**Short act of worship for Sunday 22nd March 2020 – Mothering Sunday**

**Introduction:**

Dear friends, we are in interesting, anxious and for many worrying times! But we must never forget that whilst we cannot meet for weekly worship we are still joined by the Holy Spirit as we seek a new, and temporary, way of worshipping before we can meet again as church together.

What I and the Elders are looking at is providing weekly acts of worship. We are conscious that not everyone is confident with or has the technology to watch, view or listen to things on the internet.

Each week I hope that we will provide a short act of worship for people to follow. For the 22nd March and 29th March (possible longer) that may only be provided in email/textual format. After that we hope to have audio and possible even video options to add to the textual option.

The audio is likely to be available via the church website [www.bcnchurch.org.uk](http://www.bcnchurch.org.uk) (further instructions as to how to find the precise page will be given when that facility is available)

The video is likely to be available via YouTube. You will be given a link to follow and the video would be available (again further instructions will be given if and when that happens) We may also be able to watch the videos via the Church website and Facebook….this is still work in progress!

For those who want the text we can email the scripts to people or print the devotions and hand deliver it to people. Clearly this needs the willingness of people to do the delivering.

If you have internet access then you will be able to access the suggested hymns, if suggested, to listen to. The words of the hymns will be included in the text copies of the service – basically see below for the first service!

The services may not always be put together by me, some of our preachers may put some together too. We hope to do this every week that we are not meeting in Church.

You can subscribe to the URC’s Daily Devotions which will be emailed to you. The link to subscribe to that facility is <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/> and then click on the blue banner at the top of the page that says: “Click here to subscribe to the daily devotions”

If I end up having to self-isolate then I will try and do as much as I can via email and see if others could step in if I was unable to.

The short service below is compiled by Revd Richard Bradley. The Psalm is one for the Revised Common Lectionary for Sunday 22nd March 2020.

I hope the above is helpful. God bless us all as we journey in these difficult times.

Thanks and God Bless, Richard.

*(If you prefer not to receive these services by email please let me know and I will remove you from the recipient list. At present we are simply sending this to everyone who gave consent on their GDPR forms for us using your email addresses for church related information/news.)*

*Can I also ask that people don’t reply to the emails. There are over 100 email addresses in the GDPR approved database and hence if you reply it will clog up my inbox.* 😊*)*

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**Bible verse: Isaiah 41:10 says:**

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

**Hymn: Guide me, O thou great Jehovah** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg>

 Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,

 pilgrim through this barren land;

 I am weak but Thou art mighty;

 hold me with Thy powerful hand:

 Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,

 feed me now and evermore,

 feed me now and evermore.

 Open now the crystal fountain,

 whence the healing stream doth flow;

 let the fiery, cloudy pillar

 lead me all my journey through:

 strong deliverer, strong deliverer,

 be Thou still my strength and shield;

 be Thou still my strength and shield.

 When I tread the verge of Jordan,

 bid my anxious fears subside;

 death of death, and hell's destruction,

 land me safe on Canaan's side.

 songs of praises, songs of praises,

 I will ever give to Thee;

 I will ever give to Thee.

 William Williams (1717 - 1791)

**Prayers**

Lord we come before you in these uncertain, anxious and fearful times. Some of us self-isolating alone and others with family. May we all know and believe that you are with us, beside us and will never leave us. Come in our anxiety and fear and calm us with your gracious and healing presence.

Help us to acknowledge you with us and to trust in your unfailing love for us and for the world you created.

Lord as we come we do so in praise and thanksgiving. In praise for all that you have done, are doing and will do for us and the world. We thank you for the NHS working tirelessly to treat those suffering, whether with Covid-19 or general illness. We lift them to you and thank you for them.

We thank you for scientist and medical researchers working around the clock to make and test possible vaccines.

On this Mothering Sunday when we think about Mums and those who have been Mum in our lives. We give thanks for the many people who show care and concern for us and have helped us grow and develop. Lord, we give you thanks.

And we come acknowledging our weakness and frailty in things we may have done, said or thought that have not been in line with your will and purpose. Forgive us and renew us and empower us with the presence of the Holy Spirt. Amen.

We might be in separate places but a prayer that unites us with our sisters and brothers around the world is The Lord’s Prayer. Let us pray that now…..

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed by 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.

**Bible Reading: Psalm 23 (NIVUK version)**

**A psalm of David.**

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

3 he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths

 for his name’s sake.

4 Even though I walk

 through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

 for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

 they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

 in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

 my cup overflows.

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me

 all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord

 for ever.

**Reflection:**

**“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)**

I never imagined I would be writing a reflection in such a time as this! I never thought that church buildings would have to close in such large numbers in peace time. Please note the words “church buildings”. The church are the people and whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship we can and must continue to worship as God’s people. We need to continue to seek God’s guidance and protection through whatever we may face individually and corporately as His people.

We may feel at present as if we are walking through a **“dark valley”** if you are self-isolating for your own protection and the protection of others. The Psalmist clearly is going through a challenging time in his life as he writes. But whatever he is facing he does so in the knowledge that God is with him and because of that he has nothing to fear. That doesn’t mean that we are wrong to worry as these are anxious times and as I watch the news such times bring out the bad and good in humanity. The ‘bad’ perhaps can be viewed as people grab as much as they possibly can from the supermarket shelves. The ‘good’ those who are working hard to help the vulnerable in their communities and to help those who are self-isolating. Not to mention the amazing NHS staff (and others) who are working so hard.

I hope the words of the Psalmist: **“you are with me”** offer comfort to us at this time. Even though the Psalmist is experiencing a difficult time his faith assures him that God is with him walking alongside him every step of the path on which he is walking.

Sometimes it is hard to see that when we face difficult times. You may be struggling to see God walking with you and facing these difficult times with you – but be assured He is there; He is here in this moment as you read these words. Just pause for a few seconds and say to yourself: *“you, Lord, are with me, you, Lord, are with us, you, Lord, are in the world.”*

If you feel alone…isolated…lonely…worried…anxious then please pick up the phone and speak to someone. Don’t struggle alone. But alongside this *pray*. However deep or strong your faith is: God is listening, God is with you/us.

Let us reflect on the familiar words of this Psalm as we continue into next week. I pray it brings you comfort. And if you feel as though there is nothing you can do – please be assured there is - PRAY! Pray for yourself…your families/friends….your neighbours…our country…our world.

God is with us, He will never leave us nor forsake us. Amen.

**Hymn: The Lord’s my Shepherd I’ll not want** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

 He makes me lie in pastures green.

 He leads me by the still, still waters,

 His goodness restores my soul.

 *And I will trust in You alone,*

 *and I will trust in You alone,*

 *for Your endless mercy follows me,*

 *Your goodness will lead me home.*

 He guides my ways in righteousness,

 and He anoints my head with oil,

 and my cup it overflows with joy,

 I feast on His pure delights.

 *And I will trust in You alone,*

 *and I will trust in You alone,*

 *for Your endless mercy follows me,*

 *Your goodness will lead me home.*

 And though I walk the darkest path,

 I will not fear the evil one,

 for You are with me,

 and Your rod and staff

 are the comfort I need to know.

 *And I will trust in You alone,*

 *and I will trust in You alone,*

 *for Your endless mercy follows me,*

 *Your goodness will lead me home.*

Stuart Townend ©1996 ThankYou Music

**Prayers of Intercession**

Lord our prayer today, as much as any time is, *I will trust in you alone.*

In the moments of darkness and loneliness, *we will trust in you alone.*

In the self-isolation and the limits of where we can go, *we will trust in you alone.*

We pray for those who are anxious and scared, *may they trust in you alone.*

When we seek to help another and offer care via telephone conversations and other ways, *we will trust in you alone.*

Lord, we hold up to you those who are on the front line of care for those in hospitals, doctors’ surgeries and clinics. We ask for your protection upon them and your wisdom within them.

Lord we hold up to you those working tirelessly to create a vaccine that work on Covid-19. We pray that that is ever closer to being reality.

And we pray for those most vulnerable in our world. We pray for your comfort and strength.

And we pray for ourselves. May we know the peace and presence of Almighty God in whose name we pray.

Finally, Lord, we pray for those who are Mothers and who care, or have cared, for us on this Mothering Sunday. We ask for you to be with Mums who will not be able to see their children because of self-isolation. May they be able to speak or see each other via different modes of communication.

We ask this prayer in and through the name of Jesus, Amen.

**Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKIqmdfHSk>

 Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,

 there is no shadow of turning with Thee,

 Thou changest not,

 Thy compassions they fail not,

 as Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

 *Great is Thy faithfulness,*

 *great is Thy faithfulness,*

 *morning by morning*

 *new mercies I see;*

 *all I have needed*

 *Thy hand hath provided -*

 *great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

 Summer and winter,

 and springtime and harvest,

 sun, moon and stars

 in their courses above,

 join with all nature in manifold witness

 to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

 *Great is Thy faithfulness,*

 *great is Thy faithfulness,*

 *morning by morning*

 *new mercies I see;*

 *all I have needed*

 *Thy hand hath provided -*

 *great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

 Thine own dear presence

 to cheer and to guide;

 strength for today

 and bright hope for tomorrow,

 blessings all mine with ten thousand beside!

 *Great is Thy faithfulness,*

 *great is Thy faithfulness,*

 *morning by morning*

 *new mercies I see;*

 *all I have needed*

 *Thy hand hath provided -*

 *great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Thomas O Chisholm (1866 – 1960) © 1921, 1951 Hope Publishing Company

**Blessing:**

Loving God strengthen us for the week ahead. Whatever that week brings may we know we face it with your loving and empowering presence.

Amen.

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The online version of this may not have the YouTube links due to copyright issues.

We may, in time, be able to give audio recordings of the hymn tunes but I need to seek clarity on this.