

Sunday 11th April 2021
Revd Jenny Pathmarajah
“Doubting Thomas”

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Call to worship & Lighting of Candle

Come with joy to
meet our risen Lord Jesus.
Come with all creation
to praise and glorify
His blessed name.

StF 025

1 God is here! As we his people

Meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure
What it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
All our varied skills and arts
Wait the coming of his Spirit
Into open minds and hearts.

2 Here are symbols to remind us
Of our lifelong need of grace;
Here are table, font and pulpit;
Here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
Here in silence, as in speech,
Here, in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each.

3 Here our children find a welcome
In the Shepherd's flock and fold,
Here as bread and wine are taken,
Christ sustains us as of old,
Here the servants of the Servant
Seek in worship to explore
What it means in daily living
To believe and to adore.

4 Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom,
In an age of change and doubt,
Keep us faithful to the gospel,
Help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication,
All we have to give, receive:
We, who cannot live without you,
We adore you! we believe!

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

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Let us pray together:

Gracious God, we praise and adore you. For the gift of creation, seen all around us in the beauty of springtime. For flowers, trees in bloom, for new life emerging and warm sunny days. Help us to be stewards of your creation and to help reverse the damage we have done to your beautiful world.

We thank you for the awesome gift of your Son, Jesus, who humbly walked this earth in fully human form and who died to save us. We praise you for His resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit who walks alongside us and guides and sustains us through our every waking hour. We pray through the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 20: 19-31 (*Helen Cooke*)

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'

But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' 27 Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' 28 Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' 29 Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

StF 712

- 1 Put peace into each other's hands
and like a treasure hold it,
protect it like a candle-flame,
with tenderness enfold it.
- 2 Put peace into each other's hands
with loving expectation;
be gentle in your words and ways,
in touch with God's creation.
- 3 Put peace into each other's hands
like bread we break for sharing;
look people warmly in the eye:
our life is meant for caring.
- 4 As at communion shape your hands
into a waiting cradle;
the gift of Christ receive, reverse,
united round the table.
- 5 Put Christ into each other's hands,
he is love's deepest measure;
in love make peace, give peace a
chance and share it like a treasure.

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

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Time to Reflect

Poor Thomas, famously known as 'doubting Thomas' from the passage in John's gospel. It somehow seems a flaw in his character. However, when we remember the events leading up to the crucifixion, Peter denied Jesus and all the disciples deserted him, as Jesus had predicted they would.

In the passage, the disciples were gathered behind locked doors, they were still very afraid of repercussions from the Jewish authorities. It's also fair to assume at this moment they didn't know what would happen next, despite the fact that Jesus had told them about his impending death and resurrection.

Another thing we aren't told, (in this gospel, but see Luke 24:11), was whether the disciples believed Mary Magdalene, the first person to see the risen Christ.

Doubt is a very human emotion, we all experience it in our lives, we doubt that we can do things, often feel doubt when we think God is asking us something which takes us out of our comfort zone.

At the time of writing this, we are awaiting an announcement which will describe the road map out of our third lockdown. Our churches are not open, worship is online or in paper form. We have had to do things which take us out of our comfort

zones and many times I have had doubt over whether I am able to achieve whatever it is I am asked to do. I have found recording a message on a screen difficult, often having 7 or 8 attempts before being happy with the result.

Doubt need not always be seen as a negative emotion though, because doubt leads to questions, and ultimately to answers to those questions. Thomas doubted that the other disciples had seen Jesus, but when he finally saw Jesus, he didn't need to touch Jesus to know, he called him "My Lord and my God", he recognised who Jesus really was – God.

Jesus told the disciples that those who believe without seeing are blessed. For some of us it might happen in a short time, while for others it might take years of questioning and having those questions answered. When we reach the point of belief we can and will, with assurance recognise and call Jesus "My Lord and my God".

A time of prayer

We pray for our world, for countries ravaged by war and natural disasters. We pray for those countries struggling with Covid who have little or no vaccines.

We pray for our country, for those making decisions, give them wisdom

and courage to act wisely. We pray for those who are on the frontline, who are exhausted from the effects of the pandemic, give them rest.

We pray for the bereaved, especially those who haven't been able to grieve with or for loved ones. We pray for those still struggling with illness and weariness. We think of those who are anxious and afraid to go out, those who have been isolated for so long and those who are lonely.

We pray for our churches, some open, some still worshipping in other ways, help us to go forward in the way you lead us, not to just return to what we have always done.

We pray for ourselves, that we don't need a sign to believe in you, that we trust you to supply everything we need in our lives. Through our risen, redeeming Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father ...

StF 306

Now the green blade rises

from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth
many days has lain;
Love lives again,
that with the dead has been:

*Love is come again, - like
wheat that springs up green.*

2 In the grave they laid him,
Love whom men had slain,
Thinking that he never
would awake again,
Laid in the earth
like grain that sleeps unseen:

*Love is come again, - like
wheat that springs up green.*

3 Forth he came at Easter,
like the risen grain,
He that for the three days
in the grave had lain,
Quick from the dead
my risen Lord is seen:

*Love is come again, - like
wheat that springs up green.*

4 When our hearts are wintry,
grieving, or in pain,
Then your touch can
call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts
that dead and bare have been:

*Love is come again, - like
wheat that springs up green.*

John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872–1958)

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A prayer of blessing

Peace be with you,
dear brothers and sisters,
and may God the Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
give you love with faithfulness. May
God's grace
be eternally upon all
who love our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

(Ephesians 6: 23-24)