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**29 April 2011: Rev'd Peter Barnett - Superintendent
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He has risen

Anyone who witnessed the march of witness through the town this Good Friday must have been touched by that living demonstration of a living faith in the living Lord. We hear all sorts of stories about how the church is in decline, or is a relic of the past or has lost its relevance in today's world. If that is so, then why is it so important to so many Christian people to share their faith - not only on Good Friday, but throughout the year?



On the first Easter morning, the angel at the empty tomb invites Mary Magdalene to "Come and see the place where he lay..." in other words come and examine the evidence for the Resurrection. At some time or another in our lives each and every one of us should take the time to make this genuine inquiry - for if the resurrection is true it must have a transforming effect upon the very way in which we live.

Over the years many have tried to explain away the resurrection. Some say that the women went to the wrong tomb. However, that not only takes the women for fools, but also takes Peter, John, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (not to mention the Jewish authorities who would be desperate to quash this story) for fools as well - for they all knew where the tomb was.

Others have claimed that Jesus never died on the cross - somehow he recovered from his wounds and within three days was well enough to walk around again! Roman crucifixion was not something from which anyone recovered - ask any historian, Christian or otherwise. No one would be able to recover after having nails driven through their hands and feet and a spear thrust into their side.

The Jews claimed that the Disciples had stolen the body - but how were these dispirited individuals not only meant to have over powered the guards, moved the stone and removed Jesus body - what would have motivated them to do so? Someone else stole Jesus' body? Again, in a culture where desecration of a tomb was punishable by death, why would anyone want to do such a thing? Did the Jewish authorities take the body? Surely not, for all they had to do to end these resurrection stories would have been to produce the body.

And what about the many resurrection appearances Jesus made? Not only to the Disciples, but on one occasion to a gathering of 500 people (1 Corinthians 15), were they all dreaming or mistaken?

Those of us who walked through the town on Good Friday have examined the evidence for the resurrection and our conclusion has led us to believe that Jesus rose from the grave. That belief motivates us to encourage you - the person reading this article - to accept the invitation of the angel, "Come and see the place where he lay ... He has risen from the dead" (Matthew 28 verses 6&7).