



Worship for Sunday 10th May for Christian aid week

Welcome to our worship from Jennifer

Good morning and welcome to our service on this the 5th Sunday of Easter. Today is the start of Christian aid week and we will be taking this our focus for worship this morning as we reach out in love and care to the world around us. On the Christian aid website these words are written about Christian aid week 2020: *"Love never fails. Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all..... As this virus spreads across the world, love rises up in response. You've already shown incredible kindness to your neighbours. Now is the time to reach out to your neighbours both near and far. Your love protects. From storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours battling the spread of this illness. Your love protects. With soap, clean water, and medical supplies. By supporting us this Christian Aid Week, you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today."* It is important at times like these that we look out as well as in, that we reach out to care and support as well looking in as protect and feel secure, that we share love as well as holding on to how much we are loved. Much of the material for our worship today is taken from the resources prepared by Christian aid including three of the hymns choices, the talk given by Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury and chair of the Christian aid board, the response and the prayers. So as we prepare for worship let us take a moment to be still in the presence of God.

Welcome to our worship form Christian aid

Today is the beginning of Christian Aid Week. Like many church activities at the moment, Christian Aid Week is being done differently and digitally this year. During this time together we'll have space to read and listen, sing and pray, and remember and acknowledge that we are part of a global community. We are neighbours near and far who are going through this coronavirus pandemic together. May our shared experience unite us in praise and prayer as one human family, separate but together in the home that is God's world.

God of all the Earth, be present with us now, in each of our homes, as we connect together. Build us into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you through Jesus Christ, our risen redeemer and healer. Amen.

Hymn: Let us build a house where all can dwell

Introduction to the song from Christian aid - It may seem strange to sing the lyric: 'All are welcome in this place' at a time when no one is welcome into our homes (except those who live there) or to collective worship in our church building. However, at this time more than ever, we are learning that the church is not the building, but it is us, the people. Peter calls us living stones in his epistle. Though separate, we can build up together into a spiritual house where love can dwell and be lived out in our everyday actions.

A gathering prayer (taken from Roots for Churches for Sunday 10th May)

Dear Lord, as we gather in your name, listen to us and bring us peace; be our rock and our refuge, that we may be made strong; let us your face shine upon us, that we may show your love. **Amen**

Prayers of Penitence (taken from our Eastertide service sheet)

I have made a video of the confession. (available on the website)

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

Silence is kept

Like Mary at the empty tomb, we fail to grasp the wonder of your presence, Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Like the disciples behind locked doors, we are afraid to be seen as your followers. Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Like Thomas in the upper room, we are slow to believe. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and keep us in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect for the 5th Sunday of Easter

Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonder of your risen life: give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve, to the glory of God the Father. Amen

Read Psalm 31: 1-5 & 24

A few words of reflection on this reading from Jennifer

The lectionary for today only suggests that we read verses 1 to 5 of Psalm 31 but I have also suggested that we read verse 24 too, where the psalmist writes “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.” Here we are invited, in these days of uncertainty and challenge, to wait on the lord for strength and courage, things that we might be finding difficult to grasp at this time. Lockdown has forced us to retreat into the fortress of our own homes but as we do we have been given the wonderful opportunity to gain a new understanding of God as our fortress, the place of safety and security that we turn to in times of trial. God is not a fortress that barricades but strengths and reinforces, enabling us to look out for and help our vulnerable neighbours both near and far. God is the security, the rock, from which we find courage, guidance, and strength to reach out with the love of God as we work to build up the kingdom of God here on earth.

Hymn: Love divine

Read John 14: 1-14

A few words of reflection on this reading from Jennifer

This reading is an extract from the long farewell that Jesus gave over the last supper. The comforting words of Jesus “do not let your hearts be troubled” are spoken to the disciples at a time when they would have had good reason to find their hearts troubled. Jesus words of comfort and reassurance for those unsettling times speak to us today as we face the challenges and uncertainty of coronavirus. These reassuring words once again remind us of the unfailing presence and love of God and the ability of Jesus to bring into the storms of life peace, security, love, and hope.

Roman Williams talk for Christian aid week 2020

As part of the material prepared for this year’s Christian aid week Rowan Williams has recorded a special sermon, you can hear his sermon on YouTube

Response from Christian aid

Look at your hands. Have a good look. However, your hands look to you, they are most certainly clean in these days of regular hand washing to prevent spreading the coronavirus. Our hands really are the most remarkable and useful tools, involved in so much of what we do and how we do things, even in these days of social distancing. The psalmist writes of committing his spirit into God's hands, and at times of being in God's hands. Our hands have become even more significant in these days of physical distance. We might long to hold the hand of a person we can no longer touch. We pray for the hands of medics to bring healing and comfort. We are grateful for hands stacking shelves and delivering groceries and post. And we are extra wary of everything our hands touch that comes from outside our own home.

This Christian Aid Week we also think of how our hands can be far from idle. Though not handing out envelopes or hosting Big Brekkies or the many things we usually busy ourselves with this week, our hands can still reach out virtually to our neighbours around the world. Neighbours in refugee camps and cramped living conditions, neighbours without adequate hand-washing facilities, neighbours who face the devastating impact of coronavirus with even less of the medical resources we have struggled to access here. We reach out by clasping our hands together in prayer for our neighbours, and holding our hands open before God as we declare our needs and concerns for their wellbeing and our own. We also reach out by participating in this digital Christian Aid Week, through making our online donations and sharing the stories from Christian Aid partners, working on the ground to be the hands and feet of love in action. If you wish, you can make a donation online to help vulnerable communities at caweek.org/payin.

Song: Be still for the presence of the Lord

Prayer of lament and intercession

Below are the prayers prepared by Christian aid to be used today at the start of Christian aid week. The nature of these prayers, with the periods of silence reflection, do not lend themselves easily to be recorded. Instead therefore I invite you to prayer them at your own pace and engaging in the time of reflection in the way that suits you.

Let us pray together using our open hands.

God our refuge, we come to you with open hands, some of us with hearts full of questions, some of us bruised by bereavement, some of us fearful of what the future holds, all of us stunned by the events of this year. Draw close to us now in each of our homes as we place our honest questions and hopes into your open, resurrected, yet scarred hands. God in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With the honesty of the psalmist, the wrestling questions of Job, and the lament of the prophets, we bring to you our questions or our silence. *(Hold your index finger and, in silence, ask the question that most burdens your heart or simply sit in silence before God.)* God in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear the cry of our hearts, Lord, silent and aloud, for bereaved neighbours, near and far. Comfort those pained by being absent, and hold close those who are hurting alone. *(Hold your ring finger and pray for comfort for those you know who are bereaved or simply sit in silence before God.)* God in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In this season of Easter, renew us with resurrection hope that while weeping lingers in this night, joy will come with the morning. *(Hold your middle finger and in the silence tell God what you are most looking forward to in the future or simply sit in silence before God)* God in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

On this Christian Aid Week Sunday, we pray for and with communities across the world who are most vulnerable to coronavirus. We pray for people living in refugee camps and city slums, with limited sanitation facilities, who are unable to wash their hands regularly, and have little opportunity to isolate from others. We pray for Christian Aid partners working to provide soap and buckets, communicating clear, accurate information, raising the voices of the most vulnerable and ensuring they are kept as safe as possible. *(Hold your thumb as you pray for the most vulnerable, those closest to God's heart, or simply sit in silence before God.)* God in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those of us who are self-isolating, which can sometimes feel like we aren't doing anything, remind us that we are all doing our part, and saving lives by staying at home. *(Hold your little finger and ask God for what you need, or simply sit in silence before God.)* God in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for much wisdom and resources for those in local and national authority for all frontline and key workers here in Britain, Ireland and across the world. *(Put your hands together and pray for the many frontline workers and volunteers and for Christian Aid partners working to help others across the world, or simply sit in silence before God.)* God in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As we have clapped to honour them, we clap our hands now in praise of your glorious creation, and with the hope that the first shoots of another possible world are coming into view. *(Clap your hands in praise of God's glorious creation and with the hope of new possibilities for the world.)* God in your mercy, **hear all our prayers. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Peace (Taken from our Eastertide service sheet)

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then they were glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia! the peace of the risen Christ be always with you. **And also with you. Alleluia.**

Let us offer one another a sign of God's peace.

I know that we are not together physically today and not able to share the peace in our normal way. However, this does not mean that we are not able to share the peace. Bring to mind members of our church family and as you do wish them God's peace. "..... (the name of a member of our church family) God's peace be with you.

Hymn: Be thou my vision

Closing blessing

May the presence of the Creator refresh us, may the comfort of the Son renew us, may the inspiration of the Spirit restore us to be love in action, even from a distance, in our neighbourhoods, near and far, this day and for evermore. Amen.

(Taken from our Eastertide service sheet) With the risen life of Christ within you, go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia! **Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

A piece of music to end worship this morning

As part of our thankfulness challenge this week one member of our church family sent me a link to a video on YouTube called 'The UK Blessing — Churches sing 'The Blessing' over the UK'. People from Church congregations from across the UK have recorded a blessing for the nation, its words are so beautiful so I thought I would share it with you this morning as I leave you with God's blessing.

Closing offering If you wish to make a donation to Christian Aid, you can do so online at caweek.org/payin