

This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Revd Dr Kathleen Richardson to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

### Call to Worship

It is true: the Lord is risen, he has vanished from the tomb.  
It is true: the Lord is risen and has been seen alive.  
It is true: we met him on the way, and he has turned our sorrow into joy.

So let us praise the God of resurrection, of restoration and of renewal.

### Hymn Praise my Soul, the King of Heaven (Singing the Faith 83)

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3dHeRB2c3g>

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
to his feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
who like thee his praise should sing?

Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour  
to his people in distress;  
praise him still the same for ever,  
slow to chide and swift to bless.  
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us;  
well our feeble frame he knows;  
in his hands he gently bares us,  
rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely as his mercy flows.

Angels in the height adore him;  
ye behold him face to face;  
sun and moon bow down before him,  
dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him! Praise him! Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

### Prayer of Adoration

Eternal God,  
Whose promises ring true through the Hebrew and the  
Christian Scriptures  
and burn brightly still today,  
We praise you for that thread through history that gives us  
comfort and certainty  
that you are indeed our living, loving, caring God.  
We praise you, that what you promise, you deliver.  
When you commit, you do not falter.  
We praise you that, in Jesus, we see your love in action,  
loving others with such a depth of love and commitment.  
We praise you, that in the early followers of Jesus, we see  
discipleship  
that gives us encouragement and hope;  
for they did not always succeed the first time,  
but you had patience with them and faith in them.  
We praise you for your patience with us,  
for your determination to lead us into true and living faith,  
and for your love for us.

### Prayer of Confession

We know that you seek our response to your revelation in  
Jesus,

that we will be true witnesses to the gospel of truth and love;  
our commitment that we will love our neighbours as ourselves.  
We also know that despite all our good intentions we often  
fail.

Forgive us, Lord, and help us to start again with new hope  
that your grace, at work in us, will keep us faithful, and enable  
our witness;

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

### Readings

#### **Luke 24:36-48**

*(The disciples in Jerusalem are trying to come to terms with the  
disappearance of the body of Jesus and strange accounts that  
suggest he is risen, including the events on the Emmaus road)*

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among  
them and said to them, “Peace be with you”. They were  
startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a  
ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do  
doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; see  
that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have  
flesh and bones as you see that I have”. And when he had said  
this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you - that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

### **Acts 3: 12-19**

*(Peter and John, some seven weeks later, find themselves in a position to be witnesses for the resurrection. It follows the healing of a lame man in the Temple in Jerusalem. People are amazed and form a crowd round Peter and John.)*

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, “You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,

the God of our ancestors has glorified Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

And now friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

*(We hear later that many believed – about five thousand.)*

### **Reflection**

I hope you will forgive a rather petty illustration – and one some of you may have heard before!

When my daughter was around three years old, there was a morning when something had upset her and she was in a powerful strop! She came into the kitchen looking to create

trouble, flung open the fridge door and out tumbled a rather over-ripe tomato. It splattered on the floor. After a moment of shocked silence, a small voice said, “Never mind, Daddy mend it!”

There was no possible way for that tomato to be ‘mended’, to be restored to its former glory. What could and did happen was for the relationship between parent and child to be created in a new way.

What happened at the crucifixion was brutal and complete. There was no going back. A new relationship had to be created - not a restoration of the old patterns of discipleship, but a new way of living. But it was a way of living that had been prepared for from the beginning of humanity – of God making relationship with the patriarchs, the prophets, the psalm writers, now with the risen Jesus and soon, in a new way, with the Holy Spirit.

It is perhaps not surprising that the disciples were unable at first to greet the resurrection with simple faith and joy. Valentin spoke last week about the possibility that they were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. It must have been so hard to get out of their minds the horror of the crucifixion and to come to terms with their own behaviour in

those dark days. According to Luke’s account, they heard the women talking of a vision of angels and dismissed it as an idle tale. Peter had been to the tomb and found it empty apart from the linen cloths. Two of their acquaintances had returned hurriedly to Jerusalem talking of recognising Jesus during an evening meal of breaking bread.

And it was as they were talking about these things that Jesus stood among them. Their emotions are described by Luke as ‘startled and terrified’, thinking they saw a ghost. In their joy at recognising Jesus, they were still frightened and full of doubt. All their understanding of humanity and mortality was being challenged, until Jesus began to talk to them again in that old familiar way about the fulfilment of Scripture, permitted them to see his scars and introduced the idea of their important role as witnesses of these things to others. They are not rebuked for their earlier fear, or their running away. They are entrusted with the ongoing story of the new relationship with God.

So perhaps it is fitting today that the lectionary suggests for us a link with what happens when they begin to take up their role as witnesses. Luke records the occasion when Peter heals a man lame from birth who was brought into the temple each day to beg from the worshippers. Peter uses the astonishment

of the people over a profound healing as a way in to proclaim the good news of the resurrection. He insists that this power to make new belongs to God and is available to all people willing to receive it. He makes the assumption that at least some of those present had been in the crowds that sought to have Jesus crucified. It had been the Passover celebration then, now it was the aftermath of the Pentecost feast. What Peter had received from Jesus to convince him that he was forgiven, he declares to those in the Temple. 'You killed the author of life, you rejected the Holy One'. Then those powerful words, - Friends, I know you acted in ignorance, but the suffering of the Messiah was foretold and now his glory fulfilled. Repent and your sins will be wiped out.

It is interesting to recall that at the time that Luke was writing his two books, the Temple had already been destroyed by the Romans. The Jews had lost the powerful, unifying structure of their faith as a nation, the place of sacrifice and prayer.

Peter had reminded them of a time before the first Temple when their ancestors had journeyed in response to God's call, when the prophets had told of a coming Messiah who would be the one to release them from sin and establish a new relationship with God. The boundaries are being pushed out. God is to be found in the everyday experience of life.

We have had a taste of this this year. Maybe we had come to rely too much on the gatherings in church, the taking of Holy Communion, the ordered sequence of the festivals and celebrations, our communal hymn singing. We belong to the community of faith as individuals and bring to it our individual relationship as those who are 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven'.

I wonder, when we are restored to community life again, what will be our witness of how Jesus appeared to us on the way.

*A moment of quiet reflection.*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord Jesus Christ, your suffering and death are the source of our hope and joy, because in you the mighty love of God faced the worst that human beings could do, and still in the dark moments of our lives we see your love and recognise the mercy of God.

The world is as cruel now as it was then, despair and death are the experience of many.

So we pray for your world, remembering how profoundly you cared, and we cannot stand aside while men, women and children suffer and die, go hungry and are deprived of justice and love.

We remember your sorrow and know that we must not hide ourselves from the sorrow of others,  
or run away from the things which cause sorrow to ourselves.

We ask that where there are those who suffer anxiety or loneliness, pain or grief, sickness or oppression, there will be others who genuinely care, bringing friendship and hope.

We pray for those who resort to violence, and for those who suffer its effects. Let there be forgiveness, comfort and reconciliation. Break down the barriers of suspicion and hatred, break through the prejudice and entrenched positions which penetrate down the generations; and encourage all who work for peace.

Let our freedoms be exercised with restraint that protects the wellbeing of others.

Gracious God, make us and all your people sure signs of your presence in the world, healing and forgiving, creating joy and

hope; until your glory appears in all its fulness and we come into your eternal peace; with Christ our Lord, Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen

### **Hymn Christ triumphant, ever reigning (Singing the Faith 319)**

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnsbOCH6S1Y>

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,  
Saviour, Master King!  
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,  
hear us as we sing:

*Yours the glory and the crown,  
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Word incarnate, truth revealing,  
Son of Man on earth!  
Power and majesty concealing  
by your humble birth:

*Yours the glory and the crown,  
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,  
victim crucified!  
Death is through the cross defeated,  
sinners justified:

*Yours the glory and the crown,  
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Priestly king, enthroned for ever  
high in heaven above!  
Sin and death and hell shall never  
stifle hymns of love:

*Yours the glory and the crown,  
the high renown, the eternal name!*

So, our hearts and voices raising

through the ages long,  
ceaselessly upon you gazing,  
this shall be our song:

*Yours the glory and the crown,  
the high renown, the eternal name!*

Michael Seward (b.1932)

### **Blessing**

Go into the world with a new song of love in your hearts.  
Take with you the peace of Christ, greater than the peace this  
world gives.

Be witnesses to God's love, that you may know the joy of the  
risen Christ in all its fullness. Amen