

## THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:

### Telephone Service for Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2022 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

The service can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley Benefice for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, which has been put together by Liz Howlett, and includes liturgy from the Iona Community.

In the beginning, before time, before people, before the world began, **God was**.

Here and now, among us and beside us, clearer than air, closer than breathing, **God is**.

In all that is to come, when we have turned to dust and human knowledge has been completed, **God will be**.

Not despairing of earth, but delighting in it, not condemning the world, but redeeming it through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, **God was, God is, God will be**.

*Hymn: Thine be the glory*

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.

*Refrain*

3 No more we doubt thee, glorious prince of life!  
Life is nought 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.

*Refrain*

*Edmund L Budry (1854-1932), translated by Richard B Hoyle (1875-1939)*

*Prayer*

In the beauty of the earth, in the silence of our hearts, in the community of your church, in all acts of grace and kindness, in forgiving from the heart and in worship from the soul, your Spirit confirms the truth in which we seek to live.

If knowing this, we have failed to love you, our Maker, been hesitant to follow your Son, and suspected the power of your Spirit, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

If we have desired comfort more than devotion and if we have satisfied our wants more than we have served your will, Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

If we have limited our company to those like us and if we have restricted our conversation to matters of no consequence, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Risen Christ, by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples: help your Church to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

*First Reading*

**Acts 16: 9 - 15**

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

*Gospel Reading*

**John 14: 23 - 29**

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

*Reflection*

**'Following fear, or pursuing peace'**

One of the really delightful things about being at Othona just at the moment is that we have a toddler living with us. His mum and dad are our new caterers. I am being reminded these days just how much learning an 18-month-old does each and every day – for example – how to communicate with those around him – he is saying more and more words – it's great fun listening to him and talking with him! He is also playing of course, but one of the things that is striking me just now is the way in which he is learning to draw others of us into playing with him. And this little chap is reminding me – in case I had forgotten – of the fear that goes hand in hand with living as a human. Fear does just seem to be a part of the human condition. His parents are all important to him as the people who give him a sense of

security and being loved, so when one of them goes out of sight and he suddenly realises, he gets fearful – separation from loved ones is a frightening, scary prospect. It was really touching earlier this week at a mealtime when his dad went into the kitchen to get some more food for us. The toddler started to get anxious, and his mum said, ‘Daddy will be back in one minute.’ The child put up a finger and said, ‘One’. He is beginning to learn how to manage that separation for himself – it is a big step.

It isn’t just toddlers who fear separation from loved ones, of course. They have far fewer ways of covering their fear than those of us who’ve been around a lot longer. Perhaps you are like me in that you have felt that fear of separation more strongly at different times in your life. I remember, when I was 18, I was desperate to leave home – I feared I had messed up my A levels and would have to stay another year to do retakes – oh no – that would be a disaster! It wasn’t that bad stuff was happening to me at home – I just wanted to be free! When I got to university, I had no idea how much I would miss the life I had had with mum and dad. ‘Who am I now?’ It took me a long time to establish myself as an adult – not necessarily on the outside – I was getting good at covering it up, but on the inside I keenly felt the hole of separation.

For the disciples in our gospel reading, the threat of separation from Jesus is real and scary. In this passage we find ourselves with them at the last supper. In the verses just before, different disciples have been asking Jesus a range of questions. They are anxious and fearful. They have heard him say that he is leaving them soon. How understandable it is that they might want to hear Jesus say that everything is alright really – nothing bad is going to happen. They won’t really be separated. Once the festival is over they’ll all be able to leave Jerusalem and head back to the safety of Galilee. There, they can carry on with their lives on the road with Jesus just like before. But that isn’t what Jesus is saying to them. A bit like the mum saying to the toddler, ‘Daddy will be back in one minute’, Jesus is saying to the disciples, ‘I will be leaving you soon, but I am coming back, and the Father will give you the Spirit’. The disciples long for the security of the life they had with Jesus, the most important person in their lives, who called them to follow him. But it seems there’s no going back now. Like the toddler who longs to have both parents with him all day and all night everyday; like the 18-year-old living away from home for the first time – there is no going back – there is only going forwards – and how scary that feels because it is going into the unknown! The disciples are at a crossroads, and they can only go ahead, but which way? Will they follow their fear? Or will they pursue the peace that Jesus is giving them as they sit at the meal?

When Jesus meets these disciples as a group in the upper room again, it is on the day of his resurrection. What really strikes me about this later encounter, as John relates it, is that the very first words that Jesus says to his followers then are, ‘Peace be with you’. He doesn’t berate them for following their fear and abandoning him during his arrest. He doesn’t say, ‘What about the peace I gave you? You didn’t hang onto it long did you?’ He simply, graciously, enacts his forgiveness of them by giving his peace to them once again. I can feel the fear calm down in me, just through reflecting on that open-hearted approach of Jesus.

There are many unknowns ahead of us today. There are those which we face as a nation – we have never lived through a pandemic before. We are still getting to grips with our new,

post-Brexit relationships with the rest of Europe and the world. And we will each have our own particular unknowns to face – in our communities, our families and within ourselves. It will not be surprising if fear is a factor for us. But our Lord’s approach to his disciples – the way in which he gives peace, more than once, not as a sticking plaster to cover the fear, as if it isn’t there, or to pretend that life isn’t full of challenges – his giving of peace makes it possible not just to follow our fear but to choose to live as he did, with openness, with generosity, with welcome to those who are different. How our world needs peace! May we pursue peace today, one step at a time. Amen.

Peace I leave with you,  
my peace I give unto you:

*Hymn: Peace I leave with you*  
not as the world giveth, give I unto you.  
Let not your heart be troubled.

*John 4: 27 (Public Domain)*

*Prayers*

Let us pray: May it not be long, Lord...

May it not be long, Lord, before the world we pray for and the world we inhabit are one.

May it not be long before the earth no longer suffers through human selfishness, so that the valleys can sing again, the meadows laugh and barren places burst into bloom.

**May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before the domination of wealth over want, male over female, white over black, the privileged over the poor, be facts of history, not facts of life.

**May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before spears are turned into pruning forks and all the peoples of the world are able to live in peace and harmony with one another. **May it not be long.**

May it not be long, Lord, before we vacate the places of fear and anxiety and find wells of hope and peace, deeper than shallow pools of optimism. **May it not be long.**

*The Lord’s Prayer*

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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**

*Closing Responses*

Now may God who gives seed to the sower and corn to the reaper, give to us all that we need to produce a good harvest.

**May God make us fertile in faith, hope and love, and take us out with joy and lead us on in peace, as signs of the fruitfulness of heaven. Amen.**

*Chant: Halle halle hallelujah*

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Hallelujah, hallelujah!

Unknown (Public Domain)

*Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, is copyright The Archbishop’s Council (2000).

*A Wee Worship Book: Fifth Incarnation*, is copyright The Wild Goose Resource Group (2015).