

Service for 3rd May 2020 Basingstoke and Reading Methodist Circuit Service prepared by Alison. Please feel free to adapt this service as much as you like!

Call to Worship

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Greeting

If you are worshipping at home on your own, quietly reading these words, know you are prayed for.

If you are accessing this via the internet and sharing it with others you are welcome and prayed for.

Whoever you are and wherever you are, know that God's tender gaze is upon you and that you are grafted into the body of Christ, his flock, the beloved and holy people of God.

At some points there are choices in this service because I have tried to include some material for all ages. If something is inaccessible to you I apologise for that but I have tried to provide an alternative. Whatever your age may you be blessed.

We begin with a hymn of resurrection as we continue to rejoice in this Easter season.

Stf 297 H&P 190 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing
His cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
His love in death shall never die.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
he suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, though ever crucified.

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
he comes to claim the here and now,
and conquer every place and time.

Christ is alive! His Spirit burns
through this and every future age,
till all creation lives and learns
his joy, his justice, love and praise.
(1936-) Brian Wren

Not throned above, remotely high,
untouched, unmoved by human pains
but daily, in the midst of life,
our Saviour, with the Father reigns.

Version without lyrics <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL9ey1TM6No>

Michael.t.parker@ntlworld.com can send you a powerpoint if this would help for this and other hymns.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Prayer of Adoration

Let us praise the Lord who is a great God —
the God who brought us to birth,
and who cares for us as a shepherd cares for the sheep.

Let us praise the Lord whose Son Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd
who came to rescue us,
and lead us out into the warmth of the sun.

Let us praise the Lord who breathes the Holy Spirit upon us
to convince us in our bones that the Lord is God
and we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Let us praise the Lord, the source and word and breath of life,
the one true shepherd of the sheep. Amen

Let us return to the One who is shepherd and guardian of our souls:

Let us return to God.

For we have lacked endurance in the face of suffering; we have been too concerned for our rights and impatient of the needs of others ; we have rebelled against constraints with bitterness; we have criticized and dealt out blame, quick to vent our feelings, slow to heed the demands of truth. Loving God, forgive us:

Loving Shepherd, guide us in your way of demanding compassion, so that we may learn to see our sufferings in the light of your own path through death to resurrection.

Silence.

We give thanks that we may bear the burdens of others for their blessing and healing; that through our offering they may glimpse your compassionate transformations; that through our love they may discover your freedom:

Let us return to the One who is shepherd and guardian of our souls. Let us return to God.

Sheep and their Shepherd and breaking out



Collect up pictures/examples of sheep or close your eyes and imagine a flock of them all calm and then mindlessly stampeding.

Stampeding sheep <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P8-yomL6s>

Reading: The Good Shepherd

John 10:1-10 the link below is an animated version of this reading

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKtW_3yQXBw&list=PL80yDoypXEIsD6hqupfchxPK2JD006bVv&index=7&t=0s

In place of Psalm 23, set for today let us sing or read the following hymn

Stf 479 H&P 69 The King of Love my Shepherd is.

- 1 The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His,
And He is mine forever.
- 2 Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.
- 3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home rejoicing brought me.

- 4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy Cross before to guide me.
- 5 Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
Thy unction grace bestoweth;

And oh, what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth!

- 6 And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcCwUF0s_Y&list=PL80yDoypXEIsD6hqupfchxPK2JD006bVv&index=2&t=0s

Reflection

I've been thinking about sheep quite a lot! I love lambing but I have to admit it is very tiring and it would be very hard indeed, if not impossible for me, without Helen the true Shepherd of the sheep where I lamb. There is no doubt about it even though I wish the sheep no harm at all they know her and know that with her there is safety and care. They do respond to her voice although the new orphan lambs may also quickly learn mine as I tend to be the one that gives them bottles when that's necessary.

There are occasions though when the sheep can't hear anyone's voice and be shepherded. I think perhaps it's the same for us! Sometimes they are simply too well fed and too content to pay any attention to the Shepherd but more normally it's because they are frightened, really scared, that they lose all reason and fail to listen to her even though she is guiding them to fresh pastures.

I think before covid19 we may have been like the comfortable sheep; not all of us, but some of us at least had learned to rely on our own resources and not to listen out for the Shepherd. We thought we were in control! Then, if we are honest most of us have experienced times recently when it is hard to hear the voice of our God and hard to trust in his love and care for us. We need to stop, we need to wait, we need to listen again to scripture and hear again the incredible promise of psalms such as Psalm 23 and know that we have a Shepherd that will never let us down.

For sheep that are panicking go astray together big style. One runs the wrong way and the others follow. But if enough of us listen for the voice of Jesus and follow his lead then no one will be trampled in a stampede!

Furthermore, if we are listening to Jesus we will know that it is safe to leave the sheep fold with our true shepherd, through his gate! The excitement and transformation of risking new things, fresh pastures, far surpasses the false protection of being becalmed in the sheep fold.

We have been forced out of our church buildings, and we are trying new ways of worshipping and sharing the God story. I pray that when our buildings are safe again, and especially when we can leave our homes, we will be emboldened to continue to be deployed, beyond the church, in community, in new ways. I pray that we will have learnt to listen to Jesus and not be so confined by church structures. May we all flourish in the knowledge of the reckless, relentless love of God!

Stf 244 H & P 724 Blest are the pure in heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpnU2auc3Rk&list=PL80yDoypXEIsD6hqupfchxPK2JDO06bVv&index=9>

1 Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their heart is Christ's abode.

2 The Lord, who left the heavens,
Our life and peace to bring,
To dwell in lowliness with men,
Their pattern and their King.

3 Still to the lowly soul
He doth Himself impart,
And for His dwelling and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

4 Lord, we Thy presence seek;
May ours this blessing be;
Give us a pure and lowly heart,
A temple meet for Thee.

Acts 2:42 -47

1 Peter 2:19-25

Resurrection and other 'R's in this Strange Season

I find myself in a strange place as I consider what to share with you. Perhaps my first "R" would be **Rusty**. I have not preached since **Remembrance** Sunday and I have not written out a sermon in full and preached it as on the page for over a decade. So in what follows I will have to trust the Holy Spirit and **Rely** on God for inspiration. I hope you will not find the "R"s distracting; they are offering me a framework to stop us being here until Christmas.

The first thing I want to say is that **Resurrection** is the key to this time though we have left behind the gospel accounts and moved into the era of the early church. It is the hope we have from knowing that Jesus is **Risen**, and still alive with us that is what must and will sustain us through this time. We are walking through a time with so much death and even more fear of death, and I understand that fear completely but we are called to be people who are prepared to say that this is not the end of love or of hope.

What help do we get from our passages? They may appear a bit tantalising at this time with their pictures of people gathering together and sharing freely without constraint. From Acts we read "All who believed were together" and "as they spent much time together in the temple" these are things currently denied us. This way of life is still a noble aspiration and perhaps this time apart will mean we no longer take for granted the privilege of worshipping together and as a result our church communities will come closer to this

picture. Also we may be more mindful of those who cannot get to church regardless of Covid19 and serve them better.

But in the reading from 1 Peter 2 we get a bit more help! Here we are invited to **Remember** what Christ suffered for us which gives us a model for our own sacrificial suffering. And through this we are made **Righteous** – “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that free from sins, we might live for **righteousness**; by his wounds you have been healed”.

But this is not a glib thing it is a tough thing to live into in every way. I would suggest if this time for anything it is one for **Repentance**, for turning back chastened to our God. We have been **reminded** of so many things in this time. Perhaps we have to **recognise** that we have acted as though we are the ones in control of our lives both corporately and individually. We need to rediscover humility. The virus has shown us that there are things that can destroy the things we value as well as those we have given excessive priority too. Everything can be turned upside down. A **radical re-evaluation** has been forced upon us but that does not feel like a bad thing to me. **Respect** for our planet and our shared humanity and a valuing of everyone are lessons we must not let go of.

So how will we **respond**? Perhaps bringing our readings together we could say that we will listen more attentively to God, taking time to **recognise** his voice and his call on our lives. We will **re-imagine** his kingdom as his church is **rebuilt** and as we follow his call to **reach out** beyond our comfort zones in compassionate **radical** love. I’m going to say that again slowly!

Could we commit to listen more attentively to God, taking time to **recognise** his voice and his call on our lives? Could we **re-imagine** his kingdom as his church is **rebuilt** and we follow his call to **reach out** beyond our comfort zones in compassionate **radical** love?

How wonderful would it be if we could really live into the final verse from our reading from 1 Peter and discover others, who had not met Jesus before this virus, joining us in that, because we have all been **restored** and **renewed**?

“For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have **returned** to the shepherd and guardian of your souls”.

That would be something to truly cause us to **rejoice. Alleluia!**

In place of an offering – take some time to think of all the good things you have been given and review whether God is calling you to give different amounts in different ways to your church or to different organisations

The Good Shepherd

Lord, we ask
For the courage of the Good Shepherd,
Who lays down his life for his sheep.
We pray for those prepared to suffer
And even to die
For what they believe in.
(For ...
Silence
We pray for those whose lives
And rights are sacrificed
In the name of power and greed.
(For ...
Silence
We pray for those who, risk themselves
By accompanying others
Along paths of deep suffering,
Through valleys of fear and despair.
(For ...
Silence
Lord, we ask
For the compassion of the Good Shepherd,
Who leads his sheep to safe pasture.
We pray for those who work
To feed and shelter and educate
The poor peoples of our world.
(For ...
Silence
We pray for those skilled
At nursing and healing
Those who are suffering or ill

In body, mind or spirit.
(For ...
Silence
We pray for those who care
For the victims of our society,
Those unable to cope with life,
The neglected, the abused.
(For ...
Silence
Lord, we ask
For the love of the Good Shepherd
Who knows his sheep by name.

We pray for our churches,
For their ministers and stewards,
For their preachers and teachers,
And all engaged in pastoral care.
(For ...
Silence
We pray for those we know,
Relatives or friends,
Who are facing difficult times.
(For ...
Silence
We pray for ourselves
That we might hear the call
From our Good Shepherd
And follow his way of love.
Silence.
We make all our prayers in Christ's name. Amen

Lord's Prayer

Stf 51, H & P 66 Great is thy faithfulness

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0vZs41O_2g&list=PL80yDoypXEIsD6hqupfchxPK2JD006bVv&index=12&t=0s

1 "Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

2 *Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Blessing

Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, who has opened for you the gate of glory give you life in all its fullness and lead you to life eternal and the overflowing blessing of God, the creator, Christ the redeemer and the Holy Spirit, the enabler, keep you in perfect love.

The prayers of adoration and confession are adapted from Companion to the Revised Common Lectionary Volume 2 All Age Worship Year A by Julie M. Hulme

The prayers of intercession are adapted from Company to the Lectionary Volume 4 Prayers of intercession by Christine Odell

This is a bonus. Last week Martin suggested we display something in our window. This was written by part of the Oakridge messy church. It might inspire you!

