

Welcome!

A family service sheet by Linda Little

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use because we are all still unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

Introduction:

Hello and welcome to this family service. Well it has been many weeks now and at last it seems that we are finally seeing the end of the tunnel. Shops are beginning to open; people are allowed to see friends and family under proper socially distancing circumstances and we are even allowed to meet outside as long as there are no more than six people present and households distance themselves. It has been a long time coming, so thank you all for obeying the rules and keeping us safe. Well done all of you.

For some of us, coming out of lockdown will be just as difficult as it was going in to it, fear about our own health, the health of a vulnerable loved one, or simply worry about a new outbreak of the virus will make us nervous and afraid. For those people I hope this next hymn will be a comfort:

Warning: check this next hymn before playing it to very young children, as there is a picture of Christ on the cross

Hymn 248 in Singing the Faith *I heard the voice of Jesus say*

You can hear it hear it here: <https://youtu.be/cSSiEixBt8E> and join in singing or simply sing or speak the next few verses.

I heard the voice of Jesus say:
“Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast.”
I came to Jesus as I was,
weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say:
“Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one
stoop down and drink and live.”
I came to Jesus and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live for him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say:
“I am this dark world’s Light;
look unto me, your dawn shall rise,
and all your days be bright.”
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I’ll walk,
till travelling days are done.

Let us pray:

Lord God, You know that we have spent many weeks in isolation in order to protect ourselves and one another from the Corona Virus. Thank You for always being with us.

Now, as the restrictions start to lift, and we are allowed to see more people, keep us mindful of all those we know who have health conditions and are worried about what will happen when more people meet together and things start getting back to normal.

Help us to stay alert and to follow the rules so that we all stay safe.

Amen.

...and now let us say the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven...

In our reading today, we hear Jesus talking to his disciples in:

Matthew 10:40-42

“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

Reflection

So, how DO we welcome fellow Christians when our churches are shut? How do we welcome friends when we can only meet them a maximum of six at a time and socially distanced? How do we welcome our family members, when many of them live a long way away and only a certain amount of ‘family bubbling’ will be allowed? Do we just forget the words Jesus spoke, or put them on hold until better times?

The problem is that a lot of people confuse welcoming with hospitality. For them, ‘welcome’ means “Welcome to my home/my church/my club.” So, what does ‘welcome’ really mean? Well, the dictionary says if something is welcome it is gladly received because it is much needed and desired, and to ‘be welcome’ is to be received with happiness, to be listened to, heard and appreciated. It is to become a light in someone else’s life when all around is darkness.

What do we do to welcome others in lockdown? We keep in contact, we talk to them, we demonstrate that we care, we let them know that they are important to us; we play

games with them online, we chat to them on the phone, we text them or see them face-to-face through clever technology; but most of all we CARE. We like their company; we welcome their thoughts and feelings and being with them makes us as happy as it makes them.

We don't need to do this in a building. We don't need a collective rendezvous point. All we need is to truly enjoy communicating with someone else, but there lies the rub, because a duty phone call, a polite email or a noble decision to contact someone on Messenger because they might be lonely doesn't count. Most lonely people can see right through charity contact and it doesn't make them feel appreciated or wanted, rather the reverse.

So make your communication warm, make it friendly, but above all make it real. Our next hymn talks about this sort of welcoming.

Hymn 409 in Singing the Faith *All are welcome*

You can hear it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKJgcv8SdnQ&feature=youtu.be>

and join in singing or simply sing or speak words yourself.

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hope and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and a symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us pray:

*Lord Jesus, help each of us to love one another
as you have loved us, not as an act of virtue
but because we truly welcome the presence
of that other person in our life.*

Amen.

Our next hymn reminds us to do just that. It is:

Hymn 242 in Singing the Faith *A new commandment I give unto you.* Sing/ read /pray
/proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41FZZygGWdU>

A new commandment I give unto you
that you love one another as I have loved you
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this the world shall know
that you are my disciples
if you have love one for another.
By this the world shall know
that you are my disciples
if you have love one for another. (Twice through)

The Blessing

*May the Lord bless us and keep us,
May His face shine down upon us
and be gracious unto us.
May the Lord lift up the light
of His countenance upon us
and grant us peace.*

Amen

God bless you all!