

This short act of worship has been produced for you.
If you are well enough and able,
why not spend a few moments with God,
perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with
others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

Call to worship

Lord God, we approach you as your people.
We come to follow a journey together,
to talk and to share along the way,
to meet and to know Jesus.
Help us to marvel at all that Jesus has done for us. **Amen.**

Hymn Come, let us sing of a wonderful love (Singing the Faith 443)

Sing/ Read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elqso1BJOCU>

Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love,
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour this Gospel to tell,
joyfully came:
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame:

seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderers, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride;
seeking to be,
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley (1831-1905)

Prayer of Confession

Let us pray together:

Risen Lord,

**I am sorry that I fail to recognise you alongside me,
that I am too preoccupied with myself.**

**I am sorry that I let you down;
that I am provided for and don't invite others to share what
you have given.**

**I am sorry that I welcome friends,
but not always the stranger**

or anyone who makes me feel uncomfortable.

Forgive me, Lord.

**Help me to be more open to your promptings,
ensuring that your church, my home and my heart,
are always places of welcome.**

We hear the words of grace:

Our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Today's reading Luke 24:13 – 35 New International Version

On the road to Emmaus

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him.

He asked them, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?'

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, 'Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?'

'What things?' he asked.

'About Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied. 'He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to

death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.'

He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

Time to reflect

Do you find that current circumstances change the way you hear a reading, or view a programme on TV? Did you become jealous of the disciples out for a walk, or wonder whether it was safe for a stranger to be walking alongside the disciples rather than maintain a safe social distance?

The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus is one that I return to again and again, and I seldom fail to find some new truth in it, some new insight into God and my relationship with him.

It has been particularly important to me at times of change or transition in my life, as it speaks to me about journeying. And so, I find myself asking what it has to say at this time of national crisis and social upheaval.

Journeys can be physical, emotional, spiritual, can be about health matters, or learning new ways. Journeys can be smooth and level, pot-holed, or real rollercoasters! Where we find ourselves as individuals, and as a nation, can have elements of all those things.

Just as the disciples trudged, downcast, along that road to Emmaus, so we too can be left uncertain on our journey. All that we once held to be certain and part of normal life, now seems to have been taken away. What does the future hold? There is much discussion, much speculation, and little certainty.

In the disciples' case, of course, they were lucky. They had someone come along who could explain everything to them. All we have are politicians (at home and internationally), some scientists, and a whole lot of people on social media and in the press. Even the answers they give can appear to contradict one another.

Journeying physically is something that we aren't able to do at present unless, of course, it's for shopping for necessities, medical needs, providing care for vulnerable people, daily exercise or travel to essential work. Journeying with a stranger who comes alongside is definitely NOT permitted – Jesus would have had to be kept two metres away.

But at such times, perhaps there is an opportunity for us to journey more closely spiritually with Jesus and to deepen our relationship with God. Maybe we are accustomed to keeping God at a safe two metres for six days a week and only drawing closer on Sunday mornings. Maybe we have been feeling a bit remote for a while and been wondering, "Where is God in all this?"

Over the last months we, as a Circuit, have been learning how to allow some of our faith practices to become good holy habits so that we can deepen our faith. Today we see Jesus and the disciples practicing some of those habits:

- Eating together – sharing conversation around a table (Jesus didn't have access to a phone, 'FaceTime' or 'Zoom', but we can do it that way for now.)
- Gladness and Generosity – the disciples offering a room for the night and took in a stranger
- Breaking Bread – of course we cannot share Holy Communion together at this time, but it was in that act that Jesus revealed who he was.
- Biblical Teaching – Jesus explained what was said in the scriptures concerning him.

We can listen and learn too, and ask ourselves how we can strengthen our other habits at this time.

The reading concludes with the disciples declaring, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to us!" The truth of the Easter story.

Let us, in the week ahead, allow Jesus to walk alongside us, to explain the scriptures, explain to us the times we are in, and allow our hearts to burn as we realise the truth and implication that Jesus is risen. Alleluia!

A time of prayer

Let us remember that the Methodist Church is wider than Britain. We are asked to think about our sisters and brothers around the world who are dealing with difficult and uncertain situations and we would ask that you hold them in prayer.

And so we pray:

**We open our hearts to the needs of the world
and cry with the tears of the sorrowful.**

**We mourn with the grieving souls of the world
and feel their loss and share their pain.**

**We share our love with the lonely and loveless
and feel the pulse of their life.**

**We offer our touch to the untouchable folk
who are shunned by a passing throng.**

**We catch the whisper of the unspoken truths
that burden the lives of so many.**

**We decipher the cries of a traumatised world
for whom peace is an impossible dream.**

**So Lord, take us by the hand and lead us.
Open our eyes that we may see,
our ears that we may hear,
our hearts that we may love,
our whole beings that we may serve you
to the best of our ability.**

**You do not ask of us the impossible,
but you do ask that we do the best we can.
You are ours and we are yours.
Hear our prayers, Lord, and let us be the servants
you would have us be. Amen.**

The Lord's 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.**

Hymn Thine be the Glory (Singing the Faith 313)

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

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaoV5w2Qfaq

Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment
rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes
where thy body lay:

*Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us,
risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us,
scatters fear and gloom;
let the church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth,
death hath lost its sting.

*Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.*

No more we doubt thee,
glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without thee:
aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors
through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan
to thy home above.

*Thine be the glory,
Thine be the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.*

A prayer of commitment

Lord Jesus,
as you walked on the road to Emmaus,
walk with us on the roads we travel.
Help us to know your presence with us,
and to be your presence to others.
And, at the end of the day,
may we all enjoy your feast.

Amen.

A prayer of blessing

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with each one of us, and those that we love,
now and for evermore. Amen.**

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