

Sunday 26th April 2020 – LORNA VALENTINE

Opening Prayer

As you come to worship you might like to picture a road that you know really well. Is it straight or twisted? Is it smooth or uneven? Is it busy or quiet? Who else uses it? Who have you walked the road with? Hold the picture in your mind while you pray. As I come before you today God, I bring you my road recognising others are bringing theirs too. For some the road to worship today will have been difficult while for others it has been smooth. For some there will have been twists and turns, for others it may have felt straight and plodding. Some will have walked alone and others with companions. Thank you that you walk each road with us, uniting us as a community of faith wherever we are to the glory of your name. Amen.

Hymn: Christ is alive! (StF 297)

Remember that the living Christ brings good news 'to this and every age'

Brian Wren (b. 1936)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohxaG7ZlxzE

**Christ is alive! Let Christians sing
The cross stands empty to the sky
Let streets and homes with praises ring
Love, drowned in death, shall never die**

**Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.**

**In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.**

**Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.**

**Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.**

Let me join my prayers with others today:

Loving God, for the times I have seen you journeying with me, I am thankful.

Gracious God, for the times I have seen others journeying with you, I am humbled,

Holy God, for the times I have not recognised your journeying with me, I am sorry.

Forgiving God, thank you for the assurance that you will continue to journey with me.

Living God, in my journey this week help me to see glimpses of your good news so that my heart burns within me. Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 24:13-35

Time to Reflect

Two friends are walking down a road together in a place of deep despair and sadness. They can barely get their heads around what has happened because they 'had hoped' for something so different. A stranger begins to walk alongside them and, to their complete amazement, the events that have so rocked their world seem to have passed him by. How can he not have heard what has been going on? Where has he been? It seems impossible that anyone could be walking that road and not know what they have been through. We too are living through troubling times at the moment and may feel as if we hoped for something so different. I wonder if, like me, there are times you have walked the road of despair over the last weeks. I definitely think that if any of us crossed paths with someone who seemed to know nothing of our journey, we'd have a few questions too!

Yet in that place of despair, even when they do not know it, Christ journeys with the disciples. More than that, he opens up the scripture in a way that clearly energises and invigorates them despite their hurt and pain. Then, in that simple, every day act of breaking bread, they see anew the presence of Christ among them. I wonder if, as we have travelled our current road individually and together, you too have been surprised by Christ? Have

you experienced any bread-breaking moments of recognizing the presence of Jesus? What scriptures or prayers or hymns have you found particularly speaking to your heart?

I invite you to reflect on this for a moment.

For me, I have been surprised by the many ways people have found to continue to be church without our familiar patterns of meeting and worshipping. Christ has been present in acts of hospitality and prayer, in phone calls and stillness and my heart has burned within me even as I have felt despair.

Take a time to sit quietly and ask Christ to be present for you in new ways this week.

A time of prayer

As you prepare to pray, you may find it helpful to reflect on this hymn verse:

'This, this is the God we adore,
our faithful unchangeable friend,
whose love is as great as his power,
and neither knows measure nor end'
Joseph Hart, Singing the faith 66

Faithful God, you are present in all aspects of life even when people don't see it. We call on you today to send your Spirit to bring comfort and peace to all who find their path ahead difficult.

We pray for your church and all those seeking ways to be church in these times.

May they recognize your living presence.

We pray for the world and all those seeking to offer leadership in the midst of uncertainty.

May they recognize your living presence.

We pray for all those who suffer at this time in body, mind or spirit.

May they recognize your living presence.

We pray for all who are bereaved whether through the loss of loved ones or the loss of human contact.

May they recognize your living presence.

Merciful God, accept these our prayers today in and through the name of the living Christ.

May we too recognize your living presence in the week ahead and trust in you for all that is to come.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to or read 'Lord I come to you' Singing the Faith 471

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga6Qtxzd6vk

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to your mind Geoff Bullock (b. 1956)

**Lord, I come to you,
let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace
that I found in you.
And Lord, I've come to know
the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away
by the power of your love.**

**Hold me close,
let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
and I will soar with you,
your Spirit leads me on
in the power of your love.**

**Lord, unveil my eyes,
let me see you face to face,
the knowledge of your love
as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind,
as your will unfolds in my life
in living every day
by the power of your love.**

A prayer of blessing – adapted from a traditional Celtic prayer

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
The sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields,
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the presence of Christ
Wherever you are on the road.