

## 18th April 2021 - Deacon Sue Peat

This act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building.

### Call to worship

Living Lord,  
Open our minds to your wisdom;  
Our hearts to your love;  
And our lives to your transforming power.  
We worship you with open minds, hearts and lives.  
Amen

### Hymn: Singing the Faith 28

Jesus calls us here to meet him  
As, through word and song and prayer,  
We affirm God's promised presence  
Where his people live and care.  
Praise the God who keeps his promise;  
Praise the Son who calls us friends;  
Praise the Spirit who, among us,  
To our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him  
Word of life and Lord of all,  
Sharer of our flesh and frailness,  
Saving all who fail or fall.  
Tell his holy human story;  
Tell his tales that all may hear;  
Tell the world that Christ in glory  
Came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other,  
Vastly different though we are;  
Creed and colour, class and gender  
Neither limit nor debar.  
Join the hand of friend and stranger;  
Join the hands of age and youth;  
Join the faithful and the doubter  
In their common search for truth.

John Bell & Graham Maule

### Let us pray

Loving God,  
We are glad to come and worship you, glad to  
stand in your presence and give you the honour  
due your name.

**Praise and glory, thanksgiving and worship  
are yours by right.**

You are greater than our highest thoughts,  
mightier than we can ever comprehend,  
before all, in all and beyond all.

**Praise and honour, thanksgiving and worship  
are yours by right.**

So we come, acknowledging your greatness,  
marvelling at your power,  
rejoicing in your love,  
celebrating your victory over sin and death  
and praising you for the mercy you have shown to  
us throughout our lives.

**Praise and honour, thanksgiving and worship  
are yours by right.**

We come with our praise and with our confession;  
our rejoicing and our sorrow;  
our hopes and our fears; our faith and our doubts.

### SILENCE

Accept now our songs of praise,  
our words of prayer,  
the thoughts of our hearts,  
the honesty of our worship.

**Praise and honour, thanksgiving and worship  
are yours by right.**

Thank you gracious God for your love and  
forgiveness this day and every day.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
**Amen.**

### We say together the Lord's Prayer...

#### Luke 24: 36-48

While they were still talking about this, Jesus  
himself stood among them and said to them,  
"Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they  
saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you  
troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?  
Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch  
me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones,  
as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands  
and feet. And while they still did not believe it  
because of joy and amazement, he asked them,  
"Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him  
a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in  
their presence.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was  
still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is  
written about me in the Law of Moses, the  
Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their  
minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

**Hymn: Singing the Faith 629**

God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,  
For life at times seems far too dark for me,  
And my belief becomes more insecure  
When worldly cares produce uncertainty.

God of my hope, I offer you my fear,  
When I am scared by my anxiety,  
When all I hear is suffering and woe,  
In all my shadows you will walk with me.

God of my joy, I offer you my grief,  
When I sink down in sadness or despair,  
When in depression I cannot be touched,  
I pray in all my depths to find you there.

God of my love, I offer you my pain,  
When I'm alone and feel nobody cares,  
In aching age or in rejected youth,  
You bear my cross and dry my human tears.

God of my life, I offer you my dreams,  
Light in the darkness where I hide from view,  
Light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,  
Light in my life and all my life in you.

Colin Ferguson

**Reflection**

The passage we have read in Luke's gospel records how the risen Jesus came to his own when they were gathered together in the upper room.

The risen Lord was no ghost or hallucination. He was real. The Jesus Christ who died was indeed the same Jesus Christ who rose again. This is the sure and certain hope of the Gospel. Christianity is not founded on the dreams or wishes of men and women 2 thousand years ago, but on one who in actual historical fact was nailed to a cross taking upon himself the sin of the world; paying the price once for all that all people might know reconciliation with God for all eternity. This is the hope of the resurrection!

Now we can't understand this can we?  
We can't fully get our heads round this. In fact, there's a lot of things about God and about life that if

we're completely honest, we cannot begin to understand. We cannot understand why sometimes people carry out the most horrendous acts of violence; we cannot understand why bad things happen to good people; we cannot understand why and how a virus can spread around the whole world and cause the deaths of millions of people. There is so much about life and faith that we simply cannot understand. And yet the reality of Christ's resurrection points us to a God who deals with life in a real and tangible way.

Jesus knew that these disciples were so shocked and frightened by seeing him again, he knew they needed some proof of his resurrection. He showed them his hands and feet, he said 'touch me and see for yourselves!' Even then they weren't convinced, so he took some of the fish that they were eating and ate it.

So much about being a Christian involves faith – trusting in God even when the way ahead is not clear or when everything and everyone around us says 'Really? Are you sure?' The writer of the book of Hebrews describes faith in this way – 'Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see.' Trusting God can seem risky. Trusting God can seem scary. Trusting God can seem crazy. And yet trusting God is the most liberating and faith building thing that we can ever do.

So yes, faith and trust are crucial to life as a Christian. We don't often have proof do we? But as Jesus knew these disciples fears and doubts, so too God knows each of our fears and doubts . When we genuinely say, as the disciple Thomas said, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief', God hears that prayer. What is it that you want God to show you today? Tell him. What words do you want to hear him speak to you? Tell him.

A friend of mine felt called into Methodist ministry, but he wasn't sure if he was hearing God right or not. He asked God to confirm this call through three different people saying to him that he should offer for the ministry. And sure enough, within a couple of weeks, without him saying anything to anyone, three completely different people had said to him that he should consider candidating for the ministry! We must not put God to the test, but I do believe that we can ask God for a sign of some sort to confirm something to us.

Our faith is rooted in reality – Christ's bodily resurrection, and the fact that God calls us to live in the reality of life. To live out our faith amidst the reality – often harsh, earthy, gritty reality of life.

Where people hurt other people; where injustice often prevails and where life for so many makes no sense. God calls us to be a people of hope in a world of no hope. God calls us to be a people of love where hatred is rife; God calls us to be a people of peace where conflict rules.

And so I want to encourage each one of us today to be *real* with God about our faith. Let's not pretend. God knows us better than we know ourselves, so let's be real with God. Let's be real with each other. Let's share our concerns with each other, let's trust one another enough to maybe share the things we are struggling with.

That was a key part of John Wesley's Holy Club and the Methodist societies. They shared with each other the things they were finding hard in their lives. We just don't really do that these days do we? We don't like to hear the truth sometimes do we? But let's be people who trust one another and love one another enough to be able to speak the truth in love.

And let's get to grips with living out our faith in the real world, with all its mess, with all its diversity, with all its confusion. Let's allow the real, living hope of the resurrection to fill our hearts so much that people see something different about us, and are drawn to Christ – the one who loves them, died for them, was raised from the dead, and longs to give life in all its fullness, a real and lasting hope for all eternity and the very reason for life itself.

Amen.

### Let us pray

God of life and love,  
We pray for all those who are searching for peace in their lives.

For those burdened with anxiety  
either about themselves or their loved ones.

God of peace,  
**help us to know you with us.**

We pray for all those who mourn the loss of a loved one. Give them your peace, O God. We pray for all those whose faith has been shaken, and who need to know your presence with them. God of peace,  
**help us to know you with us.**

To all those in chaos and turmoil,  
all who are restless and troubled,  
grant your calm,  
your tranquillity,  
and your quietness.  
God of peace,  
**help us to know you with us.**

We take a moment to be still  
and to lift before God the people and situations  
on our hearts this day...

### SILENCE

Ever present God, we bring you these our prayers -  
spoken and unspoken.

Help us by your Spirit to trust that you hold us  
and all those for whom we pray in your hands  
and in your love.

Amen.

### Hymn: Singing the Faith 594

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You have come to us,  
You are one with us,  
Mary's Son;  
Cleansing our souls from all their sin,  
Pouring your love and goodness in;  
Jesus, our love for you we sing,  
Living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You have come to us,  
Born as one with us,  
Mary's Son;  
Led out to die on Calvary,  
Risen from death to set us free;  
Living Lord Jesus, help us see  
You are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
We would come to you,  
live our lives for you,  
Son of God.  
All your commands we know are true;  
Your many gifts will make me new;  
Into my life your power breaks through,  
Living Lord.

Patrick Appleford

### Blessing

Go now and proclaim the Gospel,  
not just through words, but also deeds.  
Through what you say,  
what you do and who you are.  
May others, as they meet with you,  
meet with Christ,  
and know his living presence for themselves.  
Amen.

### Acknowledgements

Nick Fawcett *Prayers for All Seasons, (Kevin Mahew)*

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