

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. 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.

Opening Prayer

Alleluia! The Lord reigns!

Let the earth rejoice! Alleluia!

Hymn: From the Breaking of the Dawn

Singing the Faith 156

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3l8RVhxndYg>

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From the breaking of the dawn
to the setting of the sun,

I will stand on every promise of Your word.

Words of power, strong to save,
that will never pass away,

I will stand on every promise of Your word.

For Your covenant is sure,

and on this I am secure,

I can stand on every promise of Your word.

When I stumble and I sin,
condemnation pressing in,
I will stand on every promise of Your word.
You are faithful to forgive,
that in freedom I might live,
so I stand on every promise of Your word.
Guilt to innocence restored;
you remember sins no more!
So I'll stand on every promise of Your word.

When I'm faced with anguished choice,
I will listen for Your voice,
And I'll stand on every promise of Your word.
through this dark and troubled land
you will guide me with your hand
as I stand on every promise of Your word.
And you've promised to complete
every work begun in me,
so I'll stand on every promise of Your word.

Hope that lifts me from despair,
love that casts out every fear,
as I stand on every promise of Your word.
Not forsaken, not alone,
for the Comforter has come,
And I stand on every promise of Your word.

Grace sufficient, grace for me,
grace for all who will believe,
We will stand on every promise of Your word.

Keith Getty (b.1974) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Prayers

God of promise and hope,
through your great mercy you grant us new birth through the
death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
we worship you!

God of glory and love,
through your great power you grant us the strength to endure
all things through faith in Christ our risen King,
we worship you!

God of peace and joy,
through your great love for the world you grant us the joy of
knowing Christ with us through your Holy Spirit,
we worship you!

Loving God we recognise we have not always lived with the
promise of Easter as a reality in our hearts and lives.

We have failed to hope in you.
We have turned from your life-giving word.

We are sorry for our sins and in turning to you again we seek
your grace to forgive, renew and encourage us into the
pathways of hope and love again.

We give thanks that in our Risen Lord Jesus, our sins are met
with your forgiveness. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 14:15-21

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I
will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to
be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the
world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows
him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be
in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a
little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see
me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will
know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those
who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my
Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Time to Reflect

A disciple reflects on their experience of hearing Jesus' words of promise and anticipation:

There was, of course, nowhere we could go. Nowhere that we could take ourselves to get away from the intensity and the sheer pain of these moments. In that upper room, locked in together in preparation for the festival, the mood had already taken a sombre turn. Jesus had already told us that he was going. Yet we had no idea what he was really saying to us – how could we? Going to the Father and yet coming back to take us to himself? It made such little sense in the context of the fears around us and within us. Was he telling us that he was going to abandon us, to leave us on our own to face whatever would come?

Perhaps we should have known better. After all, we'd seen it play out often enough when we had been travelling with him. The lives he had touched, the seemingly impossible conversation started and opened out. All the "wrong" sort of people welcomed to table. Healing coming in grace filled encounter quickly following on the heels of yet another liberating glimpse of what God had intended for us all along. We should have known it and seen it coming. We should have known that it wouldn't end with him leaving us here alone to face the future by ourselves – it couldn't end that way.

But I don't mind telling you that this time Jesus' words stung. They cut to the heart of what I thought I was about. Did you hear what he said, to us, after we'd spent so long in his

company? "If you love me, you will keep my commandments". If? If? Was he still testing us out after so long, keeping us on probation, still probing the depths of our love and our commitment? Those words truly cut me to the heart. As if we, his only friends left would do anything other than to keep his commandments – or at least to give up everything trying. What else had brought us here to this point? What more would we have to do to prove our love? Yet it's then, just as Jesus hinted at a condition to his love for us, that he started to talk about another Advocate to come to be with us forever. He promised another helper, another counsellor, another person to sit alongside us to speak up for us and defend us. In our confusion and grief, we didn't know what to make of all of this. So the questions, once again, flooded out from us: Why can't he simply stay with us? Why do we need another advocate? What more must we face? And Jesus, as he did so often, simply listened. Finally, when the torrent of our questions abated, he took up again with his words of promise. The Advocate would be the Spirit of truth, the same Spirit we already have known, seen and felt within him that would be coming to be with us. The promise was that God was coming to be with us forever, helping us to go on loving and finding that we are loved through it all, despite our fears and our loneliness. Far from being orphaned or left to an uncertain fate, we were being brought closer into the life of God. We were being offered a way to live and enabled to love!

In that upper room, with emotions running deep and our fears rising high we couldn't see it for what it was at the time, of course. But looking back now, we begin to see how it was that we were actually always being prepared for that moment, that promise. I think back to the old days, my old life of fishing – well you never got anywhere without proper preparation, mending the nets by day, readying the boat for a night's work of hoping and waiting. I think back to the times we were close to Jesus as he went from village to village. The way he spoke and reached out without condition, without favour and the stir it caused. The way that those momentary encounters seemed to signify something more, something bigger than just us. Something that was truly of God.

I realised that we were always being prepared for this moment and this promise. We were being asked to grow up. We were being invited to imagine how Jesus' logic of love would change our lives and the world, forever. For we realised, in our lockdown in that upper room that we were being shown that the time was ripe for love at last not to be considered conditional, when no-one would need to be left out or ignored. It was all leading to this promise of power to enable a new normal for me, for us and for all the world.

We knew then and there, whatever would come to pass: there was hope. What was it Jesus said again? "Those who love me

will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." It was all we would ever need to know.

Wherever you may be now, be assured of the presence of the Spirit of the Living God. The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us. The Lord be with you!

A time of prayer

Ask God, our heavenly Father, to make the presence of the Holy Spirit real to you now. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pray.

Remember before God your local church and all its people. Give thanks that its mission continues even if it cannot meet for worship at present. Pray that the Holy Spirit may direct its work and strengthen all its members in the tasks to which they are called. Pray for the wider church that by word and action it may proclaim to the world God's love in Jesus Christ.

Remember before God our world and its leaders. Pray for peace, for a just and sustainable use of its resources and for greater recognition of our responsibility to care for all creation. Give thanks for those who work to combat disease; for scientists, doctors, nurses and all who care for the sick, the aged and the vulnerable. Ask God to bless and strengthen them.

Remember before God people you know who particularly need your prayers at this time: family members, friends, neighbours, fellow church members, people you would normally meet regularly but from whom you are now separated. Think of those who are ill, or anxious, or grieving. Pray that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit may surround and sustain them.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can be part of the answer to your prayers. Christian Aid Week has just ended, and the work of Christian Aid among the poor of the world is as important as ever at this time. Perhaps you could send a donation, bearing in mind that much of their usual fundraising may not be possible this year. Maybe someone you have prayed for would love to receive a phone call from you. As God blesses you, so may you be a blessing to others in Jesus' name.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: Love Divine all Loves Excelling Singing the Faith 503

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igs3mNsppsI>

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

A prayer of blessing

May God the Father bless us;
May Christ take care of us;
May the Holy Spirit enlighten us all the days of our life.
The Lord be our Defender and Keeper of body and soul,
both now and for ever, to the ages of ages.

Amen.

(The Book of Cerne, 9th century)