

Service for Easter III: Sunday 26th April



These are the flowers on our virtual Communion Table. Our Youth Fellowship planted the bulbs and created the decoupage pots, using images of things liked by their mums.

When YF collected the pots on Mothering Sunday there were no flowers, but five days later, they bloomed! Thank you, Megan.



Risen Christ, you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope: strengthen us also to proclaim your risen life and fill us with your peace. Amen.

Hymn: Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah

(for organ accompaniment, click the button on the webpage)

1. Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and evermore;
Feed me now and evermore.
2. Open thou the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fiery cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.
3. When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee;
I will ever give to thee.

Prayers

At this dangerous and unsettling time all religions are coming together to pray for the sick and dying, in this we find we have more in common than divides us. Hear our prayers for all ministers and ministries reaching out to their congregations here and worldwide using new technology to guide us in our faith.

Lord, Hear our prayers

Hear our prayers for all the countries of the world trying to cope with the pandemic and also affected by war and natural disasters. Our thoughts and prayers are with the adults and children killed by the many severe storms sweeping the southern states of the United States and for the innocent people of Yemen.

Lord, Hear our prayers

We give thanks for all hospital staff, emergency services, care workers and those who support them at this dangerous time. We pray for the scientists who are working to treat and find a vaccination for the corona virus. We also pray for farmers, shops, transport, and other workers continuing to keep our daily lives on a steady course. We pray for the Government, both nationally and locally who are working hard in adverse circumstances to keep the United Kingdom safe.

Lord, Hear our prayers

We pray for our Joint Pastorate, for our friends at Blakenall, Hatherton and Broadway. Please also pray for the people of Hamstall Ridware area as they keep Broadway in their prayers each week. We are alone at this time, isolated and isolating to stay and keep safe themselves and other people. It is hard to close yourself away, not to be fearful and keep at a distance family and friends, all those we love near and far. Help us to grow stronger, to make this a time for understanding, growth and reflection in our faith and lives.

Within our Fellowship, we pray in particular for Sybil and her family and for Don and Pat.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Lord, Hear our prayers, Amen.

Hymn: Let there be love (sung twice)
(for organ accompaniment, click the button on the webpage)

Let there be love shared among us,
let there be love in our eyes;
may now your love fill all people,
cause us O Lord to arise;
give us a fresh understanding,
of neighbourly love that is real;
let there be love shared among us,
let there be love.



When we walk with the Lord
in the light of His Word,
what a glory He sheds on our way!

Our Bible Reading is taken from Acts 2:14a, 36-39, 41

Peter's Message

Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd:

“Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

When the people heard this, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, “What shall we do, brothers?”

Peter said to them, “Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God’s gift, the Holy Spirit. For God’s promise was made to you and your children and for all who are far away— all whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Many of them believed his message and with many others were baptized. And about three thousand people were added to the group that day.

Reflection: *Who is Peter talking to in this passage?*

At first glance, it seems an easy question. It says it right there in the introduction, verse 14: 'Peter stood up and addressed the crowd'. Job done. Reflection finished.

Sorry. It's a bit more complicated than that and a whole lot more interesting.

Our passage comes just after one of the most tongue-twisting parts of the whole Bible. This tells us about the crowd.

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages ... And at this sound the crowd gathered and ... asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs ...' Then Peter stood up ..."

So the crowd was the whole known world. All places. Peter was talking to those representing all of us, wherever we are. And whenever too: 'the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off.' All places, all times.

It's like Peter was an early-model Dr Who, a Time Lord that covered all of time and space. He was talking not just to the crowd in front of him, but giving the message even to you and to me, right here, right now.

God has all kinds of ways of telling people about himself. He uses the witness of creation and the inbuilt sense of God that is present in everyone.

God's supreme revelation was Jesus, of course, but it doesn't seem a particularly efficient way of getting the message across. Three years of full-time talking and only eleven men and few women had partly understood. Not exactly broadband.

I think that the answer lies in relationships. It takes time to build a relationship, and that's why Jesus spent three years doing just that. God wants us to have time to find our faith. We are not receiving Cyberman faith-downloads.

God also wants a body here on earth, so that needs more than just me and you and you. It needs us.

So, on the Easter morning, what was the first thing Jesus told Mary to do? To tell. To tell the disciples, including Peter. Here we see Peter passing on the message, a message that was not to stay with the crowd there that day, it was for

‘those who are far off’ as well. And that’s you. And me. And all the people we know. And all the people they know.

It was John Wesley the founder of Methodism, who when meditating on the love of Jesus,” felt his heart strangely warmed”, and his ministry took on a whole new dimension as he travelled the country to bring this news to all who would listen. Jesus is ALWAYS with us in everything we do and wherever we go in life. We need to find time to LISTEN, to let Him speak. This is good news, and it’s not for us to keep

Please take time to walk with Jesus.

Amen.

Hymn: God is love, let heaven adore him

(for organ accompaniment, click the button on the webpage)

1. God is love, let heaven adore him;
God is love, let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him
and exalt him with one voice.
He who laid the earth’s foundation,
he who spread the heavens above,
he who breathes through all creation,
he is love, eternal love.
2. God is love; and is enfolding
all the world in one embrace;
his unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race;
and when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow’s iron rod,
that same sorrow, that same aching,
wrings with pain the heart of God.
3. God is love; and though with blindness
sin afflicts and clouds the will,
God’s eternal loving-kindness
holds us fast and guides us still,
Sin and death and hell shall never
o’er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so Love for ever
o’er the universe must reign.

The Lord's Prayer

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all. Amen



I hope you will join me at the end of the service for virtual refreshments.

Take care of yourselves!