

# Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June – Worship at home– United with Kingswood and Grangewood

## Call to worship

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

‘The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.’ (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Holy God, as we come to worship you, help us to remember, that though apart, we belong to your church, your people, your world, we are not alone. Draw us together by your Spirit as we worship. Amen.

**Sing or listen to or proclaim the words of – Splendour of the King – STF 15**

## Opening prayers

Holy God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, life and love and hope.

In the creative cover of darkness, you formed your creation until the time when your light burst forth, illuminating the beauty, vibrancy and wonder of all that you have made.

May we your beloved people encounter you, in the spectacular and in the mundane. Ever-creating God, meet afresh with us as we come to worship.

God of transformation, in love you sent your Son to live among your people, to enter the frailty of human flesh.

Befriending the ‘wrong’ sort of people, Jesus, powerfully proclaimed your message. Jesus demonstrated the depth and breadth of your great love, love too strong to be bound and held by death, love that burst forth from a tomb with the rising sun.

Holy Spirit of God, love and laughter, creativity, dance and song, you call us continually into relationship with you and one another.

In this time of challenge, of fear and uncertainty, encourage us to look for signs of you at work all around us.

Holy God, we come also to ask your forgiveness... (Time of quiet prayer)

Our liberating God of love, hope and peace calls us afresh to serve in the work of the kingdom, forgives us in Christ, renews, inspires and enables us through the Holy Spirit. We are forgiven people. Amen

## Readings

Matthew 10:24-39

Romans 6:1-11

## Message – Rev Mel Stoodley

Facing our fears. Hope for today & tomorrow.

Both readings deal with the cost of following Jesus, including taking up the cross, but there is hope for life with Christ now, & in eternity. In our daily lives at the moment, we may all have had moments of fear, uncertainty, & disappointment, so Jesus’ words to his disciples are equally relevant for us. They should not be afraid of those who hate them, but should continue to share the gospel message, in spite of opposition. I have to confess that I don’t like appearing in front the camera, ever

since I had Bell's palsy, many years ago. So, preparing for acts of worship online doesn't come naturally to me! Also, writing things down on paper is different from speaking to people face to face. So, Jesus' advice not to be afraid has applied to me. I've been singing some words recommended by Merlin Corrothers, in his book: 'From Fear to Faith. To the tune' 'London Bridge is Falling down' – 'God is working for my good, for my good, for my good (repeat) yes, he really is!'

Jesus goes on to reassure & encourage his disciples that they are worth much more than sparrows, the cheapest things to buy at that time. And yet, God knows when a sparrow falls & how many hairs there are on the disciples' heads. So they can be sure that God will watch over their lives. As Modern disciples, we are to be like Jesus in his teaching & in his work, & to share the same challenges, sufferings & reward. In his letter to the Romans, Paul encourages the believers to count themselves as dead to sin, but alive to God. To do that, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to be at work in our hopes & our fears.

Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch Christian who wrote many books & became famous for helping Jews who were persecuted for their faith during the second world war. When she, & her Father & sister ended up in a concentration camp, she continued to support & encourage other prisoners by leading worship, using a Bible which they'd managed to sneak into the camp. After the war, she carried on speaking & leading worship. In her book; 'The Hiding Place', she tells the story of one occasion, after a service, when she encountered a former S.S. officer, whom she recognised from her own time in a concentration camp. He thanked her for her message & marvelled that his sins had been washed away. He held out his hand to shake hers, & she described how she kept her hand by her side, & experienced angry, vengeful thoughts, but at the same time, she saw the sin of them. She recognised that Jesus had died for this man, & she prayed the words, 'Jesus forgive me & help me to forgive him.' She tried to smile, & raise her hand, but she still couldn't do it & didn't feel any warmth towards the man. So she prayed again 'I can't forgive him, please give me your forgiveness.' Then she described the incredible experience as she took his hand. A current seemed to pass from her to him, from her shoulder along her arm & through her hand. At the same time, she experienced a heartfelt love for this stranger which almost overwhelmed her. For her, this was a realisation that the world's healing doesn't rest on our forgiveness, or our goodness, but on God's.

When he tells us to love our enemies, he gives the love itself to do it. Each one of us has a mission in life. We were sent into the world by God, just as Jesus was. He will use us, as the people we are, to share his love & hope with others. On Father's Day, we remember the love of our human fathers, & of our Heavenly Parent.

### **Prayers for others**

God of hope, embracing us, surprising us, loving us, be near.

Creative God, as we adapt to a new way of being; distracting and busying ourselves; may we also seek to be present to you and each other in this season of lockdown. Help us to know the presence of the risen one in our being and in our doing.

God of creation, as we bear witness to the springing up of Spring in the beauty of your creation, may we rejoice in cleaner air, and wonder at the blossoming of life amidst such horror, longing for a new way of hope for our world.

Living God, we can feel claustrophobic, crowded or desperately lonely, our horizons of hope diminished. Lead us to restorative places, our still waters, remind us that we are not alone, call us to solidarity, to love our neighbours, to reach out. Draw us close by your hope-filled Spirit.

God of all comfort, when we are fearful, anxious or overwhelmed, may we hear you whisper our names lovingly, 'beloved child, do not be afraid.'

Tender God, when we are overwhelmed by grief and despair, you weep with us, embracing those who are sick, holding the dying when we cannot, present in a hand held, a smile, a word of comfort, love personified in doctor, nurse or care worker, embrace us in our grief. We pray for all those that are ill at this time, for those who care for them and for those who have lost loved ones...

God in the darkness, hold us when everything feels too much, when all we can do is get out of bed, when nothing gets done, when lockdown seems about competitive 'doing' and we haven't the energy to be productive, help us to listen to ourselves, to love ourselves as you love us, to remember that you do not measure our worth by our activity, you simply love and love beyond all measure, hold us in our struggles.

Resurrecting God, when we long for a return to how things used to be, open our eyes to the new thing that you are doing. By your Spirit labouring within us, may we discern new opportunities, yet also rest in the stillness. God of hope undiminished and new horizons, in this season you hold us through pain, anxiety and doubt, through loss and longing, through unexpected and unbridled joy, keep us enfolded in your loving embrace.

God of hope, embracing us, surprising us, loving us, be near. Amen

### **The Lords Prayer:**

Our Father in Heaven  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **Sing or listen or proclaim the words of – Lord for the years – STF 470**

#### **A prayer of blessing**

May the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)