

## A service for 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020

*Note: The hymn numbers are from "Singing the Faith" the current hymnbook of the Methodist Church, you will need to look them up if your Church uses a different book. I have also put links into YouTube for the hymns, my choice might not be yours, so by all means look for alternatives.*

Bible Reading: Psalm 31: 1-5, 15-16

Hymn 628: Faithful one, so unchanging <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxviwvjg1w>

Prayers Wondrous God

We are blessed that we can come together to praise you despite the restrictions and difficulties in our lives.

We come together to worship you and give you thanks. We celebrate our life together as your people.

In a moment of silence, we share with you the things we want to give praise and thanks for today.

*Moment of silence*

Thank you for this delicate but awe-inspiring world we live in; for the opportunities in the world to respond to your call.

Thank you for a world which is full of diversity, where there are many opportunities to worship you and to serve you and those we meet in different ways.

Help us not to use their differences as excuses to build walls that divide. Help us to see each difference as a rainbow of hope and as a pattern where each colour is linked and bound together by your unending love.

Forgive us, loving God, when we do not accept the diversity of the world; when we forget that we are all your people, loved equally and known to you by name.

Forgive us for our foolishness and our thoughtless use of the gifts of your creation, Lord, have mercy.

For our neglect of you, and our failure to care for others, Christ, have mercy.

For our selfishness in prayer and our carelessness in worship, Lord, have mercy.

*Moment of silence*

Here is good news for all who put their trust in Christ. Jesus says: 'Your sins are forgiven.'

**Amen. Thanks be to God**

Bible Reading Acts 7: 55-60

I can remember a time when the Church I attended would sing Christmas Carols outside the co-op in our village, I was a teenager at the time and hated this one hour a year in my life, why? Because was it a very public declaration of my faith.

Stephen nailed his colours to the mast and spoke out for his faith, his biggest risk went far beyond the mockery of schoolmates, his public declaration of faith cost him his life in a very painful way, yet even at the last, he seized the opportunity of his own death to proclaim his love for God and to pray for the forgiveness of those who caused his pain.

*Consider:*

- *Times in your own life when your faith has cost you dearly, maybe not the point that Stephen had to face, but which tested your calling*
- *Have there been times in your own life when the actions of others have hurt you, if you didn't forgive them at the time, ask for God's strength to forgive them now. This might be very difficult for some people and the time might not be right, that's OK.*

Hymn 349:

I am not skilled to understand <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkMTRKZYFNE>

*This hymn is new to me, the video clip has more verses than our hymnbook, please read the words if you don't know the tune.*

Epistle

1 Peter 2: 2-10

I often struggle with bouts of insecurity, believing that other preachers are better informed than I, more eloquent and challenging in their preaching, chose better hymns than I do and am far more in tune with congregations than I am. At times, I look at ministerial colleagues and believe that they are better ministers than I am, better Church leaders, better pastors and more creative thinkers and in the end I put this down to the strength of faith others have and the poverty of my own faith.

That said, I believe that these words of Peter can give us all confidence, he reminds us that we are all: -

- Chosen by God and precious in his sight.
- Living stones, who, like Peter are the foundations of the Church
- Called to lead people out of darkness into the light

We might all feel insecure at times, inadequate compared to others and the least in the Kingdom of God, yet in his letter Peter reminds us of these wonderful truths.

*Consider:*

- *Are there times in your life when you feel inadequate for the tasks you believe God is calling you to do?*
- *On such occasions is your natural reaction to call upon the power of the Spirit of God to help you in your times of need.*
- *How do you show your appreciation for the gifts God is giving you through other people?*

Prayer

God our Saviour,

We pray for those who feel hopeless that they may hear your good news and be freed from their anguish.

Silence

We pray for those who have had their expectation of hope torn away, for those who feel discarded and deceived.

Silence

We pray that the Church will stand together with those who are suffering, working for acceptance and peace.

Silence

We pray for those who are beginning to hope, those who dare to dream of a better tomorrow.

Silence

We pray for all affected during this Covid-19 pandemic. We pray for those who are poor, sick, homeless, lonely, imprisoned, weighed down and powerless.

Silence

May your love reach them and may we all stand together. May your Church reach out to those in need, so that all may come to give thanks to you, and celebrate together.

Amen

***The Lord's Prayer***

*Our Father .....*

Hymn 677:

Christ is made the sure foundation [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bC0tgG\\_bIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bC0tgG_bIE)

Gospel:

John 14: 1-14

I've never been the kind of person who is happy with uncertainty. I like to think that I am an optimist, who can recognise the positive aspects of most situations, consequently I have to confess that the current situation concerns me greatly and makes me feel uncomfortable, not least because I am making decisions on a daily basis that will affect the Church, potentially for years to come against a background of complete uncertainty.

In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus is prepping his disciples for a time when their lives and their faith in him would be tested to the uttermost, a time when they would do amazing work for God and face opposition that could cause them pain and suffering. He gives them words of assurance that they would be given power to work in ways that they could not currently imagine.

These are familiar words from scripture and as Stephen faced angry crowds armed with stones, he might well remember the first apostles sharing this great truth with him and he knew that he was now going to the place God had prepared for him. Maybe he remembered the words of Peter, reminding him, that despite the hatred of men, he was precious in God's sight and he was one of the stones on which the Church of Christ was built.

*Consider*

- *The signs you have seen in recent weeks that remind you of God's glory.*
- *Appreciate and give thanks for the ways God is able to make use of your time and talents during this time, always recognising that we are all richly valued in his sight.*

Hymn 346:

Christ is the world's light, Christ and none other  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne5MOMp6W\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne5MOMp6W_Y)

Prayer

**A prayer of blessing**

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life; and may almighty God bless us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.