

Dorset South & West Circuit Written Service for 24th April 2022 – 1st Sunday after Easter – by  
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Welcome

We have had the lows and highs of Holy Week and Easter and now we start to follow the disciples and others as they begin their work of spreading the good news.

Call to worship – verses from Psalm 16

- 1 Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.  
2 I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord;  
I have no good apart from you.'  
5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.  
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;  
my body also rests secure.  
11 You show me the path of life.  
In your presence there is fullness of joy;  
in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Opening Prayers

Loving God, wherever we are, wherever we go, whether we are aware or not, we know that you walk life's journey with us – helping and guiding us; nurturing and admonishing us; opening our minds, expanding our horizons; challenging our preconceptions; enriching our experiences; giving us opportunities, more than once.

For all this, but most especially for the gift of your Son, our Saviour and Redeemer, we offer our unfettered praise. Amen.

Hymn StF 296

Christ has risen while earth slumbers,  
Christ has risen where hope died,  
as he said and as he promised,  
as we doubted and denied.  
Let the moon embrace the blessing;  
let the sun sustain the cheer;  
let the world confirm the rumour.  
Christ is risen, God is here.

Christ has risen for the people  
whom he loved and died to save;  
Christ has risen for the women  
bringing flowers to grace his grave.  
Christ has risen for disciples  
huddled in an upstairs room.  
He whose word inspired creation  
is not silenced by the tomb.

Christ has risen to companion  
former friends who fear the night,  
sensing loss and limitation  
where their faith had once burned bright.  
They bemoan what is no longer,  
they expect no hopeful sign  
till Christ ends their conversation  
breaking bread and sharing wine.

Christ has risen and forever  
lives to challenge and to change  
all whose lives are messed or mangled,  
all who find religion strange.  
Christ is risen. Christ is present,  
making us what he has been –  
evidence of transformation  
in which God is known and seen.

John Bell and Graham Maule.

Prayers of Confession

Loving God, help us to live in love and charity with others, and, as we ask for your forgiveness, enable us to be forgiving. Take from our lives the hidden grudges and concealed hate. Forgive us that we have so often denied you; we have turned away from you; we have sung with our lips what we have not had the courage to practise in our lives.

Forgive our sins, comfort our sorrows, calm our fears, and take from us every proud thought. So fill us with love and concern for others, and make us ready to help and quick to forgive; we ask this through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 53: 1 – 9

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Gospel Reading Luke 24: 13 – 35

Please read the account of the road to Emmaus.

Map of Israel in New Testament times with the supposed location of Emmaus and other known sites



Hymn StF 307

On the day of resurrection  
to Emmaus we return;  
while confused, amazed, and frightened,  
Jesus comes to us, unknown.

Then the stranger asks a question,  
'What is this which troubles you?'  
Meets us in our pain and suffering;  
Jesus walks with us, unknown.

In our trouble, words come from him;  
burning fire within our hearts  
tells to us the scripture's meaning.  
Jesus speaks to us, unknown.

Then we near our destination.  
Then we ask the stranger in,  
and he yields unto our urging;  
Jesus stays with us, unknown.

Day of sorrow is forgotten  
when the guest becomes the host.  
Taking bread and blessing, breaking,  
Jesus is himself made known.

Opened eyes, renewed convictions,  
journey back to scenes of pain;  
telling all that Christ is risen.

## Reflection

The words from Isaiah may be familiar to us, although we might not know their origin. They, in prophecy, tell us of the life and death of Jesus Christ, but there is no word of resurrection. And, although in the gospels we have recently had the account of Lazarus, people coming back to life then, as now, is not a common occurrence and would not be a first, second or third thought. Therefore, we can fully understand Cleopas and his unnamed companion (probably a wife, but may be a sister, mother, or daughter as they shared a house) on the walk to Emmaus from Jerusalem. Their conversation on this walk of several hours is of what has been happening and possibly what the future might be – but the fact that they are leaving Jerusalem would seem to indicate that they don't think anything else is going to take place there, so they may as well go home.

The buzz and the rumours that have inevitably been going round (people don't change much in themselves) will probably have reached everyone present in Jerusalem, so the incredulity when Jesus joins the two of them and asks what they are talking about is also real.

After hearing a synopsis of himself, Jesus refers the couple back to the scriptures and the prophets, undoubtedly including Isaiah, to interpret for them and explain what they had heard or witnessed.

They are intrigued enough to want to know more and stop Jesus from walking on, inviting him in, offering hospitality, as he himself had instructed his followers to do. I often wonder where Jesus may have travelled on to if Cleopas and companion hadn't persuaded him to stop with them. The location of Emmaus is not exactly known, but it does appear to be, by consensus, to the west of Jerusalem, heading towards the Mediterranean coast (see the previous map). It is not in the general direction of Jericho, Bethlehem, Galilee, Nazareth or either Bethany, so there doesn't seem to be any obvious place where Jesus might be heading.

I believe that it is finally when the two stop, sit down and face Jesus, who performs a familiar action in breaking bread, that they recognised him and realised the consequences and enormity of it all.

If we think about it, when we are in heavy and heated conversation walking alongside someone, with a third person too, we do not necessarily look closely at people. If you are walking next to someone you cannot see their gait, a recognisable trait, and if you are in open air, talking against the wind and weather and you are concentrating on the words, you do not always distinguish the voice, especially when you are tired and emotional, as they inevitably would be. And remember, the last person these faithful followers were expecting to be walking and talking with, seven miles from Jerusalem, is Jesus.

It always strikes me, when I'm being busy, when I have chores and deadlines, that Jesus revealed himself in the normal, the ordinary, the pause not in the busyness, the depth or the complicated. We can be too caught up in the getting things done, getting things straight and pinned down, to breath, look around and notice the reality. So I hope that after the lows and highs of Holy Week and Easter you have found time to stop, rest, be quiet and find the Risen Christ in your everyday lives and homes, before you share the Good News with the others.

## Hymn StF 524

Listening God, you hear us when we cannot speak,  
when despair and turmoil leave us faint and weak.  
In love you call us back to you again  
and your grace reminds us how you feel our pain.

Searching God, you find us when we go astray,  
as self-centred living takes us from your way.

In love you seek us, show us what we've lost,  
and your tears remind us what forgiveness cost.

Suffering God, you lift us from our deepest grief,  
when emotion blinds us to our own belief.  
In love you touch us with your nail-torn hand  
and your wounds remind us why you understand.

Risen God, you show us love too strong for death,  
evil deeds defeated by your living breath.  
In love you teach us never to despair,  
your new life reminds us, hope is always there.

Marjorie Dobson.

### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Heavenly God, we thank you that so often you have come to us in the ordinary and everyday things of life, in our work and in our leisure. Help us there to seek you and find you and serve you, as in Christ you have sought and found and served us. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

### Prayers of Intercession using hymn StF 519 by Jenny Hewer

We talk together, God, about the recent news.

The good news, the bad news that invades our homes,  
bursting forth from radio or from television....

*Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do.*

*Father, I place into your hands the times that I've been through.*

*Father, I place into your hands the way that I should go, for I know I always can trust you.*

We talk together, God, about people we know,  
sharing in their joys, sharing in their sorrows.

We hear of illness, of anxiety, of death...

*Father, I place into your hands my friends and family.*

*Father, I place into your hands the things that trouble me.*

*Father, I place into your hands the person I would be, for I know I always can trust you.*

We talk together, God, about our faith in you;  
in our worship services, in our fellowship groups,  
with friends in our homes, we seek you together...

*Father, we love to see your face, we love to hear your voice.*

*Father, we love to sing your praise and in your name rejoice.*

*Father, we love to walk with you and in your presence rest, for we know we always can trust you.*

Silence for your own prayers...

*Father, I want to be with you and do the things you do.*

*Father, I want to speak the words that you are speaking too.*

*Father, I want to love the ones that you will draw to you, for I know that I am one with you. Amen.*

### Blessing

May the God who shakes heaven and earth,  
whom death could not contain,  
who lives to disturb and heal us,  
bless us with power  
to go forth and proclaim the Gospel. Amen.