

***He is risen indeed. Alleluia!***

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor  
Revd Rebecca Newland  
Easter Day—20 April 2014

*Acts 10.34-43; the Hymn to the Risen Christ; Colossians 3.1-4; Matthew 28.1-10*

Did you ever play the game “Freeze” as a child? The group is running and playing as though everything were normal and then the one who is ‘it’ yells, “Freeze!” Everyone has to freeze exactly as they are when they hear the word. The first person to stumble or move from their “frozen position” is ‘it’ for the next round.

There are moments in all of our lives that are frozen in time and frozen in our memories. They can be good moments, or bad moments. Moments of utter joy and moments of profound grief. Whatever else they may be, these are moments that are locked in our hearts and minds because of the power they hold for our lives. You can almost relive them now.

Remember?

That first kiss.

The time she or he said, “Yes.”

A look on the doctor's face.

The day a child was born.

The time your mortgage was approved on the first house.

The time you lost the person you loved most.

All of these are moments that are locked in place; in some sense time stops when these frozen moments are called to mind. The most dramatic of them all are those moments of life and death that make up the greatest, most wonderful and the worst, most devastating, events of our living.

‘Defining’ moments some people might call them. As we gather on this Easter Sunday, we celebrate the single most important defining moment of our Christian faith—the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Without this defining moment, none of the other defining moments of life of faith would ever make sense. Without this moment, Jesus would have remained an obscure, forgotten, first-century rabbi who amounted to nothing.

This defining moment is why our processional cross does not have a figure of Jesus on it. It is not a crucifix—it is an empty cross. We follow a Lord who was raised from death to life and who is alive. Alleluia!!

Alleluia, because the pain and suffering we encounter on Good Friday are not the end.  
Alleluia!

Alleluia, because, despite humanity's terrible propensity to violence, God does not walk away.  
Alleluia!

Alleluia, because, in the face of our fears, griefs and doubts, Jesus stands with us and says, “Do not be afraid. I go before you.” Alleluia!

Alleluia, because in Jesus we are offered forgiveness and redemption. Alleluia!

And this is pure grace. Pure, life-giving grace.

For Jesus to be raised from the dead, we humans did not have to do anything. His followers didn't have to do penance. His betrayers did not have to be punished. His murderers did not have to be condemned. For Jesus to be raised from the dead took one thing and one thing

only—the power of a loving God who made it happen—and who then in Jesus offered us peace and a relationship of love and goodness.

For Jesus to be raised from the dead we humans did not have to follow the law or doctrine or rules. We did not have to earn merit or be perfect. We did not have to be reincarnated enough times until we became worthy. We did not have to know our holy books and memorize our prayers. For Jesus to be raised from the dead it took one thing and one thing only—the power of a completely loving God.

Through the resurrection of Jesus the creator of the universe, the ground of all being, the loving energy of all reaches into our lives and is present to us—despite the way we are, despite the way the world is, despite what humanity has done or will do.

We process behind an empty cross because we are living in a resurrected Lord and the new creation of God.

Jesus Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!