

'Spiritual Communion' in the weeks after Easter

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. The words in **bold** you are encouraged to say out loud as worship and prayer.*

Opening Prayer

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members.

We are joining with Christians everywhere to be nourished by the one who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.

Opening Sentences Reminding us of our Easter Joy

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia, Alleluia, alleluia.**

I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one;
I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. **Alleluia.**
He has defeated the powers of death. **Alleluia.**
He turns our sorrow into dancing. **Alleluia.**



Prayers of Preparation and Confession

Almighty God to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen

Reflect on the week that has passed since last Sunday..

Knowing that God loves us unconditionally, we can afford to be honest about how we are.
How has the last week been, and how do I feel now?
We share our feelings openly with the Lord, for friends don't keep secrets from one another.

As we pray, we can look at Jesus as a friend and share our innermost thoughts with him trusting that He understands?

You may wish to pray

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.



A reading from the Gospel

Read Luke 24:13-35 (A reflection attached to the end of the service sheet)

Intercessions

Let us pray for the needs of the world, for our local community, and for those close to you.

End with the Lord's Prayer. **Our Father...**

Let us give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now and in the week ahead.

Lord, you created me to live in freedom.
May your Holy Spirit guide me to follow you freely.
Instil in my heart a desire
To know and love you more each day.

**O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.**

Here are words you may trust.
Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead:
He is our salvation, **our eternal glory.**
If we die with Him, **we shall live with Him;**
If we endure with Him, **we shall reign with Him.**
For he has broken the power of death;
and brought life and immortality through the gospel. (2 Timothy 2.11-13)

Blessing and Peace

May the Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Peace of the Lord be always with you



Reflection on Luke 24 v 13-35

We are reminded this morning that our encounters with Jesus are always located in a time and place in this world. Every Bible story, every revelation we have about Jesus, every lesson we learn in our lives happens in a specific moment and in a specific place. God's loving presence is not abstract. Our encounters with Jesus are not generic. In theological terms our relationship with our Creator is not immaterial but incarnate. We meet God not apart from but within the dusty, confused, wonderful walks that this world takes us on. The pilgrims on the Emmaus Road were on one such walk.

The two weary pilgrims had travelled around 12km on foot from the town of Emmaus to the city of Jerusalem for the celebration of the Jewish Passover. I am sure that they had set out a week earlier with great excitement and expectation. A gathering of their own people at a time of oppression to celebrate a traditional festival of hope for freedom and independence. And this year the added excitement of Jesus of Nazareth, a fellow Jew who was 'a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people' would also be there. What might happen this week in Jerusalem?

Well now we meet them on their long walk back to their hometown. At a moment of deflation. A moment in their lives of despair and frustration. They tell their new companion on the walk 'we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel' but '**our** chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him'. The moment is real. Their hopes and fears and pain are not immaterial. Their pain is not universal, it is personal and real. It is a story of two actual people in a particular moment in time and place. A road being walked in pain and despair.

Take a moment this morning to reflect on this moment and on the mood of the two disciples. Realise how often we are in the same situation. How often do we feel deeply disappointed and disoriented by the events around us. Not least in the unprecedented events of the last 6 weeks. How often have we had moments when we are angry and frustrated like these two. Are we feeling this way now? I wonder if we have also felt that deep yearning to meet Jesus in the hope that He would redeem us but now it feels that hope is something vague. The Christian hope has become a message for a time past, a moment that has gone. Is this really true? Or are we missing something?

The salvation Jesus offers is not found in one particular moment or at one specific time. It is not even a once for all event happening once and lasting forever. The salvation of Jesus is for every single different moment at every single different time in our lives. We are in fact saved each and every time we look up and see Jesus with us on our journey. It is not for us to look back to a time and place where we once met Jesus. It is not for us to look ahead to where we might some time meet Jesus. It is for us to become aware that Jesus is at our side at this moment. He is walking at our pace, patiently waiting for us to open our hearts and minds to His loving companionship. We are saved through an awareness that Jesus is walking with us.

At this difficult time let us encourage one another that Jesus is not behind us in the times we used to sing and pray together in our buildings. Jesus is not somewhere ahead of us in a future moment when the doors to our churches will be open again for us to meet in prayer and praise. Jesus is with us now, and in each moment. Not an abstract idea but a real presence in this strange and difficult time.