

Risen Lord, we gather as members of your family, in our homes.

In our different rooms and places. Like your disciples, we are all so very different: we have different personalities, different friends and families, but you gather us here, Lord, and we ask you to make us one as we join together in our praise and worship. Amen.

John 20:19-31 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Read or Sing:

- 1 Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am God.
- 2 I am the Lord who saves and heals.  
I am the Lord who saves and heals.  
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
- 3 In you, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.  
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

Anonymous Based on Psalm 46:10-11 Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 18 Words: ©

#### Reflection: The Disciples in Lockdown.

In the evening, when we believe that we have shut the front door for the last time, we turn the key to lockup for the night. Richard, my husband, is better at making sure this is done, than I am. It is a safe feeling to have, knowing that we are our home safe and secure and that as individuals and family we are out of harm's way. Locked doors, secure doors, can be comforting. The door's effect is, "If you just stay holed up here until daylight, then all will be well." It is as if, in their silent way, they are

stating, "Everything is going to be OK, nothing can get through me, and I'm not going to let anything get to you."

Perhaps that is what the disciples felt on that Easter night. They were in the room behind the locked doors in fear of those who killed Jesus. They had walked alongside him for three years. They had been out in the public with him and engaged in his work and mission.

They who had spoken so confidently had, in the end when it mattered most, deserted him and their calling. They not only deserted him, some even denied they knew him.

Maybe there was more than panic and fear at work in the disciples. As a matter of fact, it's fairly obvious that there was more than fear at work. They were dealing not only with fear, but with ridicule, anxiety, a sense of failure.

Maybe what the disciples were doing was not so much shutting out the world, but locking themselves in. Isn't that the way it goes with our hearts?

What if we look at this gospel story as more than a resurrection account of those first followers locked away in a remote room on some back alleyway of Jerusalem? What if it was a metaphor for our lives as Christians today and the fears we face? It is possible that the writer of this account could have meant it as both as he wrote to a newly emerging, persecuted church.

We face fears, anxieties, and doubts, on a daily basis. We slam home the locks on our hearts, but do we realise that by locking the world out, we are really shutting ourselves in? We can become a prisoner of our own sins, failings, and self-perceptions. Like the disciples, we try to hide from our feelings by locking the doors to our hearts and not letting anyone in.

This is especially true if we have been hurt before. Each hurt is followed by another lock, another bolt on the door to our hearts. Nonetheless, we can often put up a good front so the world doesn't see our reality.

The Easter story is the culmination of Good News. In the midst of the disciples' fear, anxiety, and shame, Jesus comes and stands among them. He restores them with the gifts of his peace and the Holy Spirit and charges them to carry on his ministry, his mission of reconciliation.

"To forgive," in Greek, also means "to set free." It means to release from bondage and captivity.

When Jesus stands among the disciples in a room with a locked door and announces, "Peace be with you," he is stating not only "You are forgiven," but also "You are free."

At the core of the gospel is the declaration that Jesus Christ has come looking for us, even behind closed doors. Jesus moves through the sealed doors to find us. We see his wounds from the cross, which are the marks of our forgiveness. Then he says, "Peace be with you." You are forgiven, peace is given and you are free.

We receive the same commission given to the disciples. We are to be about the ministry of the Kingdom. We are to be about the ministry of unlocking the doors to people's hearts so that they too can experience the freedom and healing of God's love in Christ. We are called to set people free by pouring out on them the same forgiveness we have received.

Even in these days of the Lockdown, we accept into our hearts once more today the risen Christ, and in doing so, we realise that fear is changed to faith, anxiety to peace, shame to restoration, and the locks on our hearts have all been removed and we are free.

You may like to re-read the Gospel. Then close your eyes and imagine that you are in that upper room. What is your situation in the room? Are you standing? Sitting? Walking about? Take a moment to think about this. As it is evening the light in the room is quite muted, just lit by a few oil lamps. Maybe the other disciples are there too. Or it could just be you in there.

In the dusk your eyes adjust to the light levels. You then notice that there is another figure in the room; a person who was not there before. You didn't see how they came into the room, all you

know is that the door is locked. You then realise that this is the risen Christ, here in the room with you, right where you are. You might see the wounds, you might not. Whatever you see or don't see is right for you. There is no social distancing with Christ, so you can get as close as you want/need to. Do you feel like saying the same words as Thomas proclaimed 'My Lord and My God'! Maybe you want to share something with Christ or just soak up being in his presence. When it feels right for you to do so, come back to this present time and place, knowing that you can return to be in Christ's presence whenever, you want/need to. There is no Lockdown with Christ, he is with each one of us, saying 'Peace be with you.'

Read or Sing:

- 1        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 who had been slain,  
          thinking that he never would awake again,  
          laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen :
  
- 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 :
  
- 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 :

John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872-1958) (alt.) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 306 Words: ©  
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### Prayers of intercession

We live in a world where many doubt. We pray today for those who doubt because no one has ever shown them the love of Jesus. **Lord, have mercy on each one.**

We pray for those who doubt because the circumstances of their lives just don't hold any sign of a God of love. **Lord, have mercy on each one.**

We pray for those who doubt because they have been hurt or let down by others, or have never learned to trust. **Lord, have mercy on each one.**

We pray for those who doubt because of conflict or natural disaster and of course this Coronavirus which has destroyed them or those they love. **Lord, have mercy on each one.**

We pray for those who doubt because they are in the dark night of illness or grief. **Lord, have mercy on each one.**

Lord, we pray for all who doubt your love for whatever reason: shine your resurrection light in their lives. **Lord, have mercy on each one.**

Heavenly Father, we continue to hold in prayer all those who are working for our wellbeing and to help make our world a safer place... **Lord, have mercy on each one. Amen.**

**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.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

Read or Sing:

- 1        Make me a channel of your peace.  
          Where there is hatred, let me bring your love ;  
          where there is injury, your pardon, Lord ;  
          and where there's doubt, true faith in you :  
          *O Master, grant that I may never seek  
          so much to be consoled as to console ;  
          to be understood as to understand ;  
          to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*
  
- 2        Make me a channel of your peace.  
          Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope ;  
          where there is darkness, only light ;  
          and where there's sadness, ever joy :  
          *Refrain*
  
- 3        Make me a channel of your peace.  
          It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
          in giving unto all that we receive,  
          and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928-1997) from the *Prayer of St Francis*

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**Jesus stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. I receive the Holy Spirit' and I go and do the Father's work, in the name of the Son and in the strength of the Spirit. Amen.**

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. **Amen**