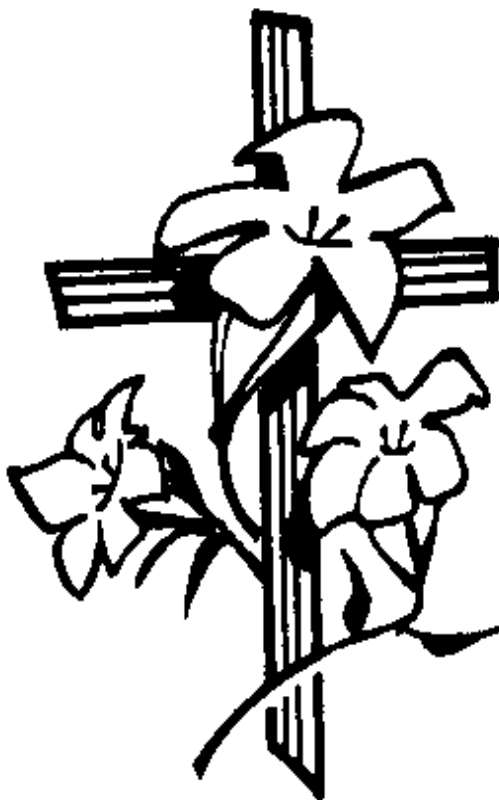


# Worship at Home this Easter



These resources have been prepared by the staff team of the Preston Ribble Methodist Circuit to help us share in worship over the Easter season as we cannot meet in Church.

Our Prayers and thoughts are with you

Happy Easter

## **A Virtual Coming Together**

### **Maundy Thursday 2020**

#### **Preparation**

In preparing to share this virtual liturgy for Maundy Thursday, you may like to do some preparation in advance. You may like to prepare a meal that can be left to simmer (e.g. a stew) so you can concentrate on the liturgy. You may also like to lay the table around which you will sit to have your meal in whatever fashion you like. Consider having a candle in the middle of the table as a focal point or to represent Jesus' presence in the room with you. If you want to enact Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet you may want to have a bowl of warm water and a towel to hand.

#### **Centering in**

Welcome to this virtual liturgy for Maundy Thursday 2020.

Take a moment to note that you are sharing this meal with millions of other Christians all around the world. (pause)

Tonight we gather to recall the story of that fateful evening some 2000 years ago when Jesus shared a meal with his friends and which he transformed into a lasting ordinance so that we could share in it too.

Take a moment to note that you are sharing this meal with all of Jesus' disciples including the ones we read about in the gospels. (pause)

The essence of The Last Supper is love. Jesus demonstrated his love for his disciples back then. Jesus demonstrates his love for you now. Jesus demonstrates his love for all people, even those who ignore him, abandon him or even betray him. Take a moment to consider these things. (pause)

#### **An act of confession**

On this night, Jesus said: "A new commandment I give to you; that you love one another as I have loved you"

We pray together;

**Lord God,  
you know us better than we know ourselves.  
You know that as we reflect on Jesus' command to love one another  
we are stricken by the contrast  
between your perfect, giving, affirming love  
and our pale imitation of it.  
We ask for your forgiveness  
for all the times when our love has been lukewarm  
or we have simply refused to give it.**

*silence*

Take a moment to reflect on why Jesus went through that horrific passion and death. Listen to him as he says to you (yes you) "Peace be with you. Your sins are forgiven". (pause)

We continue in prayer together;

**Lord Jesus,  
We thank you for all you have done for us.  
We welcome your peace.  
We accept your forgiveness.  
We believe - help our unbelief! Amen.**

## **The Lord's prayer**

### **A reading**

Find a bible and read from the gospel according to St John, chapter 13 verses 1 to 15. Whilst you read the passage slowly, immerse yourself in the story. Imagine the scene as vividly as you can. Try and sense as much detail as you can.

### **A reflection (by Rev Ray Borg)**

Jesus' actions were utterly surprising. The job of foot washing was exclusively reserved for the lowliest servants in any household, usually gentile slaves who were looked upon as lesser beings, as scum. So imagine the surprise when the Master bends himself to the task. Some

would have been bemused by the spectacle, some reluctant and some horrified at the breaking of well-established cultural norms.

What was your reaction as you vividly imagined the gospel scene? Would you have had any reservations? Would you have been comfortable with Jesus washing your feet?

Traditionally, we read this text from the perspective that Jesus, the Master, humbled himself and washed the feet of his disciples. That is a valid perspective but I wonder if there's more to this story - lots more?

I have had the privilege of being Jesus to people as I offer to wash their feet on Maundy Thursday. I am surprised by how many people cannot bring themselves to have their feet washed. In jovial conversations afterwards, they give me a whole host of reasons why they won't allow me to wash their feet. They can't be bothered to take their shoes and socks off. They feel self-conscious. They don't like having their feet touched. They worry their feet may smell. They think their feet are ugly. They can't bend down to undo their laces. They don't like people looking on etc. etc.

I'm not making any value judgement about any of these reasons. They are all valid. But part of me wonders if underlying all these reasons is another - that we cannot humble ourselves enough so that we can receive the gift on offer? It is a genuine question which pastoral sensitivity prevents me from asking.

You see, as I look into the scene from John 13 I am surprised less by Jesus' humility (I expected that) and surprised more by the disciples' humility in letting him, the Master, do something which they should have been doing for him. Peter aside, the others humbled themselves enough to receive the gift which Jesus wanted to bestow upon them.

So here's a question for you to ponder whilst you're eating your Maundy meal. Are you willing to humble yourself and accept the gift which God gives you in Jesus today? I'm not asking you if you will accept Jesus as Lord. You've probably done that already. I'm asking you if you will humble yourself to accept God's gift of your very self, God's gift of forgiveness, God's gift of his work within your dark side, God's gift of love of you as you are. Are you humble enough to accept that Jesus washed the feet of the man who betrayed him, whom I believe Jesus loved

beyond measure, and if that is true, that he loves you with that same measure despite your bunions, corns and ingrowing toenails?

*silence to reflect*

### **Washing feet**

If you plan to wash each other's feet this is the time to do it. If you are on your own, consider putting your feet in a bowl of warm water and humbly imagining Jesus washing your feet.

### **Concluding prayer**

We pray together.

***Gracious loving God,  
the Master girded himself with a towel  
and washed the feet of his disciples.  
We acknowledge our need  
to humble ourselves enough  
to allow our feet to be washed  
and to receive the gifts  
which you desire to lavish upon us.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and forever. Amen***

### **The doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow  
praise him all creatures here below  
praise him above ye heavenly host;  
praise Father Son and Holy Ghost. Amen

## Good Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Thank you for joining in this short act of worship as we remember together the events of Good Friday. We begin with a prayer:

Lord, we come to you because in you we find our hope, our joy, our peace and the strength to begin again. We come to you, Lord, because you first came to us. Loving God, we remember today all that you have done for us in Jesus Christ. We recall with wonder his death on the cross and confess with shame our share of the sin of the world for which Christ died. We ask your forgiveness now.

*Silence*

For your forgiveness and all your mighty acts of grace and love we give you thanks and praise. As we give you our hearts and lives, may Christ be lifted up so that all people everywhere may know his love and power, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

### Hymn (v1-2)

There is a green hill far away,  
Outside a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,  
What pains He had to bear;  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.

**Drama** (based on Matthew 21: 5, 8-9) *If you have more than one person in the house you may want to share in reading this sketch.*

**Person 1** I can't believe it was just 5 days ago we were waving palm branches and laying our cloaks on the ground, thinking our king had come to liberate us.

**Person 2** I know, my voice was hoarse from shouting 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' I thought Jesus was truly fulfilling the words of the prophet: 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

**Person 1** As I was thinking about this, I found myself making a cross out of the palm leaves; it's ironic that the palms that waved now symbolise a cruel cross of death.

### **Hymn (v 3-5)**

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.

There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven, and let us in.

O dearly, dearly has He loved!  
And we must love Him too,  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do.

*Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)*

**Reading:** The passion of Christ according to John chapters 18 & 19.

### **Reflection**

God has given us all an imagination and we can use this to enter into the scenes of today's gospel reading. Ask God to help you in this imaginative meditation as you re-read John 19 verses 25-27.

Imagine you are one of the by-standers watching this scene play out.

Perhaps you are John or the mother of Jesus.

Close your eyes and imagine the scene before you.

Who is around you; what are the noises you hear?

What is grabbing your attention?

Then consider what do you feel towards Jesus as you hear his words from the cross?

What do they express to you about Jesus?

What do they express to you - your value, worth, and significance? Why?

Finally, in a time of prayer tell Jesus what is on your heart.

If you have found this helpful, you may want to choose other scenes and other characters within this reading to enter into imaginatively; you will be surprised at what God will reveal to you.

## Hymn

From heaven you came,  
Helpless babe,  
Entered our world,  
Your glory veiled;  
Not to be served  
But to serve,  
And give Your life  
That we might live.

*This is our God,  
The Servant King,  
He calls us now  
To follow Him,  
To bring our lives  
As a daily offering  
Of worship to  
The Servant King.*

There in the garden  
Of tears,  
My heavy load  
He chose to bear;  
His heart with sorrow  
Was torn,  
'Yet not My will  
But Yours,' He said.

Come see His hands  
And His feet,  
The scars that speak  
Of sacrifice;  
Hands that flung stars  
Into space  
To cruel nails  
Surrendered.

So let us learn  
How to serve,  
And in our lives  
Enthroned Him;  
Each other's needs  
To prefer,  
For it is Christ  
We're serving.

*Graham Kendrick Words and Music ©1983, Thankyou Music*

## Prayers for others

God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that, through him, the world might be saved. Let us therefore pray to our heavenly Father for people everywhere according to their need.

Pray for the worldwide church.... our own local church... the ministers and their families....

those who have been accepted for preordination training.... lay workers and their families... your church office holders and their families...



Pray for the nations of the world and their leaders in this time of global crisis... for our own country and government that they may govern justly and wisely with compassion and love...

Pray for all key workers...supermarket staff, delivery drivers, cleaners, NHS staff, GP surgeries, emergency services and the military...for those in research, engineering and manufacturing working towards solutions in dealing with the coronavirus...

Pray for all who are unwell in body, mind or spirit...those who are struggling dealing with being socially isolated and social distancing...those who are infected and those recovering... for those who have other medical conditions and disabilities which are ongoing...

Pray for all whose faith is floundering, who lack faith and for those hostile to it, that God will open their hearts to the truth, give them assurance and lead them to faith and obedience...

We pray for ourselves, set us free from prejudice, a lack of insight and hardness of heart. May we be guided by your truth and live in accordance with your will.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Hymn:**

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God:  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of Nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

*Isaac Watts (1674-1748)*

**Prayer:**

Loving generous God, you gave your Son to live and die for us all. You did this, not because we deserve it, but because you love us. Lord, by your Holy Spirit, enable us to take steps of faith, hope and love, that the name of Christ may be lifted up and people everywhere might join in the song of praise to him.

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

May you continue to ponder on the sacrifice of Jesus just for you and how you respond to it.

## EASTER SUNDAY 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**Call to Worship:** Christ is risen, he is risen indeed alleluia!

**Hymn: Christ the Lord is Risen today (Singing the Faith 298)**

- 1 Christ the Lord is risen today ;  
*Alleluia !*  
All creation joins to say :  
*Alleluia !*  
Raise your joys and triumphs high ;  
*Alleluia !*  
Sing, you heavens ; let earth, reply :  
*Alleluia !*
- 2 Love's redeeming work is done,  
*Alleluia !*  
Fought the fight, the battle won ;  
*Alleluia !*  
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal ;  
*Alleluia !*  
Christ has burst the gates of hell :  
*Alleluia !*
- 3 Lives again our glorious King ;  
*Alleluia !*  
Where, O death, is now your sting ?  
*Alleluia !*  
Once he died our souls to save ;  
*Alleluia !*  
Where's your victory, boasting grave ?  
*Alleluia !*
- 4 Soar we now where Christ has led,  
*Alleluia !*  
Following our exalted Head ;  
*Alleluia !*  
Made like him, like him we rise ;  
*Alleluia !*  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies :  
*Alleluia !*

5 King of Glory! Soul of bliss!  
*Alleluia!*  
Everlasting life is this,  
*Alleluia!*  
You to know, your power to prove,  
*Alleluia!*  
Thus to sing, and thus to love:  
*Alleluia!*

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

### **Let us pray together**

Resurrection God, you offer life overcoming death, love overcoming emptiness, light overcoming darkness.

I give you thanks for the hundred small and powerful ways I experience resurrection every day.

Thank you for Jesus, who shows us how to live as a resurrection people, living defiant and in resistance to death.

For those times when I have failed to challenge the things of death, the political systems, relationships, selfish desires, I'm sorry.

For those times when I have failed to resist death and ignored your call to live the life I am gifted, I'm sorry.

I trust that you forgive me, I hear your forgiveness intertwined with your call to me to live the life I am gifted, and I trust that you are merciful in all ways. Amen.

### **Read Today's Gospel Reading: John 20:1-18**

#### **Time to Reflect**

Take a moment to think about:

The Easter story is one that is familiar to us, we know it so well but how do we live it? How do we live as resurrection, Easter Day people, the whole year round?

We are surrounded by death, and we are called to live as resurrection, Easter day people in the midst of death, how is that possible? How do we do that?

Easter isn't just "happy". Easter is much more powerful than happiness. Easter isn't safe. Saying 'Alleluia' isn't a passing pleasantry. Easter is the big shout of protest to all that is death. Easter is a defiant act against all that has tried to suppress life.

Easter is black Americans chanting "I can't breathe" whilst those with white privilege often become deaf. Still they chant attempting to dispel death. That is Easter, it's angry.

Easter is a young journalist from Northern Ireland, shot dead by terrorists but whose message of inclusion for the LGBTQI+ community continues to echo after her death. That is Easter, it is passionate.

Easter is the force of climate change protestors, trying to alert us all to the climate catastrophe about to happen, being arrested in their pursuit of the truth. That is Easter, it recognises truth. Truth is life.

Easter is the welcome we offer refugees who leave behind their home, fleeing violence and conflict for the increasing hatred and far right politics of the west. That is Easter, it is the love of welcome.

Easter is throwing off the grave clothes of death, not in a pretty delicate fashion but with power, with force, with strength. Easter is life beyond the things of death amidst the things of death.

It's Easter, it is triumphant, it is victorious, it is persistent, it is angry, passionate, truth, life and love.

While I was ill, I claimed a phrase as my own and it was 'live the life you are gifted'. By that I mean, whatever life you have - really live it,

So at Easter we talk about life winning over death, light over darkness, hope over despair. I invite you to really think about that life that you have been gifted, with whatever limitations you might have, and really embrace it, really live it. Resurrection is living the life you are gifted in the face of death.

We experience resurrection in a hundred small and powerful ways every day. And it all begins when we commit ourselves to live the life we are gifted as a form of strong resistance to death.

To live the life we are gifted as resurrection people, as an act of radical resistance to death.

Take a time to sit quietly and repeat the words to this **Taize chant: Bless the Lord My Soul**

Bless the Lord, my soul  
And bless God's holy name  
Bless the Lord, my soul  
Who leads me into life

### **A time of prayer**

*Resurrection God I bring before you now my hopes, desires, needs and concerns and I trust that you hear me and help me.*

*For your church, a people of resurrection; frightened, weary, hopeful – may we all know your love empowering us to live the life we are gifted.*

For your world, a people and creation; frightened, weary, determined – may we all know your love empowering us to live the life we are gifted.

For your vulnerable ones, the sick, the grieving, the isolated; frightened, weary, loved – may we all know your love empowering us to live the life we are gifted.

I especially want to pray for .....

*Resurrection God,*

*These are my prayers, our hopes, concerns, desires and needs and I trust that you hear me and will help me, help me to be your hands, your feet, your voice in all those situations and with all those people who need to know your gift of life. Amen.*

*Our Father .....*

***Hymn: Thine be the Glory Singing the Faith 313***

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.*

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 :

Edmond Budry (1854–1932)

**A prayer of blessing**

**May you know life rising from the death,  
May you know hope rising from the pain,  
May you know light rising from the darkness,  
May you know and live love,  
May you know and live the life you are gifted. Amen**