

Opening Prayer

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven has drawn near." **God is here, with us now.**

Jesus said, "I will come and make my home with those who love me." **God is here, with us now.**

Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will come, and teach you, and remind you." **God is here, with us now.**

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." **God is here, with us now.**

We join our hearts in worship, knowing God's presence is with us always.

My peace I give to you.

Amen.

Focusing Prayer:

Glory to you, O God: you raised Jesus from the grave, bringing us victory over death and giving us eternal life.

Glory to you, O Christ: for us and for our salvation, you overcame death, and opened the gate to everlasting life.

Glory to you, O Holy Spirit: you lead us into the truth, and breathe new life into us.

Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession:

We turn now to our prayers of confession. Where we think of those moments or times in this past week / month, where we have said or done something that we know to be wrong, or we need to ask God for forgiveness for, to say we are sorry:

Eternal God, you know how the anger, the pain,

And the bitterness of our lives tries to crowd you out.

The noise of the world deafens us to that Word which can heal us.

Our desire for revenge towards those who have hurt us shows that your peace, is far from our grasp.

You promise a new heaven and a new earth, so create new spirits and new lives within us, Healing God.

Shattered by our sin, your heart can still heal our brokenness.

Your Spirit, living deep within our souls, can teach us faithful ways.

Your Word, Jesus Christ our Lord, whispers to us of your mercy, your hope, your love.

We lift to God, confessions of heart and mind . . .

The Word which can transform us is not some idle gossip, but good news for us.

It fills us with forgiveness, equips us for service, and sends us forth to love others as God loves us.

Through Christ, our Sins are forgiven.

In our midst, the Holy Spirit teaches us all we need to know,

gives us what we need in order to be faithful and fills us with peace.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Readings:

Acts 16: 9 – 15:

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district^[a] of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

John 14: 23 – 29:

²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸ "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Sermon

In the Film *Miss Congeniality* there is an America Beauty Pageant. Each contestant is asked one by one – **If there was one thing in the world you could wish for – What would it be?** One after another they respond – "World Peace", "World Peace", "World Peace"... But what is peace? – what do we mean when we dream of World Peace, or simply just **Peace**.

In our Gospel Passage this morning Jesus Says: "*My Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you*". The whole of this chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus marks a distinction between his followers and the 'World'. But here in this passage it is our knowledge that we are his followers, is the signal that we receive the wondrous gift of Peace – not World Peace, but peace in our lives, in our relationships, in our hearts and in our minds. Peace that surpasses all understanding. Peace that is rooted in God's sacrificial, unconditional, all-powerful Love.

I wonder . . . what is Peace to you?

Peace is a state of mind for the individual, peace is the state of union and contentment between a couple, and peace is the state of oneness between or within a nation. For me peace is a deep sense of contentment, a moment where I am truly able to revel in the presence of God. Peace is where we recognize the limits of what we can affect or change on our own. **Being at Peace**, is where we place our limits, our fortunes and indeed our future, solely in someone else's hands – **in God's hands**.

Christ offers us a different window into God's Peace. Jesus gives us peace freely, with the hope that we are transformed by the peace, that we might pass it onto to others who do not yet know that peace. As a gift of life and love to the world, just as Christ is God's gracious gift to the world. The peace that Christ offers is protection in the world and ultimately an eternal relationship with God – **he offers us Love in Peace**.

Can you remember a time when you truly received God's Peace, God's Love from the actions of someone else? Or were you able to give the gift of Love / Peace to someone else? When we receive and give peace, Love, we are transformed by the Love, and we are filled by the peace. That we might pass on the gift we have received to others. So we are called to Love one another, in peace. Sharing peace and sharing love is not something we have to do on our own – but empowered and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

I believe Christ refers to the Holy Spirit, with those wonderful words of comfort: *“My peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you”*. And so the Holy spirit is the support and advocate for us spreading the Good News of Christ with the world. There is an African Proverb which says: **“If you want to go quickly, go alone, if you want to Go far, go together”**

If we want to go the distance in our mission task, then the resurrection of Christ promises us a future full of friendship – with God the Father, with God the Son, with God the Holy Spirit, with each other. We have to seek companionship if we are to succeed in spreading the love of God with the World.

But just as the Spirit fell down on believers at Pentecost, I recently read somewhere that: ***Jesus Breathed on the disciples the very Breath of God, and in so doing gave them peace.*** Wow Just think about that for a moment...

There is something weirdly unifying, humbling and encouraging in that thought – it is about our oneness with God, linked in with the history of humanity! Just for a moment think about that passage from the Acts of Apostles. Paul and Lydia. Paul’s love for the Lord opened his ears and heart to hear the divine voice speaking in a nocturnal vision, and as a result of his obedient response, the gospel is spread in a powerful and profound way. In turn Paul and Silas are ministered to and offered hospitality by this woman of means and faith, Lydia. What would you do with a vision like that today? Would you allow God to breathe his peace onto you, to lead you in a different direction? **We are connected by the breath of God, a breath that saturates our lives with the very love of God, through Christ.**

So where does this leave us here today, here Dorset South and West Methodist Circuit?

The Holy Spirit reassures us that God is at work in and through the church, working his purpose out. What is the Peace that we have to share with the world? God’s peace builds bridges in relationships. It empowers people and words in and through people to bring justice. God’s peace crosses boundaries, brining dignity, integrity and true Love.

As Christians whilst peace is given to us as a gift this is not some excuse for us isolating ourselves from the world, and its suffering to live in some cocoon of peacefulness. Rather, the Spirit is sent so that through us, others would come to know of God and God’s peace. To close I return to our Miss America Contestants and that question: – **If there was one thing in the world you could wish for, what would it be?** – that their answer of course was “World Peace”. This is the peace Christ offers us through his death and resurrection. Christ Says: **The peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you** – capture this peace, dwell in this peace, because when we do, we have fullness of peace with one another, with the Spirit, With Christ and with God. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

In these prayers of Intercession we leave space for you to draw to mind the people, places and situations that are in need of our prayers and God’s graceful intervention.

Let us offer our prayer with all God’s people:

We pray for the needs of the world . . .

We pray for the Church . . .

We pray for all in trouble or distress . . .

We pray for all who make a new beginning today . . .

God of compassion and mercy, listen to our prayer. May what we ask in Jesus Christ your Son be done according to his word, who said, ‘Ask, and you will receive, seek, and you will find, knock, and the door will be opened to you.’ To you, merciful God, through your Son, in the lifegiving Spirit, be glory and praise for ever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be 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.

Offering Prayer:

Now a prayer to focus on the offering of lives and gifts for the kingdom of God. Know that whatever your gift is, big or small, seen or unseen, God loves you and God knows you.

Lord and giver of every Good thing,
We bring to you, our lives and our gifts for your kingdom,
All for transformation through your grace and love,
Made known in Jesus Christ our savior.

Amen.

Hymn – STF 364 – O for a thousand tongues

On this Aldersgate Sunday, where as Methodist's we remember the conversion of John and Charles Wesley, and that heart-warming moment of recognition of God's unconditional love, we focus on the words of Wesley's beautiful hymn:

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

2 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of your name.

3 Jesus — the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.

4 He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;

his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me.

5 He speaks; and, listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
the humble poor believe.

6 See all your sins on Jesus laid:
the Lamb of God was slain;
his soul was once an offering made
that all may heaven gain.

7 In Christ, our Head, you then shall know,
shall feel, your sins forgiven,
anticipate your heaven below,
and own that love is heaven.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Blessing

Our God, who is gracious, sends us out to be a blessing. **With our hands, we will serve God's people.**
Jesus, who is our Brother, sends us to be with others. **We will comfort all whose hearts are troubled.**
The Holy Spirit, who is our Advocate, sends us into a broken world. **we will teach songs of hope to all who despair.**

The Blessing of God almighty, father, son and holy spirit, be with you, with those you love, and those you are called to love, now in the name of Christ. Amen.