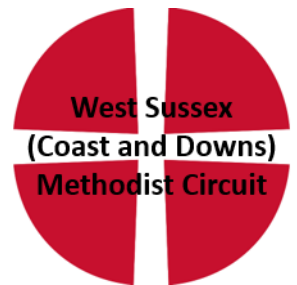


Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

April 2021



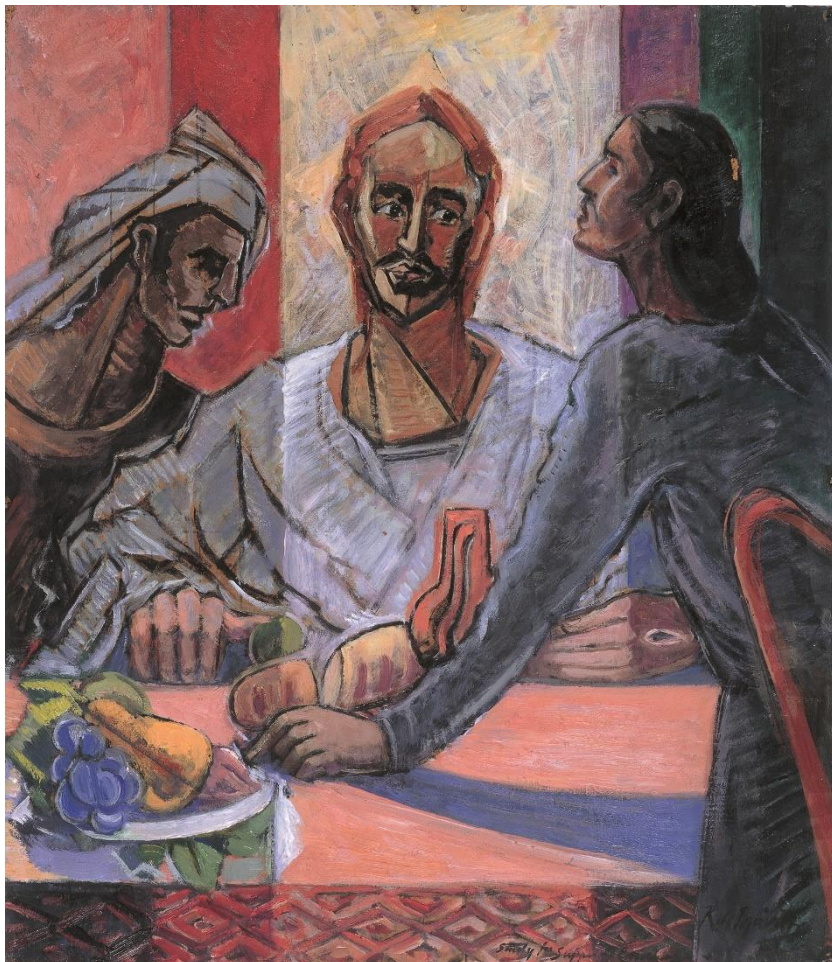
Worshipping Together is an offering from the circuit to you, and has been collated by local preachers, ministers and worship leaders from across the circuit.

If you are well enough, we invite you use this resource each week, at a time to suit you, and spend a few moments with God, knowing that you are **Worshipping Together** with other people who are also sharing in this act of worship with you.

Share these resources with others to use in their own way as we worship and grow together despite the pandemic.

Also available at: www.westsussexcoastanddownscircuit.co.uk

When [Jesus] was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.



Luke 24:30-31

The supper at Emmaus
Roy de Maistre © TMCP

Methodist Modern
Art Collection

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

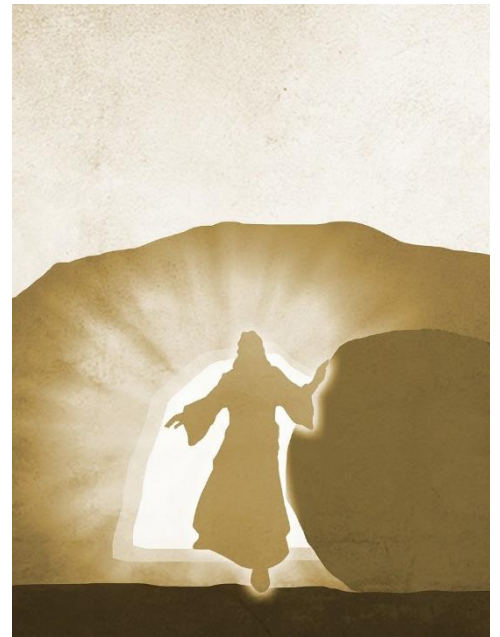
'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. *Mark 16:6*

Sing, Pray & Praise: See What a Morning²

1. See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the graveclothes, tomb filled with light,
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ, the Man,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

2. See Mary weeping, 'Where is he laid?'
as in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

3. One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty;
honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with him,
death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!



¹ Worship for Sunday 4th April by Rev Dan Balsdon

² See What a Morning by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, © 2003 Thank You music, StF309

Prayers of Praise & thanksgiving

Risen Christ,

we come in worship, as ordinary people who you love,
in the ordinary places of our living rooms and kitchens,
to celebrate today the extraordinary truth that you are risen! Alleluia!

Living Christ,

We come in praise, as ordinary people who chose to live our lives with you.
We celebrate the experience of life lived with you that we have,
for the joy and strength you give us, for the peace and hope you offer us,
we celebrate today the extraordinary truth that you are risen! Alleluia!

Loving Christ,

we come as ordinary people, transformed by your extraordinary love.
Through encountering your love and grace outpoured for us,
we know through your risen life that we are forgiven and made whole.
We celebrate today the extraordinary truth that you are risen! Alleluia!

RECEIVING

Reading: Mark 16:1-8

Jesus is risen! There is hope! For you, for me, for the disciples and the women who had journeyed to the tomb that morning. But yet, the women are not filled with joy and hope and celebration – they are *seized with amazement and terror* – and so *‘they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.’*

I wonder if a 21st Century medic would diagnose them with shock and prescribe a sugary tea and some rest to get over the immediate shock of what they had just witnessed and been told. After a tumultuous week where their leader had been taken from them and crucified, you can perhaps begin to imagine just how emotionally and spiritually vulnerable they were already. Then to be presented with a missing Jesus and a man dressed in white robes – well, it is perhaps no wonder their immediate response was to say and do nothing.

But then, at least in some versions of Mark’s Gospel (Mark’s Gospel has 2 potential endings!), the women do tell those gathered with Peter what had happened. We are then told Jesus himself is sent out through them, across the world, with the message of ‘proclamation of eternal salvation’.

In very different circumstances, as individuals and as Christian community, we have had a traumatic year too. We've restricted our activity and travel to protect ourselves and others, some of us grieve the loss of a friend, family member or member of the church community at a distance from those we love and care for.

While the circumstances are different to us than the first resurrection day, we are ordinary human beings like Mary, Peter and the rest of them. They experienced the human emotions and reactions of shock and trauma, loss and uncertainty too.

Today is the second Easter in a row we have marked in pandemic, with significant restriction on our lives. We will not be gathering side by side as the body of Christ to sing our favourite resurrection hymns and songs (though you can of course sing praise to your heart's content at home!).

Yet, while there is much that may feel lost or missing today, one truth is not missing – it is as real as ever - through Jesus, eternal salvation is made real to us. The ordinary of our human life goes on for now, but the extraordinary resurrection life that we see in Jesus is secured and certain for each of us. Uncertainty and struggle may still be part of our earthly living, but our strong and certain hope is that the risen Jesus meets us and journeys with us now and will bring us into the extraordinary resurrection life he promises us. ***Jesus is risen! There is hope!***



RESPONDING

Reflect: How have you experienced this certain hope in Jesus?

Prayers for others

Risen Christ, as we celebrate resurrection hope, and experience the certainty of eternity to come, we also recognise the reality of need in our world today. On this Easter Day, as we celebrate your risen life, we pray for the needs among human life on earth.

For those who seek fair and just use of the world's resources...

For those who strive for justice and peace...

For those who mourn...

For those who suffer as victims of violence and injustice...

For the church throughout the world...

We bring all our prayers together with the Lord's Prayer: ***Our Father...***

Sing, Pray and Praise: Thine be the Glory³

1. Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay:

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

2. Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the Church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting:

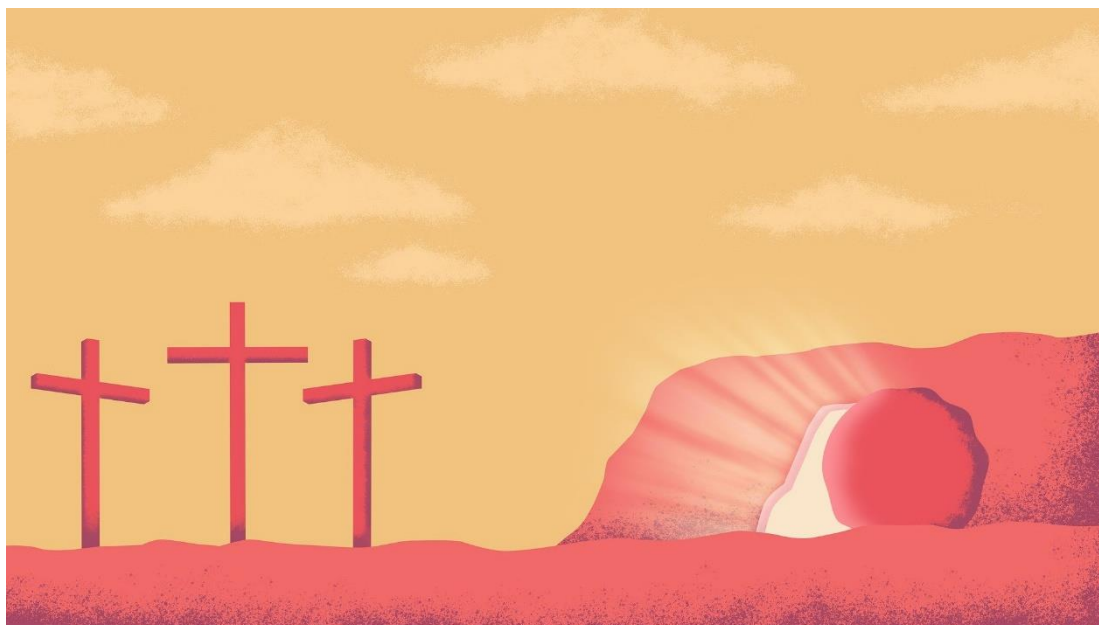
3. No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;
life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above:

Blessing

Living God, be with us, Risen Christ, journey with us, Loving Spirit, go with us,
People of God – live and love for the glory of God. Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all forever more. **Amen**



³ Thine be the glory by Edmond Budry, StF313

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

Call to Worship

Thomas knelt before the risen Christ and said, 'My Lord and my God'. Through doubt he came to faith, through disbelief he came to know the glory of the risen Christ. **My Lord and my God.**

With Thomas we come to worship - just as we are – full of questions and contradictions, offering our faith and our doubts, offering our whole selves. **My Lord and my God.**

Like Thomas we long for the presence of Christ in our lives.
Like Thomas we acknowledge the mystery of the resurrection, the mystery of Christ present with us now. **My Lord and my God.**

We come as those with doubts. We come as those in need of forgiveness.
We come as those slow to proclaim you as our Lord and our God.
We come as those longing to hear your words of peace.
So we pray: Lord Jesus, come to us as you came to Thomas, and set us free to worship you without hesitation and without fear. **Amen**

Sing/Read/Proclaim : This Joyful Eastertide⁵

1. This joyful Eastertide, what need is there for grieving ?

Cast all your cares aside and be not unbelieving :

*Come, share our Easter joy that death could not imprison,
nor any power destroy, our Christ, who is arisen !*

2. No work for him is vain, no faith in him mistaken,
for Easter makes it plain his kingdom is not shaken :

3. Then put your trust in Christ, in waking and in sleeping.
His grace on earth sufficed ; he'll never quit his keeping :

⁴ Worship material for 11th April prepared by Wendy Corney

⁵ This Joyful Eastertide, by Fred Pratt Green, © 1969, Stainer & Bell Ltd, StF314

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Risen Lord, you make yourself known to us by grace, and for love.

We thank you for all you give us every day.

We thank you, Lord. **We thank you for all you give us every day.**

You give us sight, so we may see you in the faces of your children.

You give us understanding, so we may know what we see.

You give us grace to hear your voice. Your love for us is endless.

We thank you, Lord. **We thank you for all you give us every day.**

Risen Lord, whenever we meet with other Christians for the breaking of the bread, you are there with us, as you were with your disciples.

We thank you, Lord. **We thank you for all you give us every day.**

You give us friends, that we may learn about you through them.

You give us voices, that we may tell others what we know.

You give us grace and endless love that we may live our lives beside you.

We thank you, Lord. **We thank you for all you give us every day.**

RECEIVING

Reading: John 20:19-31

“ *I was always left out, never in the right place at the right time; even at my birth, I had to be the second twin. Now this. They all say they've seen you. How can I believe them? I told them straight I'd need to see the nail scars and feel the gaping wound. I want to believe – Lord, help my unbelief. 'Peace be with you.'* Lord, it's really you. No! – *I don't need to see the nail scars or feel the gaping wound, I can see you. Oh, why didn't I believe?*

Now I'll always be remembered, but not in the way I wanted. I'll be the one who doubted, the one who had to see before he would believe. 'Thomas, it's not just you, they all had to see before they believed; but there are those to come who will need to believe without seeing. They will take comfort in knowing that you struggled with your faith, you will help them to find the way.' ”

We cannot prove most of the things we hold as dearest truths. They are acts of faith, of trust. If you try to prove them, that trust could break down. The man who told everybody how much he trusted his wife's fidelity but to prove it, hired a private

detective to track her movements, is a contradiction in terms. Either he trusts her, or he doesn't. 'Prove there's a God and then I'll believe.' Belief is about not knowing but trusting at a deeper level. Few of us have tested for ourselves that Britain is an island. We trust others who have carried out such investigations. Not to believe Jesus' words is to consider him either a liar or mistaken. We believe Jesus' teachings because we believe in him as a person.

So what convinces us that Christ is risen? Is it the certainty of those we find most trustworthy? Or an inner conviction? Or seeing how others have been transformed by the experience of Christ? Or the result of struggle and doubt? It is not important how we made the journey of faith but that we can respond, like Thomas, 'My Lord and my God'.

In one church the congregation was invited to stand only for those parts of the creed they truly believed that morning and to sit down for the parts of which they were uncertain. Whilst there were always some sitting, there was never a time when nobody was standing. The faith was being carried by some on behalf of others at all times. And so were the community's doubts.

We in the churches need to be sensitive as to how we appear to others. Do we commend ourselves and the gospel we preach? Or do people see us, and not necessarily inaccurately, as a set of dysfunctional people who need this kind of spiritual apparatus to keep us from cracking up?

Consider the idea of 'locked doors' in your own church community. Most churches in this country don't have to lock their doors during their worship (although it is worth remembering that many elsewhere do through fear of persecution), but we may have other barriers that we need to open. These may be concerned with how to bring new people into church. It cannot be overstated how difficult it is for many people to walk into a church for the first time, let alone to understand our worship. We may also need to recognise the locked doors within ourselves. We need to open the doors of our hearts to allow Jesus to enter in. Perhaps we, too, are afraid — afraid to open ourselves to Jesus because we might also be called to transform our lives, like St Francis of Assisi.

What are the solutions? We may learn from Jesus' actions. Firstly, he offers peace to the disciples. His words are a 'normal' greeting but here they clearly gain far greater depth of meaning. Christ's peace removes the disciples' fear. It begs the

question: 'How do we bring peace into people's lives?' Secondly, Jesus confers on the disciples the gift of the Spirit. This means of transformation is Jesus' promised gift to them — the Spirit is breathed on them on Easter Day, which is where John sets his Pentecost. For John the new era of the resurrection starts from Easter. The disciples become Easter people, empowered by the Spirit, to be sent out by the Son.



History will show us how the disciples took on this commission — which is why we read from the Acts of the Apostles during Eastertide. *Are we Easter people, living the life of the Spirit? Amen*

RESPONDING

Declaring Faith

Jesus stood among the disciples and said, *'Peace be with you!'*

Lord, forgive us when we do not seek your peace.

Jesus stood among the disciples and said, *'As the Father sent me, I am sending you.'* **Lord, forgive us** when we are unwilling to go where you send us.

Jesus stood among the disciples and said, *'Receive the Holy Spirit.'* **Lord, forgive us** when we are unwilling to accept your gifts for ourselves, and the gifts of others.

Jesus stood among the disciples and said, *'Forgive those who have sinned, if you do not forgive, they are not forgiven.'* **Lord, forgive us** when we fail to forgive others.

Jesus stood among the disciples and said to Thomas, *'See my hands, put your finger here. Put your hand into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'* **Lord, forgive us** our doubts, and help us to see that doubt can be part of believing.

Jesus stood among the disciples and said, *'Blessed are those who have not seen me, yet have believed.'* **Lord, forgive us** when we when criticize rather than support those who struggle with doubts about faith, and when we make it hard for people to be part of your community.

Sing & Pray: O breath of life come sweeping through us⁶

1. O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your Church with life and power;
O breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
and fit your Church to meet this hour.

⁶ O breath of life by Elizabeth Ann Head, StF391

2. O wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore; for this we plead.

3. O breath of love, come, breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart;
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your Church in every part.



Prayers of Intercession

We live in a world where many doubt. We pray today for those who doubt because no one has ever shown them the love of Jesus. **Lord, have mercy.**

We pray for those who doubt because the circumstances of their lives just don't hold any sign of a God of love. **Lord, have mercy.**

We pray for those who doubt because they have been hurt or let down by others, or have never learned to trust. **Lord, have mercy.**

We pray for those who doubt because war or natural disaster has destroyed them or those they love. **Lord, have mercy.**

We pray for those who doubt because they are in the dark night of illness or grief. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord, we pray for all who doubt your love for whatever reason: shine your resurrection light in their lives. **Lord, have mercy. Amen.**

Blessing

Jesus stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.' Go and do the Father's work, in the name of the Son and in the strength of the Spirit. Amen.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all forever more. **Amen**

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

Gathering: Lord God, as we come today praising your name and giving thanks for everything you have done for us, we know that your welcoming arms are ready to embrace to us. Be with us now as we gather and bind us together in your love.

Sing, Pray or Reflect: I watch the sunrise⁸

1. I watch the sunrise lighting the sky, casting its shadows near.
And on this morning bright though it be, I feel those shadows near me.
*But you are always close to me, following all my ways.
May I be always close to you, following all your ways, Lord.*
2. I watch the sunlight shine through the clouds, warming the earth below.
And at the mid-day life seems to say: 'I feel your brightness near me.'
For you are always close to me ...
3. I watch the sunset fading away, lighting the clouds with sleep.
And as the evening closes its eyes, I feel your presence near me.
For you are always close to me ...
4. I watch the moonlight guarding the night, waiting till morning comes.
The air is silent, earth is at rest — only your peace is near me.
Yes, you are always close to me ...

We Pray

Lord God, who understands our every need, we praise your name for always being there, stilling our turmoil, being our anchor and refuge in troubled times. This year has been difficult for us, so we thank you for watching over us, and all whom we love. We thank you for all those people who have reached out to us. For those who have helped us, comforted us and simply been there for us.

Lord, thank you for this wonderful world. As we begin to venture out again, we marvel at the beauty of flowers, the sight and sounds of Spring and the chatter of the community around us.

⁷ Worship for 18th April prepared by Malcolm Lindo

⁸ I watch the sunrise, by John Glynn, © 1976 Kevin Mayhew, StF469

Lord sometimes we have struggled. We are sometimes forgetful of your love. Sometimes we feel guilty that we have not served you as we think we should. We have sometimes neglected the truths and calls of scripture, and not turned to you in prayer. Forgive us Lord.

Lord, we thank you that you sent Jesus to live amongst us and die for us on the Cross. Today we pray “Come, Risen Lord, help us reach out to you and feel that you are there.” Amen.

RECEIVING

Reading: Luke 24:35-45

Nearly 250 years ago today, an American undertook what became known as one of the historic journeys of all time. It was on the evening of April 18th, 1775, that Paul Revere rode through the night to warn the leaders of the American rebellion that the British army was marching towards Lexington to arrest them. The journey from Boston to Lexington may have only been about 12.5 miles, but I am sure that Paul and his fellow rider were full of adrenaline as they sought to evade the English patrols in order to reach their destination first.

Our Bible reading records the end of another well-known journey. The two disciples, who had left Jerusalem on Easter Sunday and walked and talked with the Risen Christ, were desperate to walk back the 10 miles from Emmaus to Jerusalem where they knew that the other disciples were hiding. Still shocked, and recovering first from the events of Good Friday, both men would have also been full of adrenaline, excited, buzzing with the fact that Jesus has risen from the dead.

But listen now to what one of the other disciples might have said about the moment when they arrived back: *We were all there together waiting for something to happen. Waiting, for the sound of footsteps, waiting for the knock on the door, waiting for the moment when the authorities came, and it would be all up for us just as it had been for Him.*

Although the Jewish authorities never came, strange things did start to happen. It had started when the women came back from the tomb. They had burst into the room, trembling, and laughing like a bunch of mixed-up children, but we had dismissed their behaviour as being shock and the effects of grieving.

But then Peter and John came back saying the body was gone, and they believed that Jesus was alive! When I heard that I admit I did not know what to think. I thought that they both had more sense. Finally, the two from Emmaus returned saying they had seen Jesus, talked with them and broken bread just like we did at that last meal we had with him. I was stunned! I just didn't know what to think.

We were all sitting in silence, when suddenly he appeared, popped out of nowhere. I was absolutely terrified. I knew that it was Him, but I couldn't believe it. "Why are you frightened?" he asked, "why did you doubt that I would be with you again?"

Then he asked us for some food, and it was like it always was, we ate together, we laughed together, and we talked. But it felt unreal. I think we all knew that it wouldn't last. We all knew it was the end, but hoped that somehow it could be the beginning of a something new. A new chapter which would be different. A chapter in which it didn't matter that we couldn't see him. It didn't matter that we couldn't touch him. A chapter in which we would know that we would always be able to feel his presence deep inside guiding us, renewing us, and working through us.

And that is what happened, God is with us now, deep in our hearts. You don't need my word for that, you don't need anyone's because you can experience it yourselves.

And this morning we can! As we approach another step out of the lockdown, let us all be strengthened and blessed by the knowledge that, as the disciples felt, God is with us deep in our hearts.

RESPONDING

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, as we reflect on the knowledge that you are here with us in our world, we pray for all the places where there is discord and conflict. Pour out Your love and wisdom that people will listen to and respect each other.

We pray for those who live in despair, for people who struggle to find purpose in their lives, for those who cannot see a way ahead, and for those who feel alone. Pour out your love on them so that they will know that they are not alone.

Healing Lord, there are so many people in so many places, where people are suffering in so many different ways. Comfort all who suffer and be with all who seek to care for others, Lord meet their physical and spiritual needs.

Loving God, we pray for our families, our friends, and for the members of our Churches. *(you might like to name names here)*

Lord, you have given us so many gifts, talents, and opportunities. Help us as individuals and as your people together, to use what we have been given to be your witnesses in our communities and throughout the world.

Breath of Life, come, and breathe within us, renew our thoughts, will, and hearts. Refresh us and revive us in every way so that your kingdom may come, and your will be done. ***Our Father...***

Sing, Pray or Reflect: Teach me to dance⁹

*Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart
Teach me to move in the power of your Spirit
Teach me to walk in the light of your presence
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart
Teach me to love with your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart*



1. You wrote the rhythm of life,
Created heaven and earth
In you is joy without measure.
So, like a child in your sight
I dance to see your delight
For I was made for your pleasure,
Pleasure.

2. Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'yes'
A will that leaps to obey you
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in your face
Let my whole being praise you,
Praise you!

Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all forever more. Amen**

⁹ Teach me to dance, by Graham Kendrick, © 1993 Make Way Music, StF477

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

**Lord God, eternal giver of love and life,
your son Jesus Christ, our good shepherd and constant defender,
has sent us into all the world to preach the gospel of his kingdom.
Confirm us in this mission and help us to live the good news we proclaim
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.**

Sing, pray & proclaim: Will you come and follow me?¹¹

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?

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?

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?

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?

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.

¹⁰ Worship for 25th April prepared by Lynne James

¹¹ Will you come and follow me, by John Bell & Graham Maule, StF673

Reading: John 10:11-18

We don't see much of shepherds in today's Sussex, though I'm sure there are still some around, but probably up in the hills and away from the roads where we rarely go. However, we do see shepherds on programmes like Countryfile which is a household favourite. One thing that always strikes me is how the sheep recognise the shepherd's voice and come over to him almost at once. It could just be because they know he brings food, but they also seem happy to follow him.

It was even more important for sheep to have a shepherd in the time of Jesus. Like many parts of the world then, and a few still now, the sheep were easy prey for wolves. Today they are more likely to be stolen by rustlers or chased by dogs. So, the sheep still do need someone to keep an eye on them and to help them to survive. That help comes in many ways as shepherds help with lambing, food and digging out of snowdrifts. Sheep can be pretty helpless on their own. That's the reason this parable works for us because we humans can be even more helpless than sheep! OK, so we're less likely to need digging out of snowdrifts, but we get ourselves into plenty of other pickles as we go through life.

How would we survive the pain and loss that come to most lives if we could not turn to God for help? I know that when our 13 year old daughter died we would never have moved on if we had not been able to tap into God's loving care. In every subsequent loss, parents, sibling, friends, God has still been there with open arms to lead out of the darkness into the light, to shepherd us away from danger, to feed us and rescue us. Jesus did indeed lay down his life for his sheep. Yet that was not enough for him.

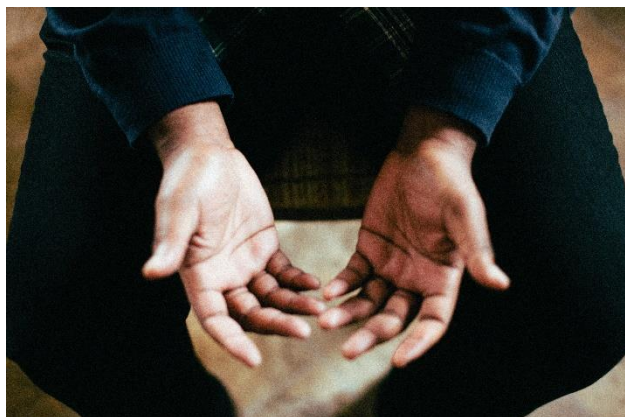
He hoped that HIS sheep would be obedient, but he also wanted to rescue sheep that were not yet his. Watching *One Man and His Dog* is great fun. The dogs are so good and the sheep so naughty. Because they are not the shepherd's own sheep. They do not know him and will not come to his voice. If the dogs weren't there the sheep would always run away. The shepherd has to hope that he/she has trained the dogs well enough to do the job for him/her. That is just the position that Jesus is considering here. Somehow, he wants to create just one flock that will obey his voice. So, he has trained us to be the sheepdogs. It's up to us to find the lost sheep and bring them safely home.

Did you ever fancy becoming a sheepdog? Certainly, those listening to Jesus did not even consider that other 'sheep' were worth saving. Jesus has to tell his followers many times that he has come to bring the news of God's love to ALL people, even the Gentiles.

It's still the same message and we are still in just as much a muddle about doing it as the Jews were in 1st century Jerusalem. Does today's church do enough to spread God's word? Or do we leave it to a few 'missionaries' to do that for us? Are we looking for the lost sheep? Or are we sitting safe in the sheepfold and leaving the other sheep who are not part of our group to the mercy of today's version of the wolves? Can we be the sheepdogs seeking out those who need help and safety? Can we bring them back to the love of God shown in Jesus? Or do we just come to church on Sundays and sing songs?

Jesus reminds us that we have free will. Our life is our own. We can lay it down and take it up again. Not perhaps in the way Jesus did, but in so many other ways that would make God's world a better place and help the flock to become one, in the name of the good shepherd. Amen.

RESPONDING



*What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit!
O what needless pain we bear!
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.*

Prayers for ourselves and others

Creator God, who made us in your image, help us to realise the full extent of the power you have given us through Jesus. Help us not to fear the wolves or the storms, but to go out bravely in your name wherever possible. Help us to find the lost sheep and bring them home.

Bless all those who do go out to help and save and be with all those who are lost, hungry, homeless or alone and afraid. We pray silently for those known to us who are in need of your comfort and reassurance..... Show us how we may help them and bring them to a place of safety.

Protect those who go bravely into hostile places to teach others who have not known of your love for them. Help us each in our own small way to give our help and support.

We thank those who have helped us and those who give of time and money to support our churches and to create places of worship which should become islands of calm and safety in the storms of modern living.

We bring our prayers together with the great prayer which the Shepherd taught us all to use... *Our Father, who art in Heaven.....*

Sing, Pray & Praise: God's Spirit is in my heart¹²

God's Spirit is in my heart; He has called me and set me apart.

This is what I have to do, have to do:

*He sent me to give the good news to the poor,
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
Tell blind people that they can see
And set the down-trodden free
And go tell everyone the news that the kingdom of God has come;
And go tell everyone the news that God's kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me, So I'm sending you out to be,
My witness throughout the world –The whole of the world.

Don't carry a load in your pack; You don't need two shirts on your back;
God's workers can earn their own keep – Can earn their own keep.

Don't worry what you have to say; Don't worry because on that day
God's Spirit will speak in your heart - Will speak in your heart.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all forever more. **Amen**

Acknowledgements

Song words reproduced under CCLI Licence | original material, formatting + editing by Rev Dan Balsdon
Bible texts from NRSV unless otherwise stated, www.biblegateway.com
Image reproduced under Creative Commons Licence unless otherwise stated

¹² God's Spirit is in my heart by Alan T Dale & Herbert Richards © 1969 Vanguard Music Corp, StF404