

**PRAYERS AND REFLECTION FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER
SUNDAY 19TH APRIL 2020**

Introduction and Explanation

In these strangest of times, it is not possible for us to physically gather together as a community of disciples. But we are nevertheless followers of the risen Lord Jesus, and we want to worship!

Below are some prayers, a Bible reading, and a reflection, which I offer for you.

Please be assured of my prayers and best wishes at this time.

Yours in Christ,

David

Revd David Hinchliffe,

Chair of the Channel Islands and South East Districts of the Methodist Church.

Gathering Ourselves in Prayer.

*You may like to be still, light a candle, or listen to a calming piece of music
as we gather in worship.*



“Locked Doors” – Photo: David Hinchliffe

Affirming our Easter Faith

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Risen Lord, as we gather in your presence today,
may we see you and hear you,
may we feel you and touch you,
may we know your presence with us now.

Amen.

Hymn (Hymns and Psalms 191) – Good Christians all, rejoice and singⁱ

YouTube recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMq5q9O1RyM>

Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King!
To all the world glad news we bring: Alleluia!

The Lord of life is risen for aye;
Bring flowers of song to strew his way;
Let all the world rejoice and say: Alleluia!

Praise we sing songs of victory
That love, that life which cannot die,
And sing with hearts uplifted high: Alleluia!

Thy name we bless, O risen Lord,
And sing today with one accord
The life laid down, the Life restored: Alleluia!

C.A Allington (1872-1955)

A Prayer of Praiseⁱⁱ

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
By his great mercy you have given us a new birth into a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
You have brought us into an inheritance
that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, an in heaven.
To you be praise, through Christ our Risen Lord,
Who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever. Amen.

Glory to God in the Highestⁱⁱⁱ

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Bible Readings: **1 Peter 1. 3-9**
 John 20. 19-31

Meditation by Julie M. Hulme^{iv}

When disaster comes
And nothing makes sense
And nothing feels right,
We feel abandoned by you, O God,
And cry to you to prove yourself a God of love.

When children cry
And their cries are not heard
And they die from neglect,
We feel abandoned by you, O God,
And cry to you to prove yourself a God of love.

When peace breaks down
And lives are maimed
By bombs and tanks and mines,
We feel abandoned by you, O God,
And cry to you to prove yourself a God of love.

When Jesus died
And was placed in the tomb –
The hope of all the earth destroyed –
We felt abandoned by you, O God,
And cried to you to prove yourself a God of love.

Silence

And then we heard the words of grace: Jesus is raised.
These children will rise.
Death is not the final word.
God is love.

Hymn (Singing the Faith) 270 – Come and see, come and see^v

Recording of the author/composer singing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gizXMaQ7Y5o>

Come and see, come and see,
Come and see the King of love ;
See the purple robe and crown of thorns he wears.

Soldiers mock, rulers sneer
As he lifts the cruel cross ;
Lone and friendless now, he climbs towards the hill.

*We worship at your feet,
Where wrath and mercy meet,
And a guilty world is washed
By love's pure stream.
For us he was made sin —
Oh, help me take it in.
Deep wounds of love cry out
'Father, forgive.'
I worship, I worship
The Lamb who was slain.*

Come and weep, come and mourn
For your sin that pierced him there ;
So much deeper than the wounds of thorn and nail.
All our pride, all our greed,
All our fallenness and shame ;
And the Lord has laid the punishment on him.

We worship at your feet,

Man of heaven, born to earth
To restore us to your heaven.
Here we bow in awe beneath your searching eyes.
From your tears comes our joy,
From your death our life shall spring ;
By your resurrection power we shall rise.

We worship at your feet

Graham Kendrick (b.1950) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 270
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Reflection: “Disciples Behind Locked Doors”

By Revd David Hinchliffe, Chair of District

It is Easter evening and the disciples are in lockdown, so John tells us. They are afraid. They are frightened of the Jews. I am sure they were equally alarmed at the thought that the Romans might burst through that same locked door. Perhaps above all, they are imprisoned by their own fear. After all, they were the known associates of Jesus. He has been crucified as an enemy of Rome, the Jews and anyone else. And they are afraid that where Jesus has gone, they too will follow.

But they are not locked in. They are not prisoners. They have self-isolated. *They have chosen to lock the doors because they are afraid.*

Who could ever have thought that in this Easter-tide we are in lockdown? Who would have believed that in a country known for its religious freedom that we are not free to worship, and the

doors of our churches are locked? But we are in lockdown, we are self-isolating – not because we are afraid of the knock at the door, lest suffer a fate similar to Jesus. We are in lockdown because it is for our well-being and the well-being of others. We are afraid of a virus that we are only coming to know, and which we are struggling to come to terms with. We are afraid, because we do not know what will happen. Tonight, with the disciples we share that most terrifying of experiences: fear. And tonight, with the disciples, we do what the disciples did: we lock our doors. Not to keep the police at bay, but a virus which knows no social distancing or social hierarchy.

And we long to be free! Free to unlock the doors. Free to walk where we want. Meet whom we want. Visit and embrace those who are dear to us. Just to fling wide the gates (or the doors)! How we long to gather again to offer our praise and thanksgiving to God together. But for now, for our own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others, we too remain behind locked doors.

Ironically, churches have been quite good at being behind locked doors. I remember going to church and the doors being locked after everyone had arrived (or at least everyone they thought was coming!). Churches can easily be locked in by fear of the world out there. We can be frightened of change, because change will be different – and will we cope? Of course the deep irony is that being behind locked doors gives us the feeling of being safe – especially if we are among those we love or of like mind. Sometimes the church *chooses* to self-isolate from its community and the world!

And yet, into this fear filled room, with the disciples self-isolating behind their locked doors, the risen Lord Jesus comes among them. Immediately Jesus meets them where they are. In their fear of death Jesus says to them all, ‘Peace be with you.’ Could there be any more appropriate or profound words than these? Jesus had died. He had been buried. Now He is alive. He has broken death’s power. Now He needs to defeat their own imprisoning fear. ‘Peace be with you.’

‘Peace be with you.’ The Risen Jesus comes to us. He breaks through our own locked doors, and speaks to us in our own fear and says, ‘Peace be with you.’ If ever we are one with the disciples it is today. If ever Jesus is one with us it is now as He seeks to reassure us that in His love He is with us. He is with those we love whom we cannot see. He is in the hospital ward and in the shop storeroom. He is with all who are afraid and long to be free again. He comes into our locked rooms and says, ‘Peace be with you.’

Jesus comes not only as the bringer of peace to those behind locked doors. He comes as the one who suffers with us. He shows us the wounds in his hands, his feet, his broken side. He shows us the depth of His love for us. He shows us that He is as it was promised He would be: “Emmanuel” – which means, ‘God with us.’ God is with us now. With us in our fear. With us in our grief. With

us in our locked rooms. He is also with us in our hope that one day the doors will be open and we will be free again.

To add additional wonder (and to challenge liturgical purists!), in John's Gospel, Easter Sunday is also Pentecost! In the midst of the fear, Jesus not only speaks a word of peace, He breathes on them and gives to them His Holy Spirit. And He commissions them: 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.'

Jesus comes to us in our fear and in our need. He speaks to us His word of peace – even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. He shows us His wounds to remind us that He is one of us, and suffers with us and for us. *And amidst all of this He breathes His Holy Spirit into us and gives us a commission: to go in Jesus's name.*

We might say, 'ah, Jesus, but we can't do that. There's a lockdown – remember?' Well, our church buildings are in lockdown for sure. And for the present we cannot meet as we usually did. But one of the miracles of this strangest of seasons is that the Church is finding new ways of opening the doors. Phone calls. Services streamed online by those of us who struggle with technology. Zoom enabling us to see each other. All of a sudden we are finding that God is setting us free. We are connecting with people we never knew. All across the world people are watching our services! And many folk who have been housebound for a long time have become part of the worshipping congregation via the internet for the first time in a while – because we now have the facility to do so. All of a sudden, it seems, Jesus is breathing His Holy Spirit on us now, enabling us to serve Him in this present hour in all sorts of new ways.

When the pandemic is in the past – please God as soon as possible – will we open the doors of our homes, but lock our church doors from the inside? Or will we have discovered that God has opened up new ways of sharing the good news of God's love? Will we boldly go where we have not gone before in mission and service? May God's Spirit be among us even now, as we hear Peter's stirring words – perhaps being spoken to us all today:

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials,⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.^{vi}

'Peace be with you.' Alleluia! The Risen Lord is here with us. We need not be afraid. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving^{vii}

Thank you, gracious Christ,
For the peace which steps gently into the midst of our fear,
Even when we bar the door against you;
For the peace which speaks to our need
from the costly depth of your own loving;
for the peace which sends us out in your name,
as wounded healers, forgiven sinners,
children reborn,
outcasts raised from the dead. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Heavenly Father, we pray for all the places in the world that need your peace:
places where wars continue to threaten the stability of the nations;
and the lack of peace has caused so much destruction;
places where people have to flee their homes, their families destroyed, lives lost.
Lord, bring your peace which passes all understanding.

Give wisdom to world leaders:
to presidents, prime ministers, politicians of all governments,
that they may strive for lasting peace and true justice,
not putting personal ambitions before the needs of their people.
Lord, bring your peace which passes all understanding.

We pray for those who need peace of mind:
those weighed down by the stresses and strains of everyday life,
or who suffer with anxiety, or are oppressed by worry and fear;
for those who find it hard to let go of things and simply trust.
Lord, bring your peace which passes all understanding.

We pray Lord Jesus, for those who are afraid today because of the coronavirus.
Be with those who are sick. Be with those who are recovering from the virus.
Be with those who grieve the loss of a loved one caused by the virus.
Be with our health service, all its staff; the key workers who enable our community to
function in this unprecedented times.
Come among us and speak to our hearts, our islands and our world: 'Peace be with you.'
And renew us by your Holy Spirit.
Lord, bring your peace which passes all understanding. Amen.

Hymn (Singing the Faith) 303 – I know that my Redeemer lives^{viii}

YouTube version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4Hy0zqnqbU>

I know that my Redeemer lives —
What joy the blest assurance gives !
He lives, he lives, who once was dead ;
He lives, my everlasting Head !

He lives, to bless me with his love ;
He lives, to plead for me above ;
He lives, my hungry soul to feed ;
He lives, to help in time of need.

He lives, and grants me daily breath ;
He lives, and I shall conquer death ;
He lives, my mansion to prepare ;
He lives, to lead me safely there.

He lives, all glory to his name ;
He lives, my Saviour, still the same ;
What joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives !

Samuel Medley (1738–1799)
Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 303

The Blessing

God the Father,
By whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
Strengthen you to walk with Him in his risen life;
And may Almighty God bless you:
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus said,
‘Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.
Receive the Holy Spirit.’

Alleluia! Alleluia!



If you would like to think about today’s gospel reading, please follow the link to the free resources offered by www.rootsontheweb.com :

For adults:

<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/106-march-april-2020-a/easter-2/adultsathome>

For children and young people:

<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/106-march-april-2020-a/easter-2/familiesathome>

Acknowledgments:

ⁱ *Hymns and Psalms* (London: Methodist Publishing House, 1983), 191.

ⁱⁱ David Adams, *Radiance of His Glory* (London: SPCK, 2009), 60. Based on 1 Peter 1. 3-4.

ⁱⁱⁱ Common Worship: Daily Prayer, material from which is included here, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2005 and published by Church House Publishing. Accessed: 15th April 2020.

^{iv} Julie M. Hulme, *Companion to the Revised Common Lectionary: Volume 2 – All Age Worship, Year A* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998), 90.

^v Graham Kendrick, “Come and see, come and see,” in *Singing the Faith* © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, 2011, 270

^{vi} 1 Peter 1. 6-9 (NRSVA) <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Peter+1.+6-9&version=NRSVA>

^{vii} Julie M. Hulme, 90.

^{viii} *Singing the Faith* © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, 2011, hymn 303.