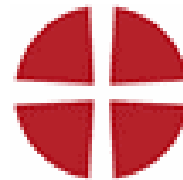




## **Heaton Moor United Church**



The United Reformed Church and The Methodist  
Church working together in partnership

**A letter for Raj :**

**Dear Friends,**

**Hope you are all well and are staying safe at home.**

**We have now moved on to the 2nd Sunday of our worship services being suspended at our church building due to Coronavirus. But i should reiterate we haven't stopped being a church and have been doing church differently. The communication between and among our church members has been on a healthy note, looking after one another and offering prayer support to one another, for which I thank all those friends who took time to call their friends and neighbours during the week. Our community involvement as a church has been consistent, participating in acts of #viralkindness. We are now getting used to working digitally with online meetings, and on Sunday the 29th March 2020 we as a Circuit are offering an online Zoom service at 3pm inviting our church members to participate, and the details are on the notice sheet.**

**There are more ideas coming up to catch up virtually in the weeks to come, and our resolve has always been not to stop being a church though our building is closed for now. I also thank Sharon and the Pastoral visitors who have distributed flowers and a prayer to our church members on Mothering Sunday, which is highly appreciated. Let us uphold Jim and Barbara and their family in our prayers during this time. Kindly also pray for the bereaved family of Alison Ashworth who passed away on Thursday.**

**Here is a hymn written by our friend Graham Adams based on the lectionary Scriptural texts for this Sunday the 29th March 2020, which are Psalm 130, Ezekiel 37 and John 11. Jubi and Jaiho have played this hymn on their guitars. You can listen to it on this link: <https://soundcloud.com/user-155107840/out-of-weary-isolation-graham-patta>**

**The lyrics of the hymn are attached for your kind perusal. Let me take this opportunity to thank Graham for those wonderful and relevant words, capturing the very essence of the three texts so succinctly in his hymn.**

**I am also grateful to my colleague Lindsay Kemp who has sent the worship resources for this Sunday, as she was supposed to preach this Sunday at our church. Those resources are also attached here for you to be used.**

**For those of you who have been part of the Lenten Bible Study where we are reflecting on the book Saying Yes to Life written by Ruth Valeria, herewith i am sending you a reading resource material for you to reflect and meditate on.**

**Please keep in touch dear friends, keep praying for one other, stay at home, look after yourself. May the healing of God be upon this world and grant us all peace comfort and love during these unprecedented times of uncertainty.**

**With warm regards,**

**raj**

**The office is now closed , I can be contacted via email  
or 07471 065729 .**

**Sharon**

## **Out of weary isolation**

Bible: Psalm 130, Ezekiel 37, John 11

Tune: Picardy (*Let all mortal flesh keep silence*)

Out of weary isolation,  
crying out to you, our God;  
longing for renewed connection,  
we bring all our pain, O God;  
waiting – how we wait – in yearning:  
show your steadfast love, dear God.

Set down in the midst of dry bones,  
cut off in a valley still,  
faced with human fears and Earth's groans,  
anxious for our strength of will:  
Breathe, O breathe on us your spirit;  
may we know your presence still.

Feeling Martha's pain and sadness  
for her loss which made you weep,  
still disturbed by grief and madness  
prompting deep to call to deep:  
so you called him out, dear Lazarus:  
Wake up from your early sleep!

Out of every depth of suffering,  
out of valleys filled with fear,  
God whose love is somehow steadfast  
cries with us and holds us near.  
Jesus, weep with us while waiting:  
for your breath of life is here.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-155107840/out-of-weary-isolation-graham-patta>

## **Sunday Worship in the United Stockport Methodist Circuit**

This coming Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> March, we will be holding an act of worship via the Internet application Zoom. You can join with a video link and see and hear everything and everyone else who is participating, or you can join just with audio, or you can telephone in. We will have a gathering time when everyone can chat to each other as we normally do at church from 2.50pm until 3pm when the service will start. At 3pm people can then chat together, again as we normally do after our Sunday services. It will be wonderful at this time to come together across the Circuit, to be able to see and hear one another. You can even bring your own cup of tea or coffee. Hope to see you at Church on Sunday!

Blessings,

Cathy, Lindsay and Raj.

**Time: Sunday March 26, 2020 2:50 PM (for at 3pm start of worship)**

### **How to join in:**

IF YOU ARE CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET WITH A COMPUTER WITH WEBCAM AND SPEAKER

All you need to do is click on the below link, open Zoom, and enter, when prompted, the Meeting ID. This should connect you automatically. Make sure you have your computer sound and video enabled.

<https://zoom.us/j/854085293>

Meeting ID: 854 085 293

IF YOU ARE JOINING BY TELEPHONE

Call from a landline on any of the following numbers:

+44 203 481 5237 United Kingdom

+44 203 481 5240 United Kingdom

+44 208 080 6591 United Kingdom

+44 208 080 6592 United Kingdom

+44 330 088 5830 United Kingdom

+44 131 460 1196 United Kingdom

Meeting ID: 854 085 293



I have been asked to pass on this message from Jim and Barbara  
Thanks to everyone for prayers, cards, emails and phone calls not only on his death but during his illness, Barbara and I have been so aware and comforted by it. Lot's of love to you all keep safe.  
The funeral is Tuesday 31st 3.15pm at Rowan, due to Coronavirus only 10 can attend. Can we hold the family in our prayers whilst the service is going ahead and light a candle.  
Thank you

God of mercy,  
From whom we come,  
by whose grace we live,  
in whose love we are held at last;  
surround us with your presence  
that in our grief and loss  
we may find assurance and hope  
in the One who died for us and rose again,  
even your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



**Virtual Coffee Morning  
Wednesday 1st April 2020**

I am going to be holding a Zoom coffee morning at 11.00 to 11.30.

Bring a brew and chat with each other via the computer. Here are the details . Click the link, follow the instructions, it's quite easy I've managed to do it twice now. You will need a microphone to be able to access the meeting on a basic level, video camera can also be used if you are feeling brave !

Hopefully see you there.

Sharon Heginbotham is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Virtual Coffee Morning

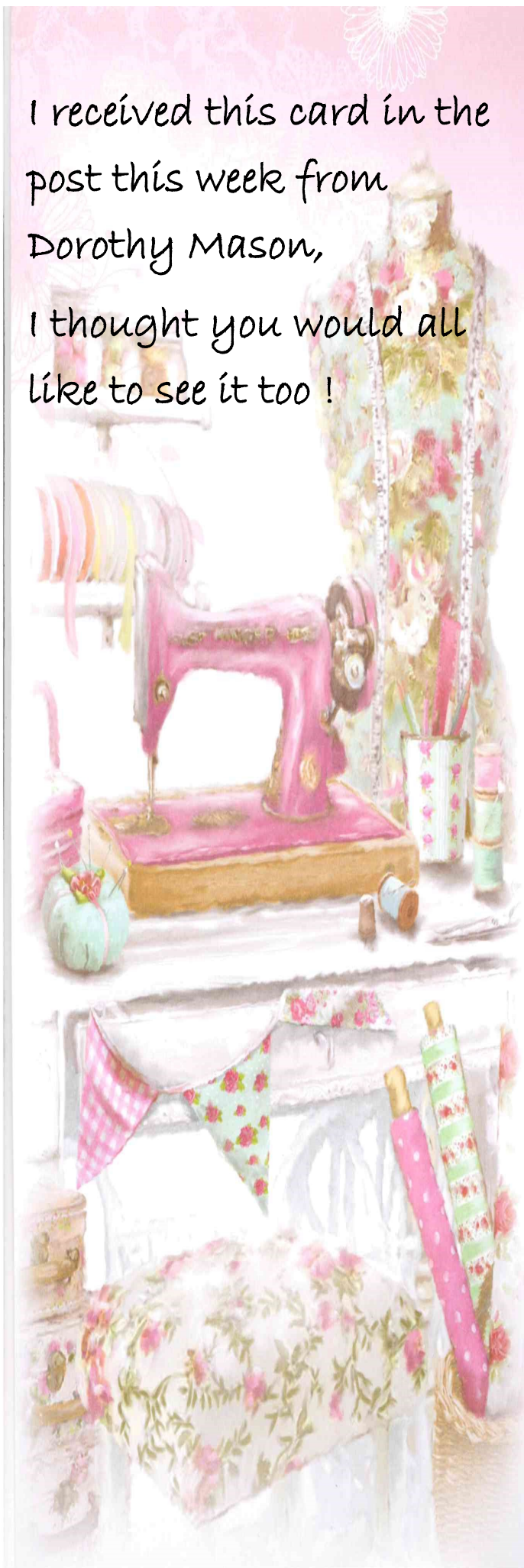
Time: Apr 1, 2020 11:00 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/415188602>

Meeting ID: 415 188 602

I received this card in the post this week from Dorothy Mason, I thought you would all like to see it too!



To all my wonderful, warm and loving Friends at church to thank you for your get well cards ~ calls ~ and prayers when I was 'out of action' and missing everyone. It means so much!

This very special  
'thank you'  
is coming to express,  
Warm appreciation  
for all your  
thoughtfulness.

"Thank You!"  
over again.

I am feeling so much better ~ more like my 'old self' but being sensible and "doing as I am told" and taking things easier until further notice.

All my love to everyone ~  
and God Bless you all!  
Dorothy (Mason)

**ORDER OF SERVICE – 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020**  
**HEATON MOOR**  
**Fifth Sunday in Lent (Passion Sunday)**  
**Holy Communion**

Call to Worship

**Hymn 220: God is love, his the care**

Commandments, Confession, Collect

OT Reading: Ezekiel 37: 1 - 14

Epistle Reading: Romans 8: 5 – 11

**Song: These are the days of Elijah**

Gospel Reading: John 11: 1 – 45

Sermon

**Song 799: All I once held dear**

Prayers of Intercession

The Peace

**Communion and Offertory Hymn: 620: O bread to pilgrims given**

Communion

**Hymn 204: Now the green blade riseth**

Benediction

## **Ezekiel 37: 1 - 14**

### **The Valley of Dry Bones**

**37** The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.'  
<sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them:



O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup>I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.'

<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'<sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely."<sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup>I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.'

## **Romans 8: 5 - 11**

<sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he

who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

## **John 11: 1 – 45: The Death of Lazarus**

**1** **1** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' <sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' <sup>5</sup>Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup>after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

<sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' <sup>11</sup>After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' <sup>12</sup>The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' <sup>13</sup>Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' <sup>16</sup>Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

## **Jesus the Resurrection and the Life**

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' <sup>24</sup>Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, 'I

am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'<sup>27</sup> She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

## **Jesus Weeps**

<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.'<sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.<sup>31</sup> The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.<sup>32</sup> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.<sup>34</sup> He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.'<sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep.<sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

## **Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life**

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.'<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me.<sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.'<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

## **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

## SERMON

This story from Ezekiel is a very strange one. Whoever heard of a valley of dry bones shaking and coming back to life?

I mean, if you were a prophet, and were faced with a valley of dry bones, wouldn't you feel a right eejit talking to them, let alone prophesying to them? And prophesying to the wind? Well, it was more like praying to the wind really. But even so.

And how would you have felt, if it was you, had those bones started shaking and rattling and clicking together and being covered with sinews, flesh and skin?

It all sounds very strange.

It's not an actual event that happened, but a vision that Ezekiel had. So let's look at what it all symbolises.

The bones, we are told, symbolise the house of Israel. They had been in exile for 10 years by this time, and were losing hope. In fact it had been extinguished. This was not the first of Ezekiel's prophecies, and some of the things he had said before had increased their despondency.

But now God is saying something new, something fresh. Something to give the people the will to carry on, confidence and hope.

Why didn't God act sooner?

Well, I don't believe that God plays games with God's people. That wouldn't be in keeping with what I believe of God. But I do believe, because we are told in the Bible, that God's ways are not always the same as our ways, and God's timing isn't always the same as our timing.

Sometimes, however hard we pray for something to happen, for a door to open, God makes us wait. Sometimes it's because the time is not right, sometimes we have a lesson to learn first, sometimes we must just be patient, and that can be jolly hard. 10 years might not sound a long time, when you think of the history of the people of Israel, but if it was you, and your life and family, it would seem a long time. It is the difference between childhood and adolescence, between adolescence and adulthood, between middle age and retirement.

But 10 years to God is a blink. We could think of God operating in a different sort of time to us. As the psalm and hymn says, 'A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone.'

Sometimes we think we know best what is right for us here and now, but God really knows what is best.

It's easy, when we're enjoying early beautiful warm weather, to get on with putting our bedding plants out, and livening up our gardens, but it's now it's only March, and it's too early, really. We can still have frosts.

It's very easy, during times when not much seems to be happening to become despondent, or to become impatient, to try to rush things.

But anyone who has put a seed in a pot will know that it seems an absolute age before that first tiny green shoot appears that tells you that the waiting time was also a developing time, a growing time and that there was plenty going on below the surface of the soil or compost, and that disturbing it would have meant killing the tiny, delicate new plant.

But that doesn't mean to say that the seed doesn't need looking after. It needs to be placed in the right conditions, and kept moist – if it's completely ignored, it could still die.

So, Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones, and they rattled and attached themselves together, and were covered by sinew and flesh and skin, but they were still dead; there was no breathe or life in them.

So Ezekiel prophesied to the breath, or wind, or spirit. The Hebrew word, Ruach, is one of those words that can't be adequately translated into one English word. In effect, Ezekiel was praying to the wind, the breath of God to sweep into these bones and breath life into them, and with life, a hope and a promise for the future.

The bones had to be made ready to receive the breath of God. Had to be built up into more than just bones that had fallen apart all over the place; had to be made into beings that were able to receive the breath of God and live.

Now, I guess most of us, at some time, feel like the Israelites did; despondent, dull, lifeless, even. Times when we need a boost – something to lift us out of our torpor.

Well, the good news is that God knows how we feel, and the better news is that God uses those barren times until God is ready to act, ready to breath into us that life that will take us into action. When this happens, we must learn patience.

In the Gospel reading, Martha had to wait. She had sent word to Jesus, and, as a close family friend, she might well have expected him to drop everything and come running. That, I think, is what any of us would expect from a friend. But that didn't happen. As we heard, Jesus deliberately stayed away for 2 days, and Lazarus died and was buried.

It's too easy to say that Martha should have had more faith. It's too easy to say the Jesus knew what he was about. There was more going on for it all to be that simple.

Nevertheless, when Jesus did arrive, and faced what must have been a whole variety of emotions and responses from Martha – from disappointment in him as a friend, to anger and frustration – he was able to turn Martha’s tears of sorrow into tears of joy and happiness as he raised Lazarus back to life. And many believed in him because of what they had seen.

Sometimes things don’t happen as we want them to, or as we think they should, or when we think they should happen.

God’s ways aren’t our ways, and God’s timing isn’t ours.

What we can be sure of is that God knows us, and understands us, and shares our joys and sorrows. He also understands our frustrations, confusions and anger, and can cope with that.

Ezekiel saw a valley filled with dry bones that symbolised the people of Israel at that time.

We are not all in the same situation at the same time in the way that those bones were. At any one time there are those who are lying lifeless, dull and in need of God’s breath bringing them to life, while others are fizzing and buzzing with life. That in itself can be demoralizing.

When we feel like those dry bones, or like Martha, we have to be patient, and remember that God is at work, hidden, below the surface, and spring will come.

God calls us to live our lives for him during the good times when it’s all happening, and during the dryer times, when we might be going through the motions. Hang on in there, and hold on to what you know to be true.

## **HYMNS AND SONGS**

**God is love, his the care,  
tending each, everywhers,  
God is love – all is there!  
Jesus came to show him,  
Ttat we all might know him:**

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*

*Sing aloud, loud, loud!*

*God is good!*

*God is truth!*

*God is beauty! Praise him!*

None can see God above;  
neighbours here we can love;  
thus may we Godward move,  
finding him in others,  
sisters all, and brothers.

Jesus came, lived and died  
for our sake, crucified,  
rose again, glorified,  
he was born to save us  
by the truth he gave us:

To our Lord praise we sing –  
light and life, friend and king,  
coming down love to bring,  
pattern for our duty,  
Showing God in beauty:

*Pearcy Dearmer (1867 – 1936)*

**These are the days of Elijah,**  
declaring the word of the Lord:  
And these are the days of your servant Moses,  
righteousness being restored.  
And though these are days of great trial,  
of famine and darkness and sword,  
still we are a voice in the desert crying,  
'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'

*Behold he comes riding on the clouds,  
shining like the sun at the trumpet call;  
lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,  
out of Zion's hill salvation comes.*

These are the days of Ezekiel,  
the dry bones becoming as flesh;  
and these are the days of your servant David,  
rebuilding the temple of praise.  
These are the days of the harvest,  
The fields are as white as the world,  
And we are the labourers in the vineyard,  
declaring the word of the Lord.

**All I once held dear, built my life upon,**  
All this world reveres, and wars to own,  
All I once thought gain I have counted loss;  
Spent and worthless now, compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,  
There is no greater thing.  
You're my all, you're the best,  
you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire is to know you more,  
To be found in you and known as yours,  
To possess by faith what I could not earn,  
All-surpassing gift of righteousness.

Oh, to know the power of your risen life,  
And to know you in your sufferings.  
To become like you in your death, my Lord,  
So with you to live and never die.

*Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)*

**O Bread to pilgrims given,**  
O food that angels eat,  
O manna sent from heaven,  
For heav'n born natures meet:  
Give us, for thee long pining,  
To eat till richly filled;  
Till, earth's delights resigning,  
Our every wish is stilled.

O water, life-bestowing,  
Forth from the Saviour's heart  
A fountain purely flowing,  
A fount of love thou art;  
O let us, freely tasting,  
Our burning thirst assuage;  
Thy sweetness, never wasting,  
Avails from age to age.

Jesus, this feast receiving,  
We thee unseen adore;  
Thy faithful word believing,



We take, and doubt no more;  
Give us, thou true and loving,  
On earth to live in thee;  
Then, death the veil removing,  
Thy glorious face to see;

*Maintzisch Gesangbuch (1661)  
Tr. Ray Palmer (1808 – 87)*

**Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain.**  
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain.  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been;  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

In the grave they laid him, Love whom men had slain,  
Thinking that He never would wake again;  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
He that for three days in the grave had lain.  
Quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen;  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain.  
Then Your touch can bring us back to life again.  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

J. M. C. Crum (1872 – 1958)

## Reading Texts with 'Sun' glasses

Let there be lights in the sky (Genesis 1:14-19) from *Saying Yes to Life*

On the first day of the creation, God made the light, and here on the fourth day God made two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. In this chapter Ruth Valerio invites us to gaze to the sun, moon and stars made by God, considering the rhythm of the seasons and festivals that were created to mark, as well as the problem of unnatural light – 'light pollution.' She also reflects about the eschatology, which is about the 'end times' as these cosmic objects created on Day Four are often brought into discussion. I have therefore called this Lenten meditation to read our Scriptures with 'sun' glasses on, for we are invited to read our texts from the perspective of sun. And there can't be any better time than to speak of sunglasses with a week full of sun shine here in UK. So, put on your 'sun' glasses and get ready for our meditation.

**Let there be lights:** In this section, Ruth explains the distinction between day one and day four of the creation, as God created light on both the instances. Let me put those distinctions on a table for our understanding.

Day One	Day Four
God created light	God creates the celestial objects to populate the sky and the 'spaces' of day and night
God separated the light from the darkness	God declares both the night and the day to be good

The Creator God spoke everything into existence by God's word and names everything. But on this day four, the author of Genesis 1 does not give the names of the sun and moon, but calls them 'greater light' and 'lesser light.' The reason for not calling them as the sun and the moon is because in the ancient near Eastern context, the sun and the moon are names associated with deities, so according to Ruth, God. Has not created some demi-gods but elements that serve a particular function. I also liked when Ruth writes that the verse 'he also made the stars' was a throw-away line, giving little importance to them as a way to counteract to the narrative around divine nature of stars, or with the gods associated with stars. Ruth finally concludes this section by mentioning that the creation comes from the word of God – from the eternal Son through the brooding action of the Spirit – but the creation is not God, and therefore is not to be worshipped. However, the creation is strongly connected to God, for God created the creation in God's space, in Godself.

### Are we prepared for this:

Ruth calls the church today to celebrate God's connectedness with the creation by inviting us as a church to go out into a nearby park or into your churchyard and hold a service there, closer to the natural world. You could collect leaves and reflect on Psalm 1. You could do a litter pick as a church taking time together to pray for the people whose rubbish you have collected asking God to speak to you about their problems and struggles. Or you as a church could spend time looking at the sky and reflecting on Psalm 19: 'The heavens declare the glory of the Lord.' Ask yourself what strikes you about the sky today and look out for an image in the clouds that reminds you of something about God. Perhaps it's time for us as a church to go out and worship along with the creation in every sense and with all senses.

With regards to apocalyptic language in the Bible, passages that speak about moon turning blood red and the stars falling from the sky, Ruth argues that they shouldn't be taken literally, nor are they always about the end times. She cautions that we must be wary of lifting passages out of the Scriptures and claiming they tell us exactly what is going to happen at some indeterminate time. Ruth spends time explaining particularly three passages, Isaiah 65:17-25, 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 21 and 22, and situates them in their particular contexts. She concludes that we are called to live in hope and participate with God in transforming and renewing our world in which we live.

Ruth concludes with a wonderful vision that motivates our hopeful action today and invites us to reflect on the words of Chris Wright when he says,

“Ecological action now is both a creational responsibility from the Bible’s beginning, and also an eschatological sign of the Bible’s *ending* – and new beginning. Christian ecological action points towards and anticipates the restoration of our proper status and function in creation. It is to behave as we were originally created to, and as we shall one day be fully redeemed for.”

Let me conclude with these words from Malachi 4:2 – But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. May the “Sun of Righteousness” Jesus Christ be with us all to celebrate God’s light into our world and may the Holy Spirit grant us strength to join her in transforming and renewing our world. May God the creator, sustain each of us with a vision of new heaven and new earth, towards which we are called to work for.

Stay safe and stay home during these days of Coronavirus. May the healing of God be upon our world today.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,  
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29<sup>th</sup> March 2020

4<sup>th</sup> Lenten Bible Study Material based on the book *Saying Yes to Life* by Ruth Valeria.

# Week 6

30 March-5 April

Faith's land is now green and productive.



## Blessing

I came that they may have life; and have it abundantly.

John 10:10

### Monday 30 March

Before the dam was built Faith struggled to find water – often digging deep in the riverbed as the rivers dried up. Thanks to the dam, Faith now grows lush, green crops.

Now there is water in Faith's community, there is life.

**Pray** Thank God for Faith's hard work and determination, which transformed this resource into a future for her family.

### Tuesday 31 March

Faith's recent tomato crop was so bounteous that she paid her children's school fees, bought two cows – one for milking and the other for ploughing – and purchased a plot of land.

**Act** Eating less meat is a great way to reduce your impact on the environment. Cook one more plant-based meal this week. Share your creations with us on social media using **#CountYourBlessings2020** **#ChristianAid** and tag five friends to challenge them to do the same.

### Friday 3 April

With water Faith can farm. With water she can extend her home for her children and build an outside toilet. With water she can maintain a garden full of vegetables and trees. Faith is fighting for a green and hopeful future.

When you are doing the washing up today, reflect on the blessings water brings.

**Give** 20p for every minute you spend in the shower today or £1 for a bath.

### Wednesday 1 April

Because Faith's community now has access to clean water, there has been a reduction in water-borne diseases. Faith used the water to make bricks to extend her house so the children have a room to sleep in, and she has installed a toilet. There was plenty left over for her livestock to drink.

**Give** 50p for every room in your house.



### Thursday 2 April

'I'm happy. I don't have the words to express how I feel. I'll do my best to educate my children so they will be what they want to be when they grow up.'

**Act** Watch [youtu.be/6Nq6OjbMsII](https://youtu.be/6Nq6OjbMsII)

Write to your local politician about the New Deal for Climate Justice campaign. Check out the MP briefing for the campaign at

[caid.org.uk/climate-justice-MP-briefing](https://caid.org.uk/climate-justice-MP-briefing)

### Saturday and Palm Sunday 4-5 April Pray

**A prayer for the climate:**

God of life, God of justice.  
You are the enabler, the all in all.  
Enable mankind and the powers-that-be  
for a change of heart  
on the issue of climate change;  
for compassion for the poor  
and the vulnerable  
who are threatened by the  
change in climate.  
So that at the end, God,  
humanity will be edified  
And you God, glorified.  
Amen.



Your total for  
Week 6





The church is working towards to becoming an Eco Church. This involves trying to be as eco friendly as we can, not just the products we use but in worship as well.

Whilst we are self isolating we can still do our bit to save the planet.

Helen Race has kindly offered to act as a collector for plastic milk bottle tops, So please save them and when we reopen I will take them off your hands and pass them on to her.

Thank you Helen.

I am also happy to take off your hands empty bread bags, crisp packets, tooth brushes and toothpaste tubes. I can then take these to Tithe Barn School who are collecting them.

Just remember whilst we are moving around, planet Earth is having a breather from all the pollution that is normally generated. This has resulted in fish and dolphins returning the canals in Venice.

## Maintaining income from personal giving

For each and all of us, our personal giving to our local church is an expression of our discipleship and this income is vital to the church locally and across our three nations, and to all the work that we do together in Christ's name.

During the closure of the church you can still contribute to the running of the church.

Keep your envelopes on one side and they can all be handed in when we next join.

Set up a standing order to the church through personal banking or via a mandate form . Contact the office and Sharon can e-mail one or send you one in the post.

Write a cheque and post it to : Sharon Heginbotham

8 Chinley close

Heaton Moor

SK4 4ER

Thank you for your continued support

Jim Lowe