

## Written worship resource for Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021

If you have access to the internet, the hymns for this Sunday are recorded as a playlist on the [Circuit You Tube](#) channel.

Take a moment of stillness to 'arrive' in the place you have chosen for worship today.

### **Welcome to worship on the Second Sunday of Easter.**

*Call to worship (inspired by Psalm 133)*

How wonderful and pleasant it is when God's people live together in harmony!

For harmony is as precious as the clothing of the Body

**That embraces the community in peace**

It is as refreshing as the morning dew

**that falls on the parched neighbourhoods of Leeds**

For there the LORD ordains his blessing, life forevermore.

**How wonderful and pleasant it is when God's people live together in harmony!**

Hymn: Alleluia, Alleluia (StF 295, H&P 250, MP )

Let us pray.

Glory to you, O God:  
You raised Jesus from the grave,  
Bringing us victory over death  
And giving us eternal life.

Glory to you, O Christ: for us and for our salvation  
You overcame death  
And opened the gate to everlasting life.

Glory to you, O Holy Spirit:  
You lead us into the truth  
And breathe new life into us.

Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
now and forever.  
Amen

If we have fallen into despair, Lord, forgive us.

**Lord, forgive us.**

If we have failed to hope in you, Lord, forgive us.

**Lord, forgive us.**

If we have been fearful of death, Lord, forgive us.

**Lord, forgive us.**

If we have forgotten the victory of Christ, Lord, forgive us.

**Lord, forgive us.**

*Silence*

May the living God  
raise us from despair,  
Give us victory over sin  
And set us free in Christ.  
Amen

## **A message from Jo and Rach:**

We hope that this act of worship will be shared across the whole Leeds S&W Circuit today, among those worshipping at home with the written material or on Zoom, and those worshipping in person in church buildings. We hope it provides good space to pray for ourselves as Christian communities, and for the life of the Circuit, through the continuing challenges of this time; to hear Jesus' words of peace and sending, and to reflect on the gifts we bring into the community of faith, and share with the world. It has been a privilege to prepare it together, with you all in mind. If you would like to share responses to the questions we pose in conversation with scripture, we would be delighted to hear from you.

***Read: John 20:19-31***

***Read: Acts 4:32-35 (interspersed with John 20:21; both NRSV, found below)***

**Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."**

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

**Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."**

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

**Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."**

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."**

As we hold these two passages of scripture, from John's gospel and from the book of Acts, side by side, I wonder if you can see the thread which connects them, as those who receive Jesus' gift of peace are sent by him into the world God loves.

God's peace, the peace which is 'not as the world gives', is 'deep down peace'. It is a peace which anchors us, holds us firm, gives us a low centre of gravity. Those of you of a certain age and sense of humour might remember the Weebles – the toy whose strap-line was 'Weebles wobble but they don't fall down'. As disciples we may wobble, but the peace of Christ grounds us securely, provides us with our balance...

And it is from the balanced place of dwelling in God's peace that we may find the courage to live open-handedly. To have the courage to offer who we are and what we have, whatever that may be, into the life of the community of faith and the life of the world.

*For reflection:*

How do you receive/know God's peace in your own life?

How does, or how might, that peace enable God to 'send' you into the community of the Church?

What 'possessions' or gifts might you seek to hold on to, and what might God be saying to you in this?

*Silence*

*What one thing might you take from your time of reflection?*

We pray...

Holy God,

We pray for one another now, that we might hear Jesus' offer of peace spoken to us, in our own situation

We ask that, dwelling in the security of your love, we might be those who have the courage to live generous and open-handed lives

God of love, God for all,

Fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and show us the way.

Sing, read or listen: In the Lord I'll be ever thankful (StF 776, MP)

Read: Acts 4:32-35 (interspersed with John 20:21; both NRSV, above)

What would it take for you, 'with great power ...' to give your 'testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus?'

The word used for power is dynamis – perhaps you can recognize the root in our word dynamite or dynamic. Dynamis is used for a power that resides in something thing because of what that thing is ... an inherent power. I'm reminded of teachers who were just 'naturals' at putting across their subject and enthusing their students. I'm sure you can think of teachers who had that gift, the power, to make their subject come alive, even last thing on a Friday afternoon! Anyone who can convince me that physics is exciting needs a medal, and so I can imagine those first disciples have become a little bit like the physics teachers I didn't have! Their passion, not for physics, but for Jesus, alive in every syllable and sentence; their conviction made visible in every natural opportunity to make connections with the story of the resurrected Jesus.

Where did that conviction come from? Where does any conviction come from, if not from experience? They had spent the past three years committed to the itinerant preacher who had been their hope of a better future. Then they witnessed their passionate, gifted teacher crucifixion – the one who could make every lesson come alive with his teaching, now a broken, desolate figure on the Roman mockery of death.

That hardly makes for a good story, and yet, as we know, death was not strong enough to keep Jesus. So while the disciples hid themselves in the upper room, too discredited to go home and yet too disarrayed to go on, suddenly, in the midst of their silence and shame, words of a new testimony were about to be written.

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Very slowly, piece by tiny piece, the teaching begins to make sense in a whole new way.

Piece by tiny piece, the disciples remember the odd detail here, the mystery of a parable

there, a look, a raised eye, a half smile ... and as the peace of Christ takes hold of them, Jesus' own resurrection testimony is already working within them.

'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me ...' – Very slowly, peace upon peace, the disciples feel a new witness stirring inside them. This wasn't just any teacher – the dynamis, the inherent power at work within this teacher, was a dynamis-power they were about to inherit.

We read in John 20:22, 'Then he breathed on them.' We've known enough about air borne molecules over the past year ... but for a moment, imagine that breath carrying the air borne molecules of God's dynamis. As the disciples breathe in the peace of Christ, so they breathe in the molecules of the dynamis-power of God's Holy Spirit — the dynamis-power that will continue to write their stories, their witness, their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

When they breathe in the peace of Jesus' resurrection testimony, their courage to speak up and to speak out becomes anchored in that Christ-given peace. As they breathe in that peace, the locked doors of their own stories are pushed open ... and the Holy Spirit picks up the pen that will continue to write Christ's testimony in and through the inherited power at work in Christ's disciples, then and now.

And so we note here, that Jesus breathed on them. While each disciple would need to play their part, the next Acts in this incredible drama would need them all. They would need each other, as much as all their stories together would be needed to form the new witness. We are told, great grace was upon them all ... dynamis grace, inherited and inherent in them, by the very nature of them being disciples.

'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I sent you ...' As our own enforced lockdown begins to ease and the doors of our homes, our churches are open again, may we breathe in the peace of the Risen Lord Jesus. May that peace be the anchor to give us — as God's Church for such a time as this — the courage to speak up and to speak out, that our testimonies to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus will resonate with great dynamis-power.

*For reflection:*

Where or how do you feel 'at peace' in life of your local church?

How does, or how might, that peace enable God to 'send' you into your local community?

What 'possessions' or gifts might we seek to hold on to as a local church, and what might God be saying to us in this?

*Silence*

*What one thing might you take from your time of reflection?*

We pray...

Holy God,

We pray for our local church, that together we might breathe in the peace of Christ, and breathe out the hope of resurrection for our communities

We ask that, anchored in the security of your love, we might be those who have the courage to live and speak in your strength.

Fill us with your power, that together we will have new stories to tell and the faith-fuelled desire to speak of you with grace-filled testimony.  
God of love, God for all,  
Fill us with your Holy Spirit.  
Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and show us the way.  
Amen

Sing, read or listen: In the Lord I'll be ever thankful (StF 776, MP)

Read: Acts 4:32-35 (interspersed with John 20:21; both NRSV, above)

As a Circuit we have significant resources of time, talent, practical skill, material wealth and spiritual riches. Many people are giving sacrificially, sharing what they have with others within the community of the Church and more widely. We recognise that we also have gifts to offer because we have inherited resources from our Circuit forebears. Even so, we can still be anxious that there will not be 'enough'.

Jesus comes to his disciples when they are vulnerable, confused and afraid. Into their anxiety he speaks peace, and he sends them - "as the Father has sent me, so I send you". Jesus does not wait until the disciples are in a better place, either physically or spiritually - he sends them just as they are, equipped with his peace, and then gifted with the Holy Spirit. He sends them just as they are, to be channels of peace, bringers of forgiveness and people of hope in the world God loves. By the time we read of the apostles (the sent ones) in the book of Acts, they have come to know that, with God, and where God's people act together, there will be enough - trusting one another to make wise decisions in the face of need.

Anchored in God's peace we find the courage to sit lightly with what we have, to commit our resources to working together in Jesus' work of loving in the community of the church, and in the world.

*For reflection:*

Where or how do you feel 'at peace' in the life of the Circuit?  
How does, or how might, that sense of peace enable God to 'send' you to participate in the work of the Circuit to be a bearer of God's love in the wider world?  
What 'possessions' or gifts might we collectively seek to hold on to as a Circuit, and what might God be saying to us in this?

*Silence*

*What one thing might you take from your time of reflection?*

We pray...

Holy God,  
We pray for our Circuit now, that we might hear Jesus' words of peace  
We ask that, abiding in the security of your love, we might be those who have the courage to trust one another as those who trust you.  
Fill us with your wisdom, that together as a Circuit we will make wise and loving choices. In the face of the need we encounter, enable us to be generous with all you give.  
God of love, God for all,  
Fill us with your Holy Spirit.  
Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and show us the way.  
Amen

Sing, read or listen: In the Lord I'll be ever thankful (StF 776, MP)

**Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."**

Hymn: Low in the grave he lay (StF 305, H&P 202)

*For reflection:*

What are you thinking and feeling as we reflect on these passages of scripture together? What seems most important to you?

What difference might these reflections make for you?

What action might God be asking of you, or of the local church or Circuit for such a time as this?

How will you communicate this with those who need to hear?

*Sending:*

As we prepare to draw our worship to a close, you may like to make a physical sign of your commitment to receive God's peace, and to be sent in God's love.

With the forefinger of your writing hand, make the sign of the cross on the palm of your other hand. Now, use the forefinger of your less dominant hand to make the sign of the cross on the palm of your 'writing' hand.

Aware that we usually have a 'stronger' and a 'weaker' hand, what might God be saying to you as you make the sign of the cross on both hands?

Hymn: Christ is alive (StF 297, H&P 190, MP)

Blessing

May we and those we love,  
Those for whom we pray,  
Know the blessing of God  
This day and every day

Alleluia!

We are sent in joy and peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ**

**Alleluia!**

'Used with permission. Opening prayers Holy Communion for the Easter season from Methodist Worship Book © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes. The Methodist Church in Britain'.

Prayers include lines from the 'breakthrough prayer' being used in the Methodist Church during this year:

God of love, God for all,

your purposes are more beautiful than we can possibly imagine.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit.

Help us let go of all that holds us back.

Open our lives and our churches to new seasons of humility and faith, of change and growth.

Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and show us the way.

Amen