

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Helen Lunn. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome to the online service from Enfield Methodist Circuit.

Call to worship

Gracious God,
we celebrate your love as we worship together this morning.
Raise our spirits in Jesus' name
as we lift our hearts and voices to you this Eastertide.
Amen.

Hymn – StF 297 – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qqaw-VzM7ms>

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

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

Brian Wren (*b.* 1936)

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A time of prayer

Let us pray

God of the miraculous and the mundane,
open our eyes to see the goodness in others and ourselves.
Give us the willingness to be available
to the community in which we live,
that quietly and confidently we might live as those
who know they are part of the Easter story
that does not end in Jerusalem,
but goes out into all the world.
We ask this in Jesus' name.

Forgive us Lord,
when our eyes are closed to the needs of others,
when our hearts are closed to you.
Give us your hand and help us up,
that we may be renewed in grace and humility
and enabled to share your love with a wounded world.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Loving God,
we give you thanks for those who express their faith in you
and their care of others through their work,
through their ministry of hospitality,
through their thoughtfulness, through their giving.
May we be inspired
through the ordinariness of their discipleship
to see the wonderful extraordinariness of your love
that is alive in their offering of
their gifts, their time, and their hearts.
We praise you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Bible Readings

Acts 9:36-43

³⁶ In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa; so, when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

John 10:22-30

²² Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade.²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

²⁵ Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them

eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

Time to reflect

How many of you like going for a walk? My husband Matt and I love walking and are currently taking part in a challenge set by Christian Aid to walk 300,000 steps in May. One of our favourite places to walk is in the local woods where we live as we get to see the nature that God has created around us as we walk.

If you go for a walk in woodlands, you will sometimes see a tree that has fallen over, but hasn’t died. From the trunk and the branches, new shoots will be growing straight upwards, and sometimes even the main trunk has continued to grow upwards, at right angles to its previous direction. Seeds that are planted will start to grow upwards, and if you change their alignment, they will change the direction of the shoot to continue that upward motion. These plants are always fulfilling their internal makeup. That they should always grow in a certain way is built into them. For us, it is our actions that show

who we are. Our inner attitudes are expressed in our behaviour, which shows who we are fundamentally. What do our actions demonstrate about us?

The feast of the Dedication, when Jesus is walking in Jerusalem, would have been a time when the Jews including Jesus would have been thinking of the Maccabean martyrs – stories as familiar to them as Robin Hood or King Arthur are to most of us. The fundamental beliefs and values of the Maccabees meant that they allowed themselves be tortured to death rather than deny their faith. In the atmosphere of this remembrance, the Jews ask Jesus if he is the Messiah. They know it is a loaded question, one that could either end with the execution of a political rebel, or show him up as the charlatan that they believed he was. Jesus tells them that he has already answered them, but not with words. His actions have spoken for him. To understand who Jesus is, we need to look at his actions and to realise that they tell us all that we need to know.

The Jews demand easy answers from Jesus – ‘Who are you? Tell us plainly.’ But there are rarely any easy answers – the best answers are the ones that we figure out for ourselves,

often by intense mental and emotional struggle. It’s like watching children working out a problem – adults often find it very difficult not to leap in and help them out, but it’s vital to allow them to find their own solutions.

Tabitha (or Dorcas) is a female disciple known for her actions – a life of ‘faith acted out’ that witnesses to the world around her. When Peter is called, the widows show him the evidence of her actions as evidence also of her belief and faith. It’s never a question of either faith or works – as James says, you really can’t have one without the other (James 2.26). True faith will always be shown in the way that it is lived out.

Why did Peter bring Tabitha back to life? This may seem a strange question but presumably other ‘good’ Christians had also died. The answer may come from the fact that it is not Peter who is praised for the deed but the Lord. Many were brought to faith by this miracle as they recognised God’s hand at work through Peter. Although this is not resurrection it shows people the power of the new life that Jesus offers.

After Paul's conversion a new section begins in Acts in which Peter is the focus of attention with his ability to perform miracles. The location is Joppa, north east of Jerusalem on the coast, at the tip of what had once been Philistine territory. Tabitha – also known in Greek as Dorcas, both words meaning 'gazelle' – has died. She is called a disciple, and is a fellow disciple of those who called for Peter – an indication of the equality that was developing in the Church, unlike the pagan world outside and the synagogue. As a woman devoted to good works, she was at the centre of a circle that made and distributed clothing to the poor in the community. Peter had to go to her 'without delay' because she would be buried promptly in a hot country.

This miracle has clear parallels with Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter, though they are not identical. Both Jesus and Peter get rid of the official mourners, women who would have been making quite a racket, as they still do in some Eastern societies. Although Jesus spoke of the girl 'sleeping', she is clearly dead, but Jesus implies she will be back with them shortly, such is his confidence in the power of God. He then said the well-known Aramaic words '*Talitha koum*', 'Little girl, arise.' In Acts *talitha*, little girl, becomes Tabitha, the name of the disciple; *koum*, get up, becomes the Greek *anastethi*. Like

Jesus, Peter took the dead woman's hands and this gazelle 'leapt up'. This is not a resurrection like Jesus' because there is not the transformation Paul talks about, nor immortality. It is a restoration to life like that of Lazarus.

There are two important differences at the end. Jesus commanded those in the know to keep the event a secret, while Tabitha's healing leads to the belief of many. And in the first the healer gets the praise, while in Acts it is not Peter, but Jesus 'the Lord' who is praised.

We may feel that restoring people from death is not within our power although everything is possible with God but we can still bring new life to people as we live out the Gospel. Where do we see the signs of resurrection today? Where can we become involved in restoring life? We must look around us, not just within our churches, but within our local communities, and indeed throughout the world. Our culture is so often accused of spreading bad news but we can be responsible for spreading good news.

Since last year I have been involved in a project called Muswell Hill Welcomes. It started when a group of Asylum Seekers were placed in a hotel near my church in Muswell Hill. One of our members had attended a meeting with the local council in which it was mentioned that 80 asylum seekers had been placed locally and he came back to the church and said how can we help them. So, Muswell Hill Methodist Church, Muswell Hill Synagogue and Whiteman Road Mosque came together alongside Haringey Council to provide a safe space for the asylum seekers to meet people outside of the hotel.

We provided a lunch once a month as the food they are getting in the hotel was not the type of food that the asylum seekers like to eat. We also provided a space for ESOL classes to happen, and supported weekly cooking sessions. Matt and I also started to buy rucksacks and pencil cases for the children to use at school and the synagogue provided a space for a clothes bank as the asylum seekers don't have much of that they can call their own. The Asylum Seekers that were originally in the hotel have all been moved on now. But Muswell Hill Welcomes hasn't stopped. We are now providing a space for Ukrainian Refugees to meet up with the council and also to see where the work of Muswell Hill Welcomes will take

us next and working with our local community to make it happen.

The Early Church father Tertullian (c.160-225) famously said that 'the blood of Christians is the seed' of the Church. Tragic as the stories of many of the early martyrs are, they did not weaken the resolve of the early Christians but strengthened them. Their great faith in the redeeming love of Jesus sustained them. It is worth remembering that when Peter brought the miracle to Tabitha it was at a time of great persecution following the death of Stephen. Do the stories of the martyrs past or present inspire your church today?

How do we help bring about new life ourselves? Christian Aid and other similar agencies may provide us with some examples. Working with local partners they bring life, where before there was only death. Their slogan 'We believe in life before death' may seem somewhat contradictory to our story from Acts but, of course, it was Dorcas' good works that had already shown people the love of Christ. Christians believe in life — full stop!

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray

In the power of the Spirit, and through Jesus our Saviour,
we ask God for healing and love to come to all people.

God of love, we pray for healing for your Church.
We ask for unity between all Christian people, that our
divisions may be set aside so that we work together for the
furtherance of your kingdom.

Hear our prayer,
loving God.

God of love, we pray for healing for our world.
We ask for people of every, race and language to recognise
that we discover your will for us through justice, reconciliation
and peace.

Hear our prayer,
loving God.

God of love, we pray for healing within our community.
We ask that all the threads of our community are joined
together by our common bonds, regardless of background,
culture or age.

Hear our prayer,
loving God.

God of love, we pray for healing within our homes.
We ask that wherever families are divided you will mend
broken relationships so that your love will be experienced by
all.

Hear our prayer,
loving God.

God of love, we pray for healing amongst the sick.
We ask that those who are sick, in body, mind or spirit will feel
your presence, and that their lives may be transformed.

Hear our prayer,
loving God.

God of love, we pray for those who are bereaved.
We ask that your grace will bring them comfort in their need
and consolation in their sorrow.

Hear our prayer,
loving God.

God of love,
who restores and reconciles people, breaking the bonds of sin
and death;
be with us and make us whole that we may live in your love
and peace throughout our lives.
We ask these prayers through Christ, our faithful shepherd.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn – StF 548 – Blessed Assurance

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2e2t26Fxy0>

Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love:

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest —
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love:

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby) (1820–1915)

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A prayer of blessing

We belong here with God's family,
but we also belong in his world.
Thank you, Lord, that you send us out
to turn our beliefs into actions.
You are with us, behind us and in front.
We go now in your name, and in your love.
Amen.

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