

Easter prayers outdoors

Easter offers us hope, whatever our situation and our fears. Sometimes the journey to get there is enormously hard, we have to pass through the cross before resurrection; winter before spring. But Easter hope is always present to us in God, even in the midst of troubles.

These prayers invite us to notice and appreciate the life bursting forward in God's creation, and to allow this to renew us in the hope of Easter. The focus is on nature itself, but there are some prayers and readings that you may like to include.

There are various options here, hopefully something for everyone.



Exploring the bible in nature:

- Find a spot where you are comfortable to sit or stand.
- Take a moment to invite God to be with you.
- Read a short reading, a couple of times through.
- Invite God to speak
- Notice what grabs your attention.
- Put the words away and go for a short stroll or focus on something in creation that you can see or hear.
- Allow what you can see or hear in the natural world to bring extra depth to your reflections.
- Take your reflections into prayer.
- Give thanks to God.



Suggested readings:

Easter week:

Short reading: When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). (John 20.14-16)

Longer reading: John 20.11-18

Later into April

Short reading: While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' (Luke 24.36)

Longer reading: Luke 24.36-43

Easter outdoors for families with younger children

The story of Easter tells us that God makes good new things happen, even when that seems impossible.

If you have a children's bible, you may like to read the Easter story, or you may like to see what you can remember together.

Because nature is made by God, it reminds us what God is like. After the winter when it seems like everything has died, comes spring. New life is all around us.

How much new life can you find where you are? On the back of this sheet are some photos of things I found. What can you find?



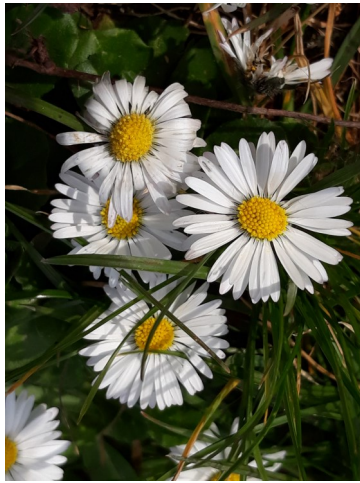
Thankyou prayer

Thank you God,
For new life in the springtime,
for flowers and birds,
for bright green new leaves.
Thank you God,
for new life at Easter,
For Jesus who is with us,
right now and every day.
Amen.

Can you find any flowers?



You may like to make a daisy chain from these.



Can you find any leaves beginning to find their way out from their buds?



The flowers in the photo below were on a tree—look high as well as low!



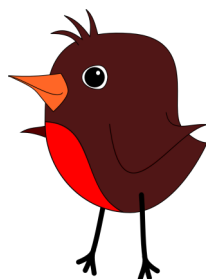
The buds in the picture below will be apple blossom soon.



Can you find any new spring leaves?



Can you see or hear any birds (this isn't a photo as they wouldn't stay still long enough for me!)



What else did you find?

Finding God's peace, through connecting with nature:

- Take a moment to invite God to be with you.
- Be present to your anxieties.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Go for a short stroll around a garden or local green space.
- Stop to look carefully at something that draws your attention.
- Explore it for a while, notice details, allow God to speak.
- When you are ready, continue and repeat, stopping about 5 times.
- End with a prayer, in silence, your own words or one or both of the prayers below.

Refuge in God

O my rock,
In you I take refuge.
The storms of life rage outside
But in you I find shelter.
Holy One, you surround me,
The cave of your love welcomes me,
it draws me within to find the rest that I need.
In your safe-holding let me find peace.
In your strong embrace let me find renewal.
Amen.



Source: Annie Heppenstall, The Book of Uncommon Prayer

Praising

Praise to you O Holy Gardener
for what was sowed in tears
is now reaped in joy.
By forsythia and primrose
you break out in newness.
By swallow and swift, your happy return.
Praise to you.

Source: Tess Ward, The Celtic wheel of the year.

Praying outdoors

Find a quiet spot. Take a moment to invite God to be with you, to become aware of God's presence.

Be still and close your eyes, listening hard.

How many different kinds of bird can you hear?

Open your eyes, can you see any of the birds? Take a gentle stroll and see how many different kinds of birds you can see. Appreciate the colours, the song, the movement.

Have a close look at something growing.

- Is it hairy, smooth, bumpy, or something else?
- Are the colours on top the same as underneath?
- Can you smell anything?
- What else have you noticed?
- Give thanks to God, in silence, in your own words or in words of blessing below:



May God of the Easter garden bless in every season of the heart.

May God of the mountainside bless in time set apart.

May God of the beach bless whether tides ebb or flow.

May God of the upper room bless my doubt that I may know afresh the deep love of God that is stronger than death.

Amen.

Source: Tess Ward, The Celtic wheel of the year.

Easter prayers and readings

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Common Worship CHP

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 21.24

The Easter story:

- John 20.1-18;
- Luke 24.1-12;
- Matthew 28.1-10;
- Mark 16.1-8

In the greening of the leaves,
Your life speaks.
As the blossom unfolds,
Your love flows out.

Soften our brittle walls
Of fear and exclusion.
Quiet the inner voices
Of blame and hurt.

May we learn a new song:
A song of creation,
Led by the earth;
A song of solidarity,
Led by the poor.



Source: Steven Shakespeare, The Earth cries Glory

As the fire rises,
as the sun ascends,
may heart and mind become flame,
burning with life's vigour

As the seed bursts,
as the tomb cracks,
may body and soul become song,
a hymn of praise and glory.

With Christ all things rise:
the cross takes root,
the desert is watered,
the dust of death blossoms into life.

May we be witnesses of this life today:
the life that is not defined by fear and death;
the life that is more than enough for all;
the life that is the glory and song of God
through all creation.

Source: Steven Shakespeare, The Earth cries Glory

Do I not fill heaven and earth, says God?
**so may we search and find
the sacredness of the earth.**

Do I not fill heaven and earth, says God?
**so help us to love God
through loving the earth.**

Do I not fill heaven and earth, says God?
**So may we take no more than we need,
and return what we can;
may we work for healing, not harm,
for regeneration, for re-greening;
may we cherish the earth
and all creation,
now and in the time to come.**

Source: Annie Heppenstall, The Book of Uncommon Prayer

