

Sunday 15th May
– Fifth Sunday of Easter
Morning Worship
Led by Sue Nelms, LLM



Gathering and Greeting

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.
Let us recognize his presence with us.

Silence is kept.

**As God's people we have gathered:
let us worship him together.**

Opening Prayer

Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal:
have mercy on us.

**Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal:
have mercy on us.**

Silence

Eternal God, source of all blessing,
help us to worship you
with all our heart and mind and strength;
for you alone are God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Hymn – Jesus where'er thy people meet

- 1 Jesus, where'er thy people meet,
there they behold thy mercy-seat;
where'er they seek thee, thou art found,
and every place is hallowed ground.
- 2 For thou, within no walls confined,
inhabitest the humble mind;
such ever bring thee where they come,
and going, take thee to their home.
- 3 Dear Shepherd of thy chosen few,
thy former mercies here renew;
here to our waiting hearts proclaim
the sweetness of thy saving name.
- 4 Here may we prove the power of prayer,
to strengthen faith and sweeten care,
to teach our faint desires to rise,
and bring all heaven before our eyes.
- 5 Lord, we are few, but thou art near;
nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear;
O rend the heavens, come quickly down,
and make a thousand hearts thine own!

William Cowper (1731–1800)

Easter Anthems

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us:
so let us celebrate the feast,
not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness:
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Corinthians 5.7b, 8

Christ once raised from the dead dies no more:
death has no more dominion over him.
In dying he died to sin once for all:
in living he lives to God.

See yourselves therefore as dead to sin:
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6.9-11

Christ has been raised from the dead:
the first fruits of those who sleep.
For as by man came death:
by man has come also the resurrection of the dead;
for as in Adam all die:
even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

I Corinthians 15.20-22

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be forever. Amen.**

Confession

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

May the God of love and power

forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Readings by John Crang

Acts 11.1-18

Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem

11 Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, ³ saying, 'Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?' ⁴ Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, ⁵ 'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. ⁶ As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷ I also heard a voice saying to me, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." ⁸ But I replied, "By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth." ⁹ But a second time the voice answered from heaven, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." ¹⁰ This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven.

¹¹ At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. ¹² The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, "Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved." ¹⁵ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁷ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could

hinder God?' ¹⁸ When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, 'Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.'

John 13.31-35

The New Commandment

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Reflection by Revd Claire Robertson

"By this everyone will know you are my disciples – if you love one another".

These are Jesus' words spoken at his Last Supper with his disciples after he has knelt and washed their feet.

This "love" that Jesus speaks of is love-in-action, supported by prayer. As Christians we are called to respond in this way to the needs in our world.

In 1945, following the Second World War British and Irish churches saw the plight of refugees. They responded to Jesus' words to "love one another" by founding a charity called Christian Aid.

Now, over 75 years after it was founded Christian Aid continues to provide humanitarian relief and long-term development support for

poor communities worldwide. Crucially, it also highlights suffering, tackles injustice and champions people's rights.

Today is the beginning of Christian Aid week and collections will be taking place in many communities and churches. There is also a website www.christianaid.org.uk for online donations with prayer ideas and some case studies of those who have been recipients of aid.

Sharing what we have with those who are in poverty is the duty of every Christian but ensuring that their voices are heard is also essential. Our God is a God who hates injustice. As his followers we need to stand in solidarity with those who are being treated unjustly and to challenge systems that keep people trapped in poverty. But to do that we need to recognise what is unfair in our society.

The reading in Acts shows us how Peter was challenged. He put aside the habits of a lifetime - not accepting hospitality from Gentiles or eating with them - and instead treated the Gentile messengers as brothers and sisters in Christ. When criticized for his actions by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem he stood in solidarity with the Gentiles. Peter was only able to do this through the power of God's spirit. The Holy Spirit showed him that his behaviour and that of the early church was wrong. It was discriminating against a section of society. The Holy Spirit showed Peter this and gave him the courage to try to change. We know from Paul's letter to the Galatians that Peter on occasions fell short of his aspirations. However, due to his actions of entering Cornelius' house in Caesarea, eating there and speaking up for the Gentiles in Jerusalem the culture in the church became more inclusive.

Our lifestyles in the West are contributing to climate change which is having a catastrophic effect on many of the poorest countries in the world. Like St Peter we need to change the habits of a lifetime. Our actions are severely harming those who are already living in poverty as well as harming our planet. Like Peter we won't always reach our aspirations but if we all take some action our culture will change.

Lord, show us this week what action you want us to take in our lives to be more recognisable as your disciples. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

cf Ephesians 3

Prayers of Intercession led by Michaela McNeill

After the words Lord, hear us. Please repeat Lord, graciously hear us.

Gracious God, it is our privilege to pray for your world and your people, and so we put our prayers at your disposal this day.

We pray for those are in the news today, whether willingly or not. Especially we pray for the people of Ukraine (pause). Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for our church community, our life together in Christ, and our witness to the world. Especially we pray for a Team Rector for the Lordsbridge Team. Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those we have met or talked to in the last day or so who have some important issue to face. Especially we pray for dilemmas faced by our family and friends ... (pause).

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those coping with stress at work, at home, or in life generally – feeling the world is a dark and weary place. Especially we pray for any family member, friend or colleague in need now ... (pause).

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who are waiting for something important – a birth, a job, a visit, a hospital appointment, a word of forgiveness. Especially we pray for anyone we know who's longing for love and friendship, and a way out of loneliness ... (pause),

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for those whose lives are not content, but who have not yet found their home in you. Especially we pray for one or two people we know for whom faith would be a lovely gift ... (pause).

Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Father, every person we have mentioned in our hearts is known and loved by you more than we can imagine. We entrust them to you in confidence and hope, knowing that you will use our prayers for their healing and well-being, for we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who is alive forever with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God,
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:
grant that, as by your grace going before us
you put into our minds good desires,
so by your continual help
we may bring them to good effect;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn – Will You Come and Follow Me?

I Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown,
in you and you in me?

- 2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?
- 3 Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?
- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?
- 5 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

Conclusion

God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.