



*Preparation: You may find it helpful to have a Bible, Singing the Faith (if possible) and some bread as we prepare for our worship today. You are invited to read aloud the words in bold type.*

In the breaking of bread and in prayer,  
**Jesus is among us.**  
 In the telling of stories and in song,  
**Jesus is among us.**  
 In this place and in this moment,  
**Jesus is among us.**

Welcome. We begin our worship with the hymn (StF 293):

**All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPkZAjA610k>

Let us pray:

Our hearts lift to praise you Lord, God of new beginnings.  
 From the first moments of time,  
 you have continued your work of creation,  
 bringing order out of chaos, light out of darkness,  
 and life out of barrenness.

And through the resurrection of Jesus you give hope and the promise of new life to the world and to all people.  
**Thank you God**, for real joy in the faith we share.  
**Thank you God**, for hope in the Good news we share.  
**Thank you God**, for peace in the fellowship we share.  
**Thank you God**, for goodness and mercy towards us, for the gifts and graces within us and for the outpouring of your Spirit among us. **Amen**

**Gracious and loving God,**  
**we know we are not always ready to find you**  
**as we travel life's road.**

**Sometimes, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus,**  
**we are lost in sadness and grief.**

**Sometimes we are too busy, preoccupied**  
**with the minutiae of everyday routines.**

**Sometimes we are overwhelmed**  
**by our own concerns, or those of others,**  
**to notice you are there and that you care.**

**For this we are truly sorry. Forgive us.**

**Shake us out of our preoccupations.**

**May we see you more clearly, love you more dearly**  
**and serve you with joy.**  
**In Christ's name. Amen**

We hear the words which Jesus speaks to us:  
 Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.  
**Thanks be to God. Amen**

The Gospel reading for today is Luke's account of the walk to Emmaus on the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection:

**Luke's Gospel, chapter 24, verses 13 – 35**

These two individuals were coming away from Jerusalem: in retreat, getting away from the intensity, the disappointment, the raised expectations and dashed hopes, the grief. None of it made sense, none of it! They just had to get away, back home perhaps, back to some sort of normality, back to the way their life had been before...

And we know something of how they were feeling – for in these strange unprecedented times, many of us are feeling anxious, afraid, confused; we long to wake up from what feels like an unreal situation and return to some sort of normality, back to how life was before Covid 19 turned our world upside down.

Cleopas and his companion had so much wanted to be part of this new movement, to be followers, to be in at the beginning of something new and potentially world changing, but now all their plans, all their expectations were shattered and they faced a very different sort of future. And now they were on their own!

Except that they weren't of course - and Luke lets us in on what's happening right from the start. So we know what they don't know - that this stranger, this traveller whom they meet along the road, with whom they share their anguish, their confusion, their doubts, their questions, this is Jesus, the risen Jesus. He has not abandoned them, has not left them without hope or purpose, has not led them on a wild goose chase, has not been defeated by the political powers and religious authorities, nor even by death! He is walking alongside them, listening to their concerns, helping them to make sense of their experiences, sharing their stories, sharing their journey...

And we await the moment, for surely it will come, when they recognise him. Indeed that moment of awakening does come - not in the debate and discussion, not in the questioning and explaining, but in a moment of close companionship and fellowship, a moment of sharing and hospitality, a moment of weary and hungry vulnerability. In the simple act of blessing and breaking bread, Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection are all held together and remembered - all the meals shared in homes, on hillsides, with friends and with crowds, meals with Zacchaeus, with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. And the stories about great banquets, and parties; food and hospitality; the

discipleship Prayer, and Jesus' words at that last meal together – 'Whenever you eat this, whenever you drink this...remember me'.

*Pause for a moment.*

*Prayerfully, think about meals you have shared with others, formal and informal, picnics and celebrations; think about the food being shared and meals being offered to those who are having difficulty in accessing food at the moment; think about the special sharing of the Lord's Supper; think about Jesus' presence with you now.*

*Take the bread and speak the words of the Hebrew blessing which Jesus would have spoken:*

**"Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth".**

*Hear Jesus' words, "I am the bread of life".*

And now they knew that Jesus had been with them...that his risen presence was real, in the stranger that they happened to meet, the stranger they were prepared to listen to, the stranger who helped make sense of something in their lives, the stranger for whom they showed concern, the stranger to whom they offered hospitality.

Their response was immediate – no resting overnight before the long walk back to Jerusalem! Enthused and energised with new hope, determination and vision, they set off on their journey to Jerusalem, to share the good news and to start a new life – no going back now!

When we reach the end of this particular journey, will we allow it to have been an awakening for us – or will we go back to our old ways? Will we have accepted with grace our mutual dependence on one another? Will we have accepted our responsibilities towards the earth and its people? Will we be concerned more about the global issues of climate change, poverty and justice than narrow, sectarian views? Will we have heard God's voice in this crisis and will that make a permanent difference to us, to the church, to the world?

Our next hymn is no 662 in StF:

**Have you heard God's voice, has your heart been stirred?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Aigbqg9eU>

And now we bring our prayers for others, which include the response Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Remembering how Jesus on the night he was betrayed, lovingly served his disciples by washing their feet, we pray for all health care, social care and emergency workers, ancillary staff, delivery and maintenance people and volunteers – and all who serve the community in a variety of ways.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Remembering how the disciples met behind locked doors for safety, we pray for all those who are confined to their homes and those who do not have a safe place to stay.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Remembering that at first the disciples were confused and afraid, we pray for all who are anxious, alone, afraid, ill or feeling isolated. We pray for all who are separated from friends and family, and especially those who have lost a loved one and are having to cope alone in their grief.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Remembering how Cleopas and his companion's experience gave them new hope and vision, we pray for scientists and medical researchers to be inspired in their search for treatments and vaccines and for political leaders to be wise and just in their decisions.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

*A moment of silence to add your own prayers..*

Let us say together the Lord's Prayer

Our final hymn is StF 526: **Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8mti7VL3gg>

*The Invitation of Easter by Peter Millar*

Across our beautiful evolving world,  
Another Easter dawns, tenderly inviting us to ponder  
Upon wider truths and alternative visions.

Truths of both heart and mind  
That find their roots in the mystery and practicality of God.

Basic truths, illuminating our often uncertain journeys -  
Allowing us to reconnect with the energies of Christ:

That life does not come from death;  
That hate is not the final word;  
That the broken continue to sing with joy;  
That the trees and the mountains clap their hands;  
That forgiveness resides in the heart of the human condition;  
That love, with all its multiple faces, remains our companion.

Christ is risen!  
Risen again in the midst of it all -  
That in some amazing way we too may be a people of hope  
Who walk in the light,  
Imbued with the Spirit.

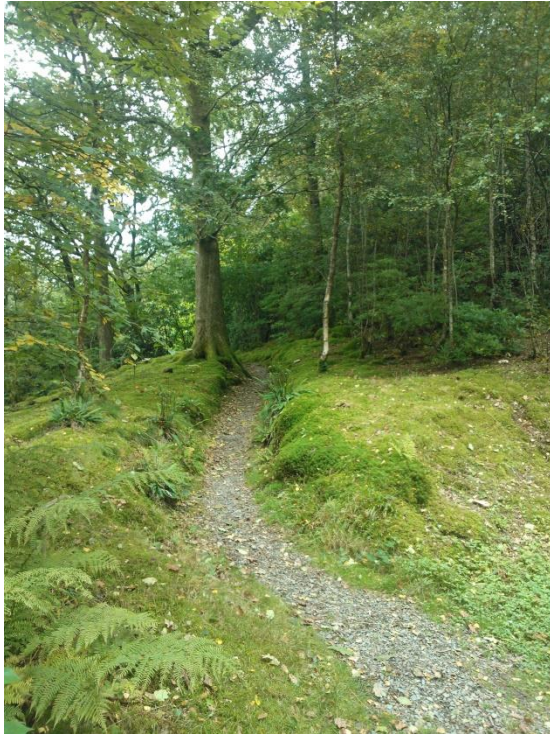
May God lead us on the path of peace,  
in the way of willingness  
and along the journey of joy and hopefulness. **Amen**

Let us say the blessing together, remembering those who will be worshipping elsewhere but nevertheless are with us and thinking of those from whom we are temporarily parted:

**May the strength of God pilot us  
May the power of God preserve us  
May the wisdom of God instruct us  
May the hand of God protect us  
May the way of God direct us  
May the shield of God guard us  
May Christ be with us this day and evermore Amen**

***An activity for this week: Take your own Emmaus walk.***

This can be on your daily exercise time outside, it can be walking round your garden or it can be sitting in the house. If you are doing this at home, take an imaginary walk to a favourite place – perhaps looking at a photograph or picture, or, if you have internet, there are lots of virtual walks available for free on You Tube.



Immerse yourself in your walk –

listen to the sounds, see the signs of new life around,  
take in every little detail, recognise the handiwork of God,  
sense the presence of God's Spirit,  
imagine Jesus is walking with you,  
speak to him of what is on your mind and in your heart,  
or simply remain silent .... and listen.

Psalm 121 (*excerpt*):

I lift up my eyes to the hills –  
From where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved:  
He who keeps you will not slumber  
The Lord will keep you from all evil:  
He will keep your life.

The Lord will keep your going out  
and your coming in  
from this time on and forevermore.