

**Dorset South & West. Written Service.**

**Sunday April 23rd**

The 3rd Sunday of Easter.

**The church is closed..... to make ready.**



**Prepared by Revd Jean Quick**

**Call to Worship:** I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. Psalm 116:1-4

**STF 340**

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,  
and publish abroad his wonderful name;  
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;  
his kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save;  
and still he is nigh, his presence we have;  
the great congregation his triumph shall sing,  
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

'Salvation to God who sits on the throne!'  
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son;  
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,  
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right;  
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,  
all honour and blessing, with angels above,  
and thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

**Prayers of Adoration and Confession from the Methodist website.**

God who calls and equips,  
We seek you, not for what we can do for you,  
but in response to your incredible love in our lives.  
We celebrate your all-encompassing love  
and the people who have made you known to us.

We recognise that your Spirit  
has worked through countless people  
to make your salvation known to us  
and we take a moment to recognise this.

We praise you for God's love made known in Jesus,  
the One who calls so many different people,  
in so many diverse ways

and in a variety of contexts.  
We open ourselves to your love and guidance  
that we may respond to your calling  
and help others recognise your love. **Amen.**

God of immense love and mercy,  
Forgive us when we try to avoid following you,  
forgive us when we ignore your calling in our lives,  
forgive us when our busyness drowns out  
your still small voice and we attempt to go our own  
way.  
Forgive us when our actions prevent others  
from responding to God's calling in their lives.  
**Amen.**

**Affirmation of forgiveness**

God's love for you is not dependent on what you do.  
God's love for you does not diminish  
when you lose focus and lose your way.  
God's love for you remains as it always has and always will.  
You are forgiven and held dearly by the loving arms of God.  
Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

**Bible Reading .....Acts 2: 14a, 36-41. Peter Addresses the Crowd**

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

### STF 399

When deep despair casts out all light  
and hope is wearing thin;  
come Spirit, dance with gentle grace,  
shine through the dullness we embrace  
and make the colours sing;  
and make the colours sing.

When greed dictates that children die  
and poverty holds sway;  
come Spirit, burn as living flame,  
prompt us to act to end this shame;  
cast apathy away;  
cast apathy away.

When colour, lifestyle, creed or name  
cause groundless hate and fear;  
come Spirit, weave a web of peace,  
that prejudice and violence cease;  
reveal God's purpose here;  
reveal God's purpose here.

When guilt and fear tear us apart  
and faith's a bitter thing;  
come Spirit, dance with gentle grace,  
shine through the dullness we embrace  
and make God's colours sing;  
and make God's colours sing.

Michaela Youngson

*Can be sung to the tune Repton which we often use for the hymn, Dear Lord and Father of Mankind.*

### Reflection

In two weeks time we will be joining in a world changing celebration. The Coronation of King Charles III and The Queen Consort. I have the delightful task of preparing a service for this week and the week of the Coronation. So I would like to have a kind of theme running between these two services that hopefully will aid our reflection on what is happening in our nation.

I was interested to see in the official notifications that Westminster abbey is to close, temporarily and to make preparations. This is the official notice.

*To prepare for the Coronation of The King and Queen Consort we will be closed to visitors and worshippers from 25th April and will re-open on Monday 8th May. Services will take place in St Margaret's Church until Tuesday 2nd May.*

I guess we can all recall times when the church has been closed temporarily to us, not least during recent history and the effects of Covid. Apart from that particular time. I guess temporary closure's have been met with very mixed feelings?

What would it mean to us if the church was closed and not just temporarily? Surely that question begs a much more important question? What does the church mean to us?

In our Bible Reading we hear that Peter is speaking to the crowd about Christ's sacrifices for us and they are 'cut to the heart.'

The extract comes from the passage about the Day of Pentecost. How a crowd of many different nationalities were drawn to find out what the commotion that Peter and the disciples seemed to be creating, was all about. Today we pick up the story after Peter's long discourse. Initially the crowd's reaction ranged from humour, to feelings of being perplexed or amazed.

We could look at Royalty's history in our time and have a somewhat equal range of feelings. But surely one precious gift of Christ's sacrifice is that the past is forgiven to all who truly repent. The past is past.

Do you recall the days before health and safety took hold of how we organised our premises? Mostly for the better. I remember one small village chapel that I was privileged to serve, quite early in my time as a Minister. We had to close temporarily to deal with rising damp issues. I happened to visit one of the founder members who was in hospital at the time. He had served on the property committee before 'Elf and safety', came to reside! He was interested in why the chapel was closed for a few weeks. As I explained he went into spasms of mirth and was struggling to speak, finally insisting that the floorboards must not be moved. Once he had settled and my worries for his health had allayed. He explained how many many years ago he and a few men had redecorated the chapel and buried the rubble and rubbish under the floor boards. He said how they had always

thought how ironic that they were sitting Sunday by Sunday on their guilty secret. He finished by saying, 'be sure your sins will find you out!'

This surely is the heart of the church that we can bring our rubbish to God and bury it in His sacrificial love. The difference with my old friends rubbish and what we give to Christ is that he buried it for us in His death and resurrection and our sins are remembered no more. Christ remembers our sins no more. He makes us clean and whole, when we turn to Him.

The past is past and today is a present indeed. The old chapel had to be closed so we could prepare it for the future.

Another reflection on the closing of Westminster Cathedral that surprised me was the renovation of the coronation seat. I loved to tease people about how I, *as remember.....an itinerant minister*, had always sat in this chair! as had all the generations of my family! Impossible and joking aside we know that there's always a place for us in Our Heavenly Father's sight. But how sad when people feel rejected on entering a church for the first time and are asked to move because that's so and so's usual seat.

The chair King Charles will sit on is being partially restored. The 700-year-old oak chair is described as "extremely fragile" by conservation experts at Westminster Abbey. The painstaking preservation work is intended to clean the chair and stabilise layers of flaking gilding.

I warm to that. How often do those who feel extremely fragile and as if the gilded layers of their lives are flaking away, seek solace in the church? I can see why the crowds when they really listened to the gospel message that Peter proclaimed were cut to the heart. Has your experience of what the church proclaims as the love of Christ, cut you to the heart?

It's so easy to get caught up in the physical aspects of the building and our memories of the place. But what is the church? The old adage, take away the first two and last two letters and you find the central part of the Christian church... (CH) UR (CH). It's a wonderful thought that generation's before us and generations after us will know that in Christ, we can be made whole.

The church however we know it, as a place, does close temporarily. I guess there are some 24/7 churches but realistically the church in a sense close's for us after our Sunday service or fellowship group until the next time we attend. But what do we do to make ready, for the next time that we will receive the blessings from being in a place to hear about God's message?

This is the time of the great spring cleaning or decluttering, as we describe it now. What are we holding onto that we should let go of? What needs a clean up? What might we share with someone so that we might be ready to receive and rejoice again?

### **Prayers of intercession from the Methodist church website.**

As we offer our prayers for the world and for ourselves we will share in times of silence, allowing us to reflect on the needs of others and on our own experiences. As we reflect, it may be that God will speak into that silence and help us to understand the world and our lives in new ways.

We remember creation, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit:  
places of beauty and brilliance,  
places of grandeur and spectacle,  
places of extravagant diversity.

We pray, creating God,  
for places damaged and degraded  
for people scraping a living from land made fruitless by human greed.  
Silence  
Help us to live sparingly and to care for creation.  
Gracious God: Hear our prayer.

We remember humanity, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit:  
people of beauty and brilliance,  
people of gifts and grace,  
people of extravagant diversity.

We pray, healing God,  
for people whose lives are diminished because they live with their own or another's mental illness;  
for people facing the stigma caused by misunderstanding about mental illness;  
for people struggling to find help when they need it.

**Silence**

Help us to be welcoming, helpful and more aware of those things  
that make for mental well being for others and ourselves.  
Gracious God: Hear our prayer.

We remember the Church, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit:  
a community of beauty and brilliance  
a community of love and compassion  
a community of extravagant diversity.

We pray, inspiring God,  
for denominations working out how to be one family,  
offering an effective witness to your love in the world;  
for churches with projects that offer help to people struggling with mental illness;  
for churches and people in our own families and community who need to be understood, accepted and  
loved.

**Silence**

Help us to be willing to change ourselves and inspired to change the world.  
Gracious God: Hear our prayer.  
In the name of Christ.

**Amen**

Let us also pray for the Royal family and for those who are making preparations for the Coronation Day.  
We pray for King Charles' as he prepares for the Coronation and for Camilla The Queen Consort's and as she  
prepares to be crowned alongside His Majesty.  
We pray for the 'Coronation Committee' and for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby; for the Dean and  
staff of Westminster Abbey as they make their preparations.  
We pray for the power of God's love to strengthen all family relationships in the House of Windsor; for  
reconciliation, understanding, and forgiveness. And for joy and peace to reign in their hearts and lives as they  
prepare with us and the whole nation to celebrate a momentous time in history. **Amen**

**Let us offer The Lord's Prayer**

**STF 415**

The Church of Christ, in every age  
beset by change but Spirit-led,  
must claim and test its heritage  
and keep on rising from the dead.

Across the world, across the street,  
the victims of injustice cry  
for shelter and for bread to eat,  
and never live until they die.

Then let the servant Church arise,  
a caring Church that longs to be  
a partner in Christ's sacrifice,

and clothed in Christ's humanity.

For he alone, whose blood was shed,  
can cure the fever in our blood,  
and teach us how to share our bread  
and feed the starving multitude.

We have no mission but to serve  
in full obedience to our Lord:  
to care for all, without reserve,  
and spread his liberating Word.

**The Blessing.**

In the coming days,  
may the majesty of our Heavenly Father  
be the light by which we walk,  
the compassion of the Son of God  
be the love by which we walk,  
And the presence of the Holy Spirit  
be the power by which we walk. **Amen**