

worship



notes

from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 19th April 2025
The Third Sunday of Easter
The Revd Dr Nick Jones

Call to Worship

Jesus was revealed for our sake
through him we have come to trust
in the God who raised him from the dead

We are called to love one another
we have been made new through the living and enduring word of God. Amen.

Adapted from 1 Peter 1.17-23

Prayer of Illumination

God of revelation and good news,
help us today to find you in our worship,
in the words we share and the music we hear,
help us to try to answer some of our questions,
and stir us into asking more
as we seek to continue learning and growing together. Amen.

Prayer of Approach & Thanksgiving

Risen and living Jesus,
who will meet us wherever we are ready to look,
in reading scripture, in breaking bread,
in worshipping and giving thanks:
here we are. Use us, reassure us,
and help us to love you and each other more.
Loving God, we come before you as your people,
to sing your praises, to hear your word in scripture,
to give thanks for and respond to your love.

We come to worship today just as we were,
as we were made, and we celebrate again
that act of creation and creativity.
We thank you for your many gifts,
for the beauty of the world all around,

for the plants and flowers
growing anew in the spring weather.
We thank you for the Easter celebration we have recently enjoyed,
remembering that your love is a gift not just for one day but for every day of the year.
We thank you for the church, for the fellowships we belong to,
and for our families and friends, the people we love
who gives our lives richness and depth.
We ask that you help us as we try to live out your love in our lives
and in how we treat other people,
transforming our world together, celebrating you make all things new.

Words of Assurance and prayer of confession

Gracious God, we know that you love you each one of us
and nothing can separate us from that love.
We celebrate your mercy and your readiness to forgive.
Therefore, trusting in your abundant grace,
we think of the mistakes we have made
and the times we have acted in ways which
are contrary to the values of your kingdom.
We have hurt others through action or negligence,
we have not struggled for justice but accepted injustice,
we have not shared what we have but acted with selfishness.
Through Jesus our sins are forgiven,
and we pray for help in our efforts to do the best we can. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Writing and story-telling God,
sometimes your stories are hard for us to read,
sometimes we have many questions
and struggle to make sense of what you tell us;
and so we pray for the spirit to be with us today,
as we read your scripture
and think about what it means for us today.
Holy Spirit, reach in our minds and our hearts
and make us ready to ask the difficult questions
we sometimes hide from. Amen

Readings

Acts 2.36-41 | Luke 24: 13-35 |

All Age Activity

The URC's Friends on Faith Adventures has some excellent suggestions for an all-age activity relating to the Emmaus Road. This link leads to a direct download.

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Friends-on-Faith-Adventures-Luke-walking-with-Jesus-Emmaus-Road.docx>

A way in would be to ask if anyone has been on a pilgrimage, or a journey with some significance. If your church took part in a Good Friday Walk of Witness that would be a good example, or maybe a trip to Iona or other place with a spiritual meaning.

Sermon Notes

Luke

The story of the two disciples walking to Emmaus and unknowingly meeting Jesus is a rich and beautifully told passage of scripture, and that depth and richness could lead you to go in many different directions. That can feel like a problem as well as a blessing! There are lots of details which will always remain mysterious (Who is the companion? Where is Emmaus?) but they really don't matter. Rather it's a story that dramatizes a journey of faith and gives us a language to begin thinking about what it means to encounter Jesus. The idea of Christian life as a journey is something of a cliché, and the word is devalued by its constant use on reality TV. Yet being a follower of Jesus *is* a journey, and a never-ending one, because the journey rather than the destination is the purpose. Cleopas and his friend are of course on an actual journey but also a spiritual one. One way in is to think of a journey which can work in both ways. In my sermon I use the example of Antarctic explorers convinced there is an extra person beside them, but maybe you think of a journey more personal to you. Maybe you've been on a pilgrimage in some way, or had to travel in order to understand something new. Importantly reaching Emmaus and recognising Jesus is not the end of the story; the pair turn around and go back to the city, seeking other believers to share their good news of their encounter. If your service involves sharing Communion there is much to be made of the fact they only recognise Jesus in breaking bread, just as the breaking of bread together helps us to remember Jesus and grow closer in fellowship both with him and with each other. Perhaps your church shared a meal together over Easter or does so regularly; is Jesus with us when we sit down simply to eat and share each other's company? And don't forget this is a passage of questions and answers. You could think about how on our faith journey we have many questions, not all of which are answered – but seeking is important in itself. How can we ensure that in our church communities asking questions is not discouraged but considered an essential aspect of faith? What would you ask if you had the opportunity.

Acts

This is a continuation of Peter's sermon from earlier in the chapter, and here we have

another question. ‘Siblings, what shall we do?’ Peter’s answer seems simple, but as so often is harder to live our. ‘Repent and be baptised, and so receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’. And crucially this message is not just for those listening, but for those who are far away and those to come in the future. Peter’s preaching causes around 3000 people to join the church – don’t be downhearted if your sermon doesn’t quite have that effect! Who knows what ideas and thoughts you will pass on that will bear later fruit that you may never see? In some ways our churches today are very different from the early church, but in others ways we do the same things; fellowship, breaking bread, listening to the Spirit.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe what Cleopas and his friend came to believe in Emmaus:

“It is true! The Lord has risen.”

We believe that our Emmaus is here

and we can encounter the same risen Jesus in stories from scripture,

when we pray alone or together,

when we learn from friend or stranger.

We trust in a God who is sometimes hard to see,

who sometimes we do not recognise,

but we trust is with us always.

Offertory Prayer

God of abundance

we remember our churches are able to meet

because people of faith and generosity

choose to come together in response to your call.

We celebrate all the ways in which people give to the church;

gifts of money, but also gifts of time and energy and dedication.

We pray that together we will use these gifts

to follow wherever you lead us. Amen.

Intercessions

God of the Emmaus road,

God who accompanies us as we travel

and can reach out to us in unexpected ways,

we have heard today of your message

of renewal and new life, of abundant grace and love.

But as we celebrate what we believe you have done for us

we pray for those who are struggling and need help.

We remember all victims of injustice and inequality caused by human actions

and we ask for guidance on how this suffering can best be ended.

We pray for all of those who know poverty, both across the world, and those struggling to manage in our local community.

In a world where your abundant spirit of creation means there is enough for everyone too many go hungry.

We pray for them, and for the work of aid agencies and others who work to alleviate suffering and rebuild hope,

We pray also for all those suffering due to war, where political differences have not been resolved peacefully and violence is the result.

We remember refugees from all parts of the world forced to leave their homes due to the danger of conflict.

We pray they will receive a warm and compassionate response; we pray we will find ways to help.

We give thanks for the freedom we have to worship as we wish and express our beliefs, and to question what we are told.

We pray for those who do not have this freedom; we pray for people in places where to worship openly, or to criticise the powerful, is to invite persecution.

We pray for a world in which people of all faiths and none are free to follow their own conscience, a world which celebrates diversity and difference and the complexity of your creation, rather than judging who are different to us.

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves, may we, like Cleopas and his friend, encounter you in spirit and in truth as we travel along the road.

Blessing

Loving God, whose presence and grace fill our whole world, help us to see you reflected in: the people we meet, the places we go, and the questions we ask.

May the grace of God almighty
Creator, Redeemer and Spirit
be with us and those whom we love
now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn Suggestions

In addition to those suggested for Eastertide here:

<https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/prayer-and-worship/worship-notes/>

	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Who would true valour see (To be a pilgrim)	556	535	486	
One more step along the road I go	549	530	476	1346
Will you come and follow me?	558	533	673	
Nothing distress you, nothing afruit you	548			
O for a closer walk with God	551	522		494
Meekness and majesty				465
Jesus stand among us	565		30	380
On the day of resurrection to Emmaus we return			307	
On the journey to Emmaus			308	
O thou who this mysterious bread			597	

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*