



# Highcliffe and Bransgore **Methodist Churches**

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020, 10:30am, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Resurrection (Easter 5)

Prepared by Rev'd Phillip Dixon

This written worship has been prepared for you to use as we gather in separate places, united together in love for our Lord Jesus Christ. The knowledge that we are sharing in this worship in our own homes is an encouragement to us and at a time of physical separation brings us together spiritually.

We continue to be in the glorious season of **Resurrection** and as a resurrection people our proclamation is:



Alleluia! Christ is risen!

**He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**Good morning church!**

**Call to Worship, based on Psalm 84**

How lovely is Your dwelling place,  
O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy  
to You, the living God.

Happy are those whose strength is in You,  
in whose heart are the highways to Your  
kingdom.

As they go through the valley of tears  
they make it a place of springs;  
the early rain also covers it with pools.  
They go from strength to strength;  
Each will appear before God, He will look  
on the face of the anointed.

For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the  
house of my God than live in the tents of  
wickedness.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
He bestows favour and honour.  
No good thing does the Lord withhold  
from those who walk righteously.  
O Lord of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.  
**Amen.**

Our homes have, as in the days of the  
early church, become sacred places of  
prayer, worship and of breaking bread.  
We have recovered something important  
from our roots. Home as a place of prayer  
and worship, not as a replacement to our  
communal gatherings but as a  
complement to them. Blessings will flow  
from this rediscovery.

**Opening Prayer:**

Loving and gracious God, thank you for  
each other, our spiritual family, each  
dearly loved brother and sister of our  
fellowship, near and far. We pray for Your  
blessing upon us this morning, we pray for  
Your Holy Spirit to fill us and guide us for  
the week ahead. Lord, may we encounter  
You in our prayers, our silence and

reverence, our singing and the reading and understanding of Your Holy Word. We come this morning not as a duty, a tradition or an observance but as redeemed children of light, eager to be in Your presence, to worship You, to learn and be strengthened by You for the days ahead.

For those who do not yet know You as their trusted and loving Father, speak to them this morning Lord and melt their hearts. We pray in the name of our precious Saviour and Lord Jesus, Amen.

Bless the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. Psalm 103:1-3

**Hymn: 10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)**

Sing/read /pray /proclaim the words.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUfyowttvmY>

Bless the Lord oh my soul  
Oh my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before  
Oh my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up  
It's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing Your song again  
Whatever may pass  
And whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing  
When the evening comes

Bless the Lord oh my soul  
Oh my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before  
Oh my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name

You're rich in love  
And You're slow to anger  
Your name is great  
And Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness  
I will keep on singing  
Ten thousand reasons  
For my heart to find

Bless the Lord....

And on that day  
When my strength is failing  
The end draws near  
And my time has come  
Still my soul will  
Sing Your praise unending  
Ten thousand years  
And then forevermore  
Forevermore

Bless the Lord...

Sing like never before  
Oh my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name  
Jesus I will worship Your Holy name  
Worship Your Holy name

Songwriters: Jonas Myrin / Matt Redman. 10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord) lyrics © Capitol Christian Music Group

**Prayer of confession:**

*if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear them from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. – 2 Chronicles 7:14*

Lord Jesus Christ, for the times when I have not taken the opportunities You have given me to be a faithful witness. Lord forgive me, Christ have mercy.

For the times when I lack the humility and grace, when I think I know better than

others and when I talk more than listen.  
Lord forgive me, Christ have mercy.

When I lack the courage to say what  
needs to be said or do what needs to be  
done, thinking that favour with man is  
more important than favour with You.  
Lord forgive me, Christ have mercy.

*Pause*

Lord Jesus, I name the specific things for  
which I am asking Your forgiveness...

*A time of silence to hear what the Lord  
may be saying to us.*

God of love and power, thank You for the  
forgiveness and freedom You have given  
me from my sins, heal and strengthen me  
by Your Holy Spirit so that I may walk  
today a path of righteousness with my  
past life of sin behind me. I am reminded  
that, as a believer, I am Your redeemed  
child, bought back into relationship with  
You for a price, the blood of my Lord Jesus  
Christ. Your Grace is an unmerited gift to  
me each and every day. I pray Your Holy  
Spirit will come and fill me afresh today  
with miraculous light, love, wisdom and  
kindness so that I may always reflect your  
wondrous glory. Amen.

### **Reading: Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7 Serving the Church**

In those days when the number of  
disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic  
Jews among them complained against the  
Hebraic Jews because their widows were  
being overlooked in the daily distribution  
of food. <sup>2</sup> So the Twelve gathered all the  
disciples together and said, 'It would not  
be right for us to neglect the ministry of  
the word of God in order to wait on  
tables. <sup>3</sup> Brothers and sisters, choose

seven men from among you who are  
known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.  
We will turn this responsibility over to  
them <sup>4</sup> and will give our attention to  
prayer and the ministry of the word.'

<sup>5</sup> This proposal pleased the whole group.  
They chose Stephen, a man full of faith  
and of the Holy Spirit; also, Philip,  
Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and  
Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to  
Judaism. <sup>6</sup> They presented these men to  
the apostles, who prayed and laid their  
hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> So the word of God spread. The number  
of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly,  
and a large number of priests became  
obedient to the faith.

New International Version UK

**A time to pause, read again, pray, and  
reflect.**

**Preaching notes:** Here we have what may  
have been the first recorded "upset" in  
the church, unfortunately many more  
have followed over the years. Sometimes  
it is about some receiving preference over  
others or it may be over matters of  
doctrine, the choice of hymns or even  
seating arrangements. We must  
remember that this early church we read  
of in these first 7 chapters of Acts was  
fully Jewish yet also fully "Christian" -  
followers of Jesus Christ. Hellenistic  
implies Greek speaking and of course  
Hebraic being Hebrew speaking. It is even  
pointed out to us that Nicolas was "a  
convert to Judaism".

This passage clearly indicates that since  
the very beginning the Christian Church  
has served Christ by serving the needy in  
society. Here we have the daily

distribution of food to the widows, albeit apparently skewed towards the Hebrew speaking widows. Not only do we have the first disagreement in this short passage but also the first division of labour, the church is growing fast and needs some organisation to carry out its mission to the poor. Notice that even the distribution of food (waiting on tables) requires those who are “full of the Spirit”, every role in this expanding movement required someone who was passionate for the Lord Jesus. There are no roles in the church – then and now – that require greater or lesser faith, every role is serving Christ and requires commitment and passion for God, because everyone is both a disciple and a disciple-maker.

What I like so much about what we hear concerning this opportunity (we never have problems) is the matter of fact way it was resolved, quickly and fairly, to the satisfaction of all, with God given wisdom. “The twelve” apostles (remember that Matthias was chosen to replace Judas, Acts 1:20-26) rightly, do not wish to neglect the preaching and teaching ministry they are undertaking because it from this, led by the Holy Spirit, that more and more disciples are being made and coming to have a living and active faith in Jesus. Here we see the fruits of reliance on God’s Holy Spirit: prayer, preaching, service and devotion; the exponential growth of believers. The priests who are mentioned at the end of the passage (verse 7) would be Jewish synagogue priests indicating the truth of Gamaliel’s words “if this work is of God, you cannot overthrow it” (Acts 5:39).

The praying and laying hands on the seven servers by the apostles is a practise that

endures in the church today. God’s Holy Spirit is working through the apostles, approving, strengthening and commissioning those who will undertake roles or tasks. Those of you who know your Bibles well will recognise the first two names of the food servers, Stephen, the great witness to Christ, will be falsely charged, arrested and killed by a mob (Acts 6:8 – 7:60) and Philip is a great evangelist to Samaria and to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:5-40). As believers we are all workers for Christ, first and foremost spreading the gospel message to make more disciples.

As disciples of Christ we are called to participate in the Great Commission (Matt 26:19) to go and make disciples. If each one of us, with prayer and the participation of the Holy Spirit, was able to disciple just one person, a neighbour, a friend or a family member, the church would double and then double again and so forth.

The church of the New Testament is never a safe or static place, it was always designed and blessed by God to be a vibrant group of people, believers, experiencing exponential growth and contagious faith. If we do not recognise that as being us now, then we (together) need to carefully retrace our steps back to the cause of the disparity between the current reality and God’s intention. Our opening Psalm spoke of traveling the highway to God’s kingdom, much like a pilgrimage, taking even a one-degree misstep will over time produce a huge disparity between where we are now and our original destination.

In closing, serving the church is never.... “I just welcome people” or “I just do the IT”, did Stephen or Philip just wait on tables? And what of the other 5 of the 7, we do not hear of their exploits for Christ but undoubtedly they also achieved much for the Lord. As church we are a “called out people”, each of us to be approved, commissioned and strengthened to make disciples and to keep ourselves accountable to each other. We provide the perspiration and God gives the inspiration and power and through the Holy Spirit, adds to our number. I look forward to what God will do through us in the days ahead. **Amen.**

**Let us pray:**

Holy Spirit come powerfully into our fellowship, add to our number. Give me the strength and courage to speak out as a witness to those around me, help me be bold. Bless each one of us so that Your church, may grow powerfully in our towns and nation. Give me the confidence and knowledge that my part is to pray, come under the teaching of the apostles, break bread with sincerity and serve You in whichever role and whatever place You choose. In the words of the Covenant I have made with You Lord, *I am no longer my own, but thine; put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.* We pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

**We pray together our Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

**Hymn: SoF 690 The Church’s one foundation**

Sing/read /pray /proclaim the words  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHCqXL3mCwU>

The church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ, her Lord;  
she is his new creation  
by water and the Word:  
from heaven he came and sought her  
to be his holy bride;  
with his own blood he bought her,  
and for her life he died.

Called out from every nation,  
yet one o'er all the earth,  
her charter of salvation  
one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
one holy name she blesses,  
partakes one holy food,  
and to one hope she presses,  
with every grace endued.

Yet she on earth hath union  
with the God the Three in One,  
and mystic sweet communion  
with those whose rest is won:  
O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we,  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
on high may dwell with thee.

Samuel John Stone (1832-1900)

### **Prayer of Intercession:**

Lord, guide us so that we may walk in Your way, rejoice in your truth and be kept for ever in the eternal life which You give. Make us the people that you would have us be, guide us that we may do what You would have us do; that we may reveal Your truth and lead others to the fulness of life with You.

We pray for all who are in positions of authority, for all who will be called upon to make difficult decisions this week. We pray for Boris Johnson and his Government, as he announces today what is the next step in easing the restrictions caused by the lockdown. We pray for all who do research into finding a vaccine to overcome the Covid-19 virus. We remember all who have died from the virus and pray especially for all families who are grieving when they have been unable to be with a loved one at the point of death. Be with all who are ill at the moment, that Your healing hand may be on them and restore them to full health.

We thank for all NHS workers - porters, cooks, pharmacists and medical staff - in their dedication at this difficult time.

We praise You for all people who have enriched our lives, for all who have built up our community, for those who extended our vision, for all who taught us the Christian faith.

We pray for our families and friends, even those from whom we are separated. Keep them safe, Lord.

*A time of silence, for personal prayers.*

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Provided by Pam Sturtridge with contribution from David Adam  
*Clouds and Glory*, prayers for church year A.

### **Blessing:**

Christians from across the country came together virtually on May 3 to sing a blessing over our land during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of more than 65 churches and ministries across the country filmed themselves singing along to the song "The UK Blessing." Currently it has had almost 2 million views

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtl3mNj5U>

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace. Amen

### **Notices:**

Please let me know of any resources that may be blessing you in this time of separation that can be shared with others.

Your stewards are meeting with me on-line to discuss future plans. I appreciate that in these coming few weeks, with talk of easing restrictions, it will be a time of anxiety for many and I would like to assure you that we will never put you in a position that risks your health.

Each week, following your suggestions, we are refining what we do. Thank you.

I hope that you are finding the weekly Bible studies a good way of going deeper into the passages and preaching notes that are within these pages. I have also added them to our website.

Until we meet again, God bless. Phillip  
Telephone 01425 673350

[phillip.dixon@methodist.org.uk](mailto:phillip.dixon@methodist.org.uk) YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182

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