll with the punches a little better, the thought of things improving for anyone feels too good to be true.

There's then a discussion on the podcast about religion vs faith, leading Trevor to say:

"One of the things that faith requires of you is the ability to believe that this current state that you are in is not the end. There is a possibility that something can be greater. And even though you cannot see it, you believe that it can happen."

Which leads me to wonder – is the rise in non-religious affiliation in New Zealand bringing with it a loss of hope? A loss of belief that things can and will get better?

Right now, it appears safe to assume that hope is low:

- methamphetamine use has more than doubled in Northland since 2022, while cocaine use reached its highest levels ever in 2025;
- 180 people were living on the streets of Whangarei in October 2025, with 540 people in Whangarei and 1,200 across Te Tai Tokerau on social housing waitlists;
- New Zealand is in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of a cost of living crisis, with 165,000 people unemployed in December 2025;
- business confidence fell from 59 to 33% between February and March this year;
- inflation continues to rise;
- the price of essentials like groceries and electricity are going up;
- a fuel crisis looms.

Of course, the decline in Christianity isn't the only reason for loss of hope in the current social and political environment – there's a lot of rough stuff happening out there which I imagine is having way more of an impact. But I do think there's something to be said for the importance of Easter.

Which brings me to my initial question: What does Easter have to offer the people of Aotearoa New Zealand?

Reflecting on that question over the past few weeks I believe that the answer here is **hope**. Throughout the church year we tell the story of a God who loves the world so much they came, as a tiny human baby, to live among their creation. Growing into a man and experiencing the world through human eyes. As Mike said on Friday, “[Jesus] practiced a ministry of radical inclusivity, drawing to himself all the despised and rejected members of society. He lived what he taught: a life of justice and love, of profound compassion for all people.”

At Easter we tell the story of Jesus who suffered and died, but whose death was not the end, reminding us that death and evil do not have the final word. Even when it looks like evil has won, because of the resurrected Christ, we now know that ultimately love is the victor.

The story of Easter Sunday begins with “while it was still dark” and while the world feels pretty dark right now, we know that God is at work amidst our pain and confusion, our heartache and anger, that things are not the way we know they should be.

When the Marys visit the tomb, experience an earthquake, see an angel, and watch the guards become “like dead men”, the angel says to them “do not be afraid” (v5). So, whatever you are facing today, because we know that Jesus is alive, that death could not defeat him, you too do not need to be afraid. This is not to go all Pollyanna on you; life can throw some terrible curveballs and your feelings toward them are valid. But know that the resurrected Jesus, the God incarnate who has experienced what it is to be human and all that has to offer – the good and the bad - is with you as you face the future.

The next thing the angel says to the Marys is “come and see” (v6). Jesus’ resurrection was, and is, a hard thing to believe, but the angels invite the Marys to view the evidence, to see for themselves that he was no longer lying dead in the tomb. Do not be afraid to bring your doubts and your questions to God, you might be surprised at the response you get.

The Marys are then told to “go and tell” (v 7). We too need to talk about the reason for the hope we have. Michelle Obama once said, “courage is contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own”. When we are vulnerable and tell our stories, God uses those stories to inspire others, bringing hope that God can, and does, turn darkness to light.

Finally, the Marys meet the resurrected Jesus. They have final undeniable confirmation that what the angel told them was true – Jesus had been raised from the dead! Jesus reminds them to not be afraid and to go and tell the others what has happened, along with instructions on what they can do to meet the resurrected Jesus for themselves.

The resurrection of Jesus is not just a past event; it’s a present reality. It means that even in the face of fear, grief or uncertainty, God is at work bringing life, joy, and hope. The risen Christ meets us where we are and sends us out with courage and purpose.

You are important. Your life is important. Your story is important. Be courageous as, with God’s help, you share the reason for your hope in a world that desperately needs to hear it.

Do not be afraid.  
Come and see.  
Go and tell.  
They will see.  
Amen.

**Hymn – In Christ Alone (Complete Mission Praise 1072)**

1. In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid ground,  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

2. In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save:  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The love of God was satisfied –  
For every sin on Him was laid;  
Here in the death of Christ I live.

3. There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain:  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine –  
Held in the saving love of Christ.

4. No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand:  
Till He returns or calls me home,  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

## Offering Dedication

We give thanks, O God, for you are good.

You have been our help and hope, calling us to be help and hope for the world.

You live among us, calling us to share life and love with all creation.

Bless the gifts we bring before you, that they may be signs of your life, hope, and love.

Amen.

## Prayer for Others/Intercession

We pray now for ourselves and others...

For the peoples of the world, living through loss and longing,

For refugees, mourners, and peacemakers,

For those who sit in the dark before the dawn,

**Risen Christ, bring new life and hope.**

For our nation and its leaders,

facing choices that shape the common good,

For wisdom rooted in justice, and compassion that acts,

For courage to name truth and serve all people,

**Risen Christ, bring new life and hope.**

For the church in every place, called to be witness and light,

For prophets and preachers, for doubters and dreamers,

For a resurrection faith that listens and leads,

**Risen Christ, bring new life and hope.**

For our communities, filled with pain and promise,

For neighbours who grieve, and children who hope,

For kindness to rise like dawn, again and again,

**Risen Christ, bring new life and hope.**

For all who suffer – in mind, body, or spirit,

For the lonely, the fearful, the sick, and the weary,

For presence that heals and companions who stay,

**Risen Christ, bring new life and hope.**

For those who have gone before us,

and the saints who still guide,

For stories passed down in love and light,

For hope that carries us through every sorrow,

**Risen Christ, bring new life and hope. Amen.**

## Hymn – O Love That Will Not Let Me Go (HFTC 486)

1. O Love, that will not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee;  
I give you back the life I owe,  
That in your ocean depths its  
flow  
May richer, fuller be.
2. O Light that follows all my way,  
Renew your radiance in me:  
I welcome your life-giving ray  
That in your sunshine's blaze  
each day  
May brighter, fairer be.
3. O Joy, that seeks for me through  
pain,  
Restore your hopefulness to me;  
I trace the rainbow through the  
rain,  
And trust your promise once  
again:  
That dawn shall tearless be.
4. O Cross, that raises up my  
head,  
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there  
blossoms red,  
Life that shall endless be.

### **Blessing**

Go and proclaim the Risen Christ.  
Go and live as the risen children of God.  
Go and be Easter people –  
People filled with hope and life and love for all the world.

### **Sung Amen x 3**

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