**Text

Description automatically generatedWorship Sheet for Sunday 18th April 2021: 3rd Sunday of the Easter Season (Compiled by Revd. Pam Siddall of Buckden Methodist Church)**

**Call to worship**: “See what great love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.” (**1 John 3, 1: NRSV**)

**Hymn:** Jesus stand among us - Hymns and Psalms 530/Singing the Faith 30

**Prayers: We still our hearts and quieten our minds to be aware of the presence of our Lord and Saviour.**

“The Lord is here. His spirit is with us.”

Risen Lord, here with us *all,* where-ever we are worshipping this morning, your presence unites us; your life gives meaning to our lives; your love comforts us; your rising gives us eternal hope. We praise you and thank you with all our hearts. **Amen.**

**We say the Lord’s Prayer knowing that we are surrounded as we do so by the whole community of faith.**

**Reading: Luke 24, 36b-48**

*Think about the reading: Jesus appears to his disciples in their room in Jerusalem when they are comparing notes on the Lord’s appearances to the women, to Peter and to the walkers on the Emmaus Road.*

Perhaps, like me, your first thought is that this is very similar to last week’s gospel story. The setting is the same, the Lord’s greeting is the same and there is the same emphasis on reassuring the disciples of Jesus’s real, physical presence, this time by showing them his wounds, by inviting them to touch him and by eating broiled fish with them. Ghosts don’t eat! We may ask ourselves why, then, we are appointed this seemingly repetitive passage on this Easter Season day in the second year of our 3-year pattern of set readings (the lectionary.) When we consider the differences between this and last week’s lesson: John 20, 19-31, we note that Luke’s emphasis is on Jesus’s final teaching for his disciples (v. 44-48.) Having reassured them, and opened their minds to the truth of his messiah-ship in the prophecies of scripture, he declares them to be witnesses in the work of proclaiming repentance and forgiveness to all nations. It reminds us of the end of Matthew’s gospel (chapter 28 verses 18-20) when Jesus sends his followers out on the great commission to make disciples of all nations, but also promises to be with them “to the very end of the age.” Surely this is what today’s lesson has to say to us too. Later we see the disciples working it out in their lives. In Acts 3 verse 15, Peter is speaking to the on-lookers after he and John have healed a crippled beggar in the name of Jesus. He says, “You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”

Witnessing sounds a daunting task and indeed it is. I was once first on the scene of a fatal road accident but I was very glad not to be called to give evidence in court as I would have made a terrible witness, because shock made my interpretation of what little I saw very unreliable. How must those first disciples have felt? Yet their subsequent, faithful witnessing to and demonstrating of the risen life of Jesus has led ultimately to our own personal belief in the Christian faith.

Can we hear *ourselves* daring to assert today, “WE are witnesses”? If so, we need to be asking ourselves whether we are reliable witnesses. We need to be prepared, having thought about what we have seen and experienced of Jesus and how we might pass on the amazing news of his living presence among us every day.

**Hymn**: He is Lord - Hymns and Psalms 256/Singing the Faith **348**

**Reflection: ‘A channel of witness’**

There’s an old Flanders and Swan song “The gas man cometh” which begins, ‘T was on a Monday morning the gas-man came to call…’ and goes on to detail the ensuing week of daily calamities necessitating the call out of a succession of other workers, each to amend the mayhem occasioned by their predecessor, until we arrive back at the gas-man the following Monday! The song has been in our minds here in Buckden in recent months as rusty and collapsing gas piping has been systematically replaced, street by street, through an amazingly haphazard system of holes and conduits, so that a safe and secure gas supply can continue to be channelled to every home for years to come. (Our gas-workers, by the way, were actually on the whole very good, it must be said!)

The word ‘*conduit’* isn’t at the tip of everyone’s tongue these days but it’s what I have been feeling my role, in company with Christian colleagues across the connexion, has often become during this extraordinary year. Like so many of you, I have received Methodist and other Christian information, ideas, services, pastoral greetings, church family news and prayer requests from all quarters (though especially via our faithful Frank Canon) and have then done my best to send it all spinning on out to everyone remotely connected with our congregation by email links and attachments, doorstep deliveries or phone-calls. Each recipient in turn has probably passed some of this on to yet others. Connections have been made and some of them retained so that witness has continued in spite of our buildings being closed. ‘Make me a channel of your peace..’ we sometimes sing, in the words of St. Francis (adapted by Sebastian Temple.) I like the picture of the community of Christians busily at work, faithfully channelling the Good News so that it is readily available to give power to every household whenever the moment comes for them to ‘switch on’ to their need of Christ Jesus in their lives.

**The challenge:**

1. Jesus opened the minds of the disciples to understand the scriptures and to see the proof of his messiah-ship predicted there. We need not only to read our Bibles daily and use whatever helpful study material we can, but also, consciously, to invite the Holy Spirit to interpret what we read and seal its personal guidance into our hearts.

2. How can we witness to repentance for forgiveness of sin unless we know ourselves to have experienced God’s forgiving love? We need to keep returning to him with humbled hearts to allow the Holy Spirit to show us our need of his Grace to cleanse and renew us so that the channels of love, worship and witness remain open to God and then through us to our neighbours.

**We read Singing the Faith 420 as our prayer of confession:**

1.Because you came and sat beside us 2. Because you laughed and loved the child-like

because you came and heard us speak, because you lived from day to day,

and we ignored you and we refused you, and we love status and steady money,

we ask forgiveness, Lord Jesus Christ. we ask forgiveness Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Because our peace was your agenda 4. Because your cross compels an answer,

because you wept to see us war, because your love absorbs our sin,

and love power and winning battles, and we are wounded because we wound you,

we ask forgiveness, Lord Jesus Christ. we ask forgiveness, Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Because you came on Easter morning,

because you came at Pentecost,

and in the Spirit, we are forgiven,

we live to praise you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Prayers for the needs of the world:**

We pray for the world-wide Church and ourselves as part of that body. May everything about our lives and our service to others bear witness to the living faith of Jesus.

We pray for all world leaders at these challenging times, that God’s Kingdom of justice peace and healing may triumph over earthly powers and values and right outcomes be sought for all peoples.

Acknowledging the funeral of Prince Philip on Saturday, we lift Elizabeth, our Queen, and all her family to you for comfort and strength. May their mourning in the public eye bear witness to the resurrection faith of the Christian Church and bring hope and comfort to the many who mourn the loss of loved ones, especially in this time of pandemic.

We pray for all who are suffering at this time: those so terribly affected by natural disasters, by warfare and strife, by illness, poverty, loneliness or any other kind of need and we take time to remember before God all those we know personally, allowing them to represent all those others known by name to the Lord.

**We give thanks that the Lord hears and answers our prayers. In so far as we ourselves are called to be part of that answer, we ask God to guide, strengthen and enable us to do his will.**

**We ask these prayers in the name of the risen Lord Jesus. Amen.**

**Hymn: Christ is Alive -** Hymns and Psalms 190/Singing the Faith **297**

**Sending out prayer**: We go forward with thankful hearts, in the assurance of the daily presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.