



Heaton Moor United Church

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



Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 10th August Circuit Service 3.00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkvc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Wednesday 12th August Coffee and Prayer 11.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWTBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668 Password: 794265

Thursday 13th August Circuit Service 3.00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkvc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Joining by telephone

Step 1)

Dial any of the following numbers. If one doesn't work try another and another until you are able to connect:

0330 088 5830

0131 460 1196

0203 481 5237

0203 481 5240

0208 080 6591

0208 080 6592

Step 2)

Follow the prompts you hear on the phone. You may be prompted to enter 3 different things:

1 -- Meeting ID followed by hash #

2 -- Password followed by hash #

3 -- Participants ID -- You will not have one of these, don't worry, all you need to do is enter "Hash" #

You should then be entered into the service.

Private Prayer and Reflection Opening Times

Monday 10.00am to 12.00pm

Thursday 6.00pm to 8.00pm

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forever more.

At our last Leadership team meeting we have agreed to re-open our church building for public worship from 13th of September, subject to the lockdown restrictions. We are working on the logistics to get things ready towards that date. There are details about the re-opening in the notices. Thanks to the Property group and the Leadership team for all their efforts in this regard.

The online circuit zoom services continues even when we re-open for public worship. Herewith I am sending you the reflection for this Sunday along with the worship resources for your kind perusal.

I will be on my annual leave and will return to work on the 18th of August. During this time if there are any pastoral emergencies kindly contact Rev. Lindsay Kemp (till 16th of Aug) or Linda, and for any other administrative issues you can contact Sharon at our office.

Kindly pray for Lebanon and for the all the victims of the blast during the week, and pray for peace in this region.

May God's love and peace stay with you all grant you the needed strength during this time.

Thanking you,

Regards,

Raj

6th August 2020



Congratulations to
Carole and Alan Shore
On your 60th Wedding
Anniversary this
week



From all at
Heaton Moor
United
Church



This week the Leadership Team met to discuss re-opening for Worship.

They agreed to aim for 13th September @ 10.45 for Worship to take place.

Things we can't do:

No Singing



No Hymn Books/Notice Sheets



No tea/coffee



Things we can do:

Follow Social Distancing



Wear a face covering



Pray



Due to this, the amount of people we can seat is limited.

Worship Together (30 mins Max)



Can you please let me know if you are planning on attending so we can get an idea of figures.

Thank you
Sharon

Are we as a church willing to walk with Jesus on waters today?

Reflecting on Matthew 14:22-33

Amidst a re-lockdown measures in place due to the spike in the transmission of virus in our borough here, and as I read through the risk assessment forms of the churches in their preparations for the reopening of the church buildings for worship, I have been thinking are there any theological risk assessments that need to be addressed by us as churches. I reckon how important are the risk assessments for us to follow to keep everyone safe as they return to the church buildings. However, in our planning, all what we have been trying to do is working on how to come back to the church buildings. But personally, I think, a rather more important serious question for us to introspect is how are we preparing ourselves to come back to 'church?' What has the learning for us to be a church over the last 20 weeks in lockdown? Have we captured a new vision for us as a church or are we just eager to get back to what we have always been and done as a church? Where is God leading us as a church at a time like this?

For me, church is where Jesus is; in other words, church as a plural word for disciples is a place where Jesus is. This week's reading from Matt 14:22-33, we have Jesus walking on the waters, and this text offers an invitation for us as church to be very different from the usual routine, to walk along with Jesus on the waters of modernity today.

After feeding more than five thousand people in the wilderness, Jesus stayed back dismissing everyone including his disciples to retreat and spend time in prayer. "When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them." (Matt 14:23-24) Since the boat wasn't there for him to travel Jesus had to do something unusual and odd to reach out to his disciples, which was walking on the waters. To put it other way, in order to reach out to his disciples, his friends, Jesus (ad)ventures to leave no stone unturned and can go to any extent, even to the point of walking on the water. For Jesus taking risks was nothing new, and at this point having spent time in prayer with God in solitude, Jesus knew that there is nothing that can separate him to love his disciples, even a lake and so he walks on it to show his love for them by reaching out to them. In other words, for Jesus there is nothing that can separate him from the love of God and his love for people, neither death nor life, neither peril nor pandemic, nor height, nor depth, nor length, nor lake, nor day, nor night, nor things present, nor things to come, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate him from love. At this instance, Jesus demonstrated that love for his disciples by reaching them on foot on waters. For Jesus all that mattered was reaching his disciples, for which he employs unusual and odd ways, of walking on water.

When Jesus does something unusual and odd, the first reaction that comes from the people was to mistake him to be a 'ghost.' It was well past midnight, early morning ish, when the fishermen turned disciples, were travelling in the boat to the other side of the shore, ahead of Jesus, the waves started roaring on the sea that they saw a 'ghost' walking on the sea. Terrified by seeing 'the ghost' the disciples cried out in fear. This case of fear in the life of disciples happened because, firstly, it was unusual and impossible to see someone walking on the sea, when they saw such a thing at that odd hour, they were in fear. Secondly, they mistook Jesus for a ghost or a phantom. They did not anticipate that the divine in Jesus can

appear at the oddest periods of time and in the most unusual ways such as walking on water. They neither had a slightest clue to know that Jesus did this to express his love for them. The disciples were scared, fear overtook them, and they were terrified. Learning that his colleagues were petrified, Jesus comforted them by saying that "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid." Our context is no different today. Fear has taken over us for we are not able to recognise Jesus who has been coming to us at odd hours, and in odd and unusual ways.

On recognising Jesus words of hope, Peter takes courage in making a plea to Jesus to command him to walk like Jesus on the rough sea. Peter has personally seen and witnessed the strength in the command of Jesus on other occasions, be it in catching two boats of fish, or in stilling the storm or in casting away the demons, and therefore he makes a plea to Jesus to command him to walk on the rough sea. Jesus does not ignore the pleas made by his disciples, and since Peter has acknowledged the power of his command, he invites him to get out of the boat, to come and walk like him on the rough sea. Jesus appreciates when courage transforms people to adventure, and Peter started to walk on water towards Jesus. A rare sight for a human to walk on rough sea, Peter did it and walked for a while, for his plea was answered and became a reality.

This rare experience of walking on water for Peter did not long last, for as long as he kept his gaze on Jesus, he walked on rough seas as easy as he walked on the streets. When he let go his gaze on Jesus and noticed the strong winds of that rough sea, fear overcame him once again, and he began to sink in the waters. Letting go his focus on Jesus cost him dear. A diversion and deviation from the gaze on Jesus caused him to lose his balance on the waters, and was overtaken by fear and anxiety.

In those sinking moments, Peter cried out "Lord save me!" This shout of Peter on the one hand was an act of his confession for losing his focus on Jesus, and on the other hand it was an act of intercession, crying for help to save him from sinking. At that shout for salvation, the Grace of God came near to Peter, and Jesus reached out his hand, caught him and brought him out from sinking by granting him a new life experience. Imagine if Jesus did not come in rescue of Peter, he would have drowned. But he was found by the Grace of God, that he was saved to life and was caught by Jesus to live for him and for God's Kingdom. In saving Peter, Jesus exposed his little faith, his doubt and healed them with greater faith and trust. The rest of the disciples on witnessing this whole episode recognised the 'Son of God' in Jesus and became a worshipping community.

On seeking relevance of this text for us as churches today, the call is in what ways are we trying to reach out to our people around us? We as churches have been very comfortable in doing what we have always done, and any slight change can cause a huge ruckus in our churches. In order to reach out to his disciples Jesus not only went an extra mile, but also went to walk on the waters with an extra smile. When Jesus did something unusual and odd in reaching out, the disciples did not recognise it was Jesus and called him a 'ghost.' There is no one size fit for all churches today in terms of translating what does that mean for us as churches to walk on the waters with Jesus. If we have a love for our community, we will like Jesus walk on waters to reach them, however impossible it might be, with Jesus we are called to do that. In that process there is every reason for the church to be misunderstood, like the

disciples calling Jesus 'ghost', but it is worth taking a risk with Jesus and be prepared to be branded as a church in doing things differently.

This text is an invitation to capture a new vision for us as churches, which might look like walking on the waters. But we can like Peter start walking on waters when we get out of our comfy boats. Only on getting out of our boat and boxes can we as churches can walk with Jesus on the waters. Peter's walk on the rough sea is an invitation to us, the disciples of Christ in this 21st century, to recognise the strength in the command of Jesus, to be courageous in faith and to transform it to an adventurous faith of walking along with Jesus on rough seas of our times. My vision for a church today is that we will always remain in service of our community, addressing the needs and fears of people around us. Church is not about what happens at 11 O'clock on a Sunday but it is more about walking with Jesus on unusual grounds in love of our creation around us, and in helping people to overcome their fears and anxieties.

This text assures us that God's grace helps us from sinking in the waters, for it is Jesus who is calling us to walk with him on the waters, and if we begin to sink, Jesus extends his hand to us. As church, let us be adventurous to walk with Jesus, driving all fears of sinking, for God's grace has not given up on the church today. Church as offering Christian presence in our communities is still relevant and this current situation is an opportunity to sit together and envision a new vision for us as churches. In the waters of uncertainty, in the waters of insecurity, in the waters of anxiety, Jesus is inviting us to step out of our boats and walk with him, for he creates a worshipping community at the end. Let me remind you, it is not the worshipping community that is walking on the waters, but it is when a community recognises Jesus walking on the waters, and one of them joining with Jesus in that walk, they turn out to be a worshipping community. God is leading us a church to transform from being a frightened community to be a worshipping community, willing to do the unusual and odd things for God and with God.

May God grant us God's grace so that we as a church can walk along with Jesus on the unusual and unexpected sites like on waters so that we become relevant, meaningful and worshipping community.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta
6th August 2020



Sunday 9 August 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

I come this day to worship You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Open my heart, to receive Your love, my soul to receive Your Spirit and my mind to know to Your truth. For Your glory. Amen.

Hymn: StF 51 Great is thy faithfulness

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTKlqmdfHsk>

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail
not;

as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy
faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I
see;

all I have needed thy hand hath
provided.

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto
me.

Summer and winter, and springtime and
harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to
guide;

strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow,

blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866-1960)

Let us pray together

God of grace, I praise You. I praise You for
who You are: creator, faithful, rescuer, and
holy. I praise that You even though I cannot
be with others to worship You, I can feel that
You are here in my heart.

I praise You, for all the blessings You have
given me. For family, for friends, for a
relationship with You. Help me not to take
You for granted.

God of grace, as I worship You this morning,
help me to be transformed by Your love, and
in the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 14:22-33

Time to Reflect

I am sure we can all relate to Peter.

Throughout the gospels we get a picture of
someone who does not always think before
he speaks, if we take Peter's confession in
Matthew 16:13-20 and think – did he rush his
confession of faith or not? Only a few verses
later Jesus rebukes him.

And it is the same in this reading. Peter is
singled out while the others stay in the boat.

Jesus says to his disciples 'Take heart, it is I;
do not be afraid' when he walks on the water
to the disciples in the boat. Should this have
been enough for Peter as it was for the
others? No, Peter being Peter, wants to try
and walk on the water.

Perhaps, the message today, for us, is one of
trust as we journey as disciples through these
difficult times? Jesus says to us, as he said to
Peter, "Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid".

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Almighty God, I come now to pray for Your world. Your world which is full of brokenness, injustice, and inequality. I bring before You the rulers of the world, local or national, and pray that they would remember that all power comes from You.

Almighty God, I pray for your church. I pray that during these times we would unite in worship and service. I pray for my local church, and its ministers/pastors, that they would be strengthened by Your Spirit.

Almighty God, I pray for those known to me and name them before You. And, I pray for myself, that I would be transformed by Your Spirit, and live in the love which You have given me through Jesus.

In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to Jesus, Draw Me Ever Nearer by Keith & Kristyn Getty

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLr5Y_vW3wA

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

As this time of worship ends,
and I enter into the storms of life,
and the uncertainties which may come,
may I take heart that Jesus is present,
and ever live for His holy name.
And may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with me, and those whom I cherish in my
heart, now and always.
Amen.

Original Materials by Matthew Ramsden, Local Preacher from
Bolton Methodist Circuit

Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

Matthew 14:22-33 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Jesus Walks on the Water

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land,^[a] for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind,^[b] he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God".

Copied from Bible Gateway and last accessed on 22 June 2020.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+14%3A22-33&version=NRSV>