

Worship at Home - Sunday 24th April 2022

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

Faithful God, the strength of all who believe and the hope of those who doubt; may we, who have not seen, have faith and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Amen.

(MWB Collect p541)

StF 294 All you that seek the Lord who died

[youtube.com/watch?v=KDD8b7RmV2U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDD8b7RmV2U)

**All you that seek the Lord who died,
Your God for sinners crucified,
Now, now let all your grief be o'er!
Believe, and you shall weep no more.**

**The Lord of life is risen indeed,
To death delivered in your stead;
His rise proclaims your sins forgiven,
And shows the living way to heaven.**

**Haste then, you souls that first believe,
Who dare the gospel word receive,
Your faith with joyful hearts confess,
Be bold, be Jesus' witnesses.**

**Go, tell the followers of your Lord
Their Jesus is to life restored;
He lives to quicken humankind;
He lives that all his life may find.**

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

Source of Life, Risen Lord, Breath of Hope, we lift our hearts and minds in praise to you and rejoice that you are stronger than death, truer than lies, loving and faithful to the end. You are there at our beginnings, and you walk with us through our endings, and nothing can separate us from your love.

Be near as we open heart and mind to you in worship, thankful for your grace and stunned by your great mercy. For with you we can reveal our everyday reality as it is; no holds barred. You only wait for our honesty so that you may reach out with healing kindness to restore us where we need it most.

May we wait on you with trust, seeking what is good, and dismissing any chaff which gets in the way as soil aerating roughage. May we find you, and follow you, as we worship you. **Amen.**

Today's Reading from: Revelation 1: 4-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him, even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. **Amen.**

'I am the Alpha and the Omega',
says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Today's Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

The Purpose of This Book

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name
<https://bible.oremus.org/>

Time to Reflect

We often focus on the commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus ascends, to go and make disciples of all the world. In this reading from John, Jesus gives the first post-resurrection commission: **Forgive**.

It is the evening of the first day; Mary found he was alive that very morning. The disciples would have been wracked with guilt and confusion. And Jesus first gives them the assurance of *Shalom*; of Peace and wholeness. He keeps emphasising this greeting; "Be at peace". And he sends them, empowered by the breath of the Holy Spirit, to forgive.

It's an awesome responsibility, especially when you understand that, if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained. Seventy times seventy Jesus had said the disciples should forgive one another. His example on the cross was to ask God to forgive, because "they know not what they do".

Forgiving is one of the hardest things we do. And yet it is – or should be – the hallmark of the Christian. Everyone is capable of forgiving. Counsellors know that it is healthy for human beings to forgive; we live happier lives when we can let go; we find peace. Christians are actually commissioned to forgive. That is the good news which they are to share: Forgiveness is an essential part of the Peace Jesus wishes upon his followers. As the author of Revelation puts it, we are "a Kingdom of Priests", and the role of the

priests in the temple was to mediate the forgiveness of God to those who brought sacrifices to atone for their sins; for anything they'd got wrong and now regretted – as well as bringing gifts of thanksgiving.

The death of Jesus is the final sacrifice; we no longer need a system of temple priests. Instead there are people who know themselves forgiven, who therefore forgive; a kingdom or nation of priest; Christians.

Forgiveness does not mean accepting injustice. It means exercising justice without revenge. It means bringing about a Kingdom of Peace through a decision of the heart so that decisions of the mind may be wise and compassionate, just and merciful.

When people disagree strongly, they can find it hard to forgive. When they act in ways which conflict, it can be hard to forgive. Yet forgiveness enables us to live with an acceptance of our differences as people who know they, too, have had to be, and continue to need to be forgiven.

Only God knows what he is doing. All too often we do not. He forgives. He is just. Yet - or 'and' - he forgives.

May God send the Holy Spirit to us all, to help us know we are forgiven, to help us to forgive, and to help us to discern what is just and wise in his kingdom of loving peace and kindness.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

God of all, we pray for your world.

We pray for people of differing faiths, and for those who insist there is no God, and for those who are uncertain, that we may all trust in what we know, believe that truth is strong enough to prevail over what is doubtful, and prove tolerant

especially towards any need for healing and hope. Help us to make space for your redeeming grace. We pray for the leaders of the nations, that they may be wise in exercising justice, and compassionate in showing mercy.

We pray for those who harm, that we might find ways to forgive and thereby gain clarity of mind to help effect changes which limit or remove that harm.

We pray for those whose hurt is so great that forgiveness may not be an appropriate response at this point in time; that we might be forgiven for any pressure they feel from the way we express the Good News of God's love, and that we might instead offer a hope which is both trustworthy and just.

We pray for those who are struggling in body, mind, or soul. May they receive loving kindness in thought and word and deed.

We pray for any who are grieving. And we thank you that we can trust that Jesus has conquered death and sin, and reigns over time and space with you and the Holy Spirit; one loving God. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Listen to "Forgive one another"

[youtube.com/watch?v=f3riOX46bwo&list=RDf3riOX46bwo&start_radio=1&rv=f3riOX46bwo&t=64](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3riOX46bwo&list=RDf3riOX46bwo&start_radio=1&rv=f3riOX46bwo&t=64)

or "Forgiveness"

[youtube.com/watch?v=FMn0QNdiuGE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMn0QNdiuGE)

or see Hymn StF 431 Oh the Love of my Lord

[youtube.com/watch?v=RZ8tpLIJ0TQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ8tpLIJ0TQ)

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

May God, who raised Jesus Christ from death to life, raise us from fear to hope, from despair to joy, from confusion to action, and may his peace fill our hearts and flow out to all whose lives touch ours this day and every day. **Amen.**