

## Virtual Worship: Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2020



**Introductory music: Lord, you have searched and known my ways**

### **Opening words & prayer**

Welcome to the service this morning. I am Karen Smith, and I shall be leading the service today. Let's prepare ourselves to worship together, wherever you may be, with a few moments of silence.

Lord calm our thoughts as we come into your presence to worship you. Open our hearts to welcome you in and to receive the blessing of Jesus' love, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Call to worship**

We've come to worship God,  
who loved us before we were yet born,  
who knows us even better than we know ourselves,  
whose presence never leaves us,  
and whose love for us never ceases.

**This is our God.**

**Let's worship together!**

## **Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Lord's Prayer**

Glorious God, you are utterly beyond us in every way, yet you involve yourself with our very human existence and commitments, and we give thanks and praise to you for your unending love for each one of us. You have nurtured and blessed each of us as we grew in the womb of your love and compassion over many years; and we give thanks for the trust in you that has grown in us as we have developed and reached maturity.

We praise you for the way you have placed your hand on us in blessing, and that you have communicated to us in wordless ways, the depths of your love for us, so that we can understand and know that we are your beloved child.

We give thanks and praise to you that you trust us enough to share some of your thoughts with our limited minds and hearts; and that deep within us, there is that spark of your holy life to enrich and bless us; so that we always have an inner yearning to be near you and to be blessed by you.

Bearer of all creation, in your power, majesty and infinite love, you have ordained that your eternal presence is with each of us at all times, so that in the morning, you are there with us; and during the evening and night you are still with us. Trustworthy God, you honour us always with your presence. **Amen.**

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Merciful God, you plant each of us like seeds in the same field and together we are nourished and nurtured by the sun. We sway in the wind and are refreshed by the rain. We are blessed by the knowledge that you want us to grow towards what you call us to be.

When we deprive others of that same opportunity, **forgive us.**

When we want to uproot those whom we believe do not belong in our part of the field, **forgive us.**

When we label others as good or bad rather than accept them for who they are, **forgive us.**

When we are reluctant to acknowledge that we ourselves are a mixture of weeds and wheat, **forgive us.**

When we are afraid to look into the fields of our own lives to see what is growing there, **forgive us.**

O God, you know us inside and out, through and through.

**You search us out and lay your hand upon us.**

You know what we are going to say even before we speak.

**So we pray that you will help us to reach out to the uprooted and rejected,**

**the lonely and the outcast, and to develop and grow the good in ourselves, in others and in the world.**

**This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen**

Moira Laidlaw's [Liturgies Online](#) website.

God in Community, Holy in One, hear us as we pray as you have taught us, saying,

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those that 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

## Readings:

**Psalm 139: 1 -12, 23 & 24** read by Kathy Le Fanu

**1** You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. **2** You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. **3** You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. **4** Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. **5** You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. **6** Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

**7** Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? **8** If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. **9** If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, **10** even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. **11** If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around

me,” **12** even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

**23** Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. **24** See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

**Matthew 13: 24 -30, 36 -43** read by Hugh Le Fanu

**24** Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. **25** But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. **26** When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

**27** “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ **28** “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ **29** “‘No,’ he answered,



‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

**36** Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” **37** He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. **40** “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. **42** They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like

the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

**Hymn: Lord of all hopefulness** *Tune: Slane*

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
whose trust, ever child – like, no cares could destroy,  
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.  
Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,  
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,  
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

### **Reflection: Growing together**

There's been much talk in the media about values reignited during the lockdown months and whether these will remain as part of our way of life as we emerge, blinking, into the outside world as it is today. I feel that if we have been reminded of anything in recent months, it is that we are social animals, needing contact with all those we love and those we know less well. I have been, & done these all myself: phoned, texted, What's App'd, Face Timed, Messaged and Zoom called with great vigour and pleasure throughout. I hope that church members know we care about one

another & perhaps even know one another better than perhaps we did before the pandemic. Good seeds have been sown.

A sense of belonging has been so important; looking out for one another. These recorded services have been part of that too because we want to continue to be a place of welcome, where all belong, to nurture our spiritual needs and our church community, which reaches further than we ever imagined as we are joined by people who we might not have otherwise reached. We have dreamed boldly and taken once unimagined steps. Hopefully, we see this as another good seed sown.

The Psalmist reminds us we humans have our frailties as well as our strengths. He reminds us powerfully that all individuals and communities will reflect the different aspects of human nature. They can be good or bad. They have ups and downs. We don't always 'behave' ourselves or get along!

*<sup>1</sup> You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.<sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.*

I believe this is telling us God knows what people are really like. He knows how we feel, our individual and communal quirks and ways, that we are not perfect, that some things reflect bad seeds – he knows what we are really like and still loves us. I am reminded of that famous line from *Bridget Jones's Diary* ‘ I like you, very much. Just as you are.’

And that amazing knowledge leads me to think we can grow personally and as church communities knowing we can be more than the person or community we might think is possible, because God knows us, *and his hand is upon us*. We are now much more because our communities of faith have been enhanced by the

combined effect of sharing ideas, resources and abilities throughout recent months. Good seeds.

According to Jesus in the parable we heard this morning we are told there are good seeds and bad sown in God's field. It may be hard to tell which is which and over time; they rub along together and it's difficult to separate them. But God knows- it is not ours to judge. But within this there is a challenge to us all to consider where we stand with God. How are we growing, will we continue to grow, with God to be good wheat? The Psalmist reminds us that God's hand is there to guide us.

The glorious writing of the Psalmist & Matthew go straight to the core of our growth as Christians and as communities of faith. No doubt, we might all like to think of ourselves as one of the good seeds, growing strongly still as the good wheat. But what if we have moments when we are unwilling for God to go with us in every step we take? Try it he says - He constantly guides and holds fast even if it's not obvious to us.

Such a love as he gives demands from us deep loyalty & to allow ourselves to grow together with God, to think deeply about how God is forming us spiritually & what God wants us to become. That challenges us, both individually and as church communities, to dare to dream boldly, to dare to say as the Psalmist did so long ago *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* Hold fast!

## Prayers of Intercession

Our minds are so often full of words, and what is worse, our hearts are often clogged up with thoughts & ideas as well, which leaves little room for meeting with God in simplicity and stillness. So today we are going to have some space to pray ourselves. Let us pray.

Let's take a little time to notice how many good things surround us, how much there is we take for granted, and how much our lives have been blessed this last week with good people and enjoyable experiences.

*Silence*

We pray now for some of those people and places we hear about in the news, things we have read in the papers or seen on the TV or internet during the week. We hold them now within God's love.

*Silence*

We turn now to pray for the church & those who give their time to lead us. This particular time brings many opportunities and some problems. We ask for guidance and grace for their decision making.



## *Silence*

Between us all, we know so many people who are struggling today with illness, crises, big decisions and major changes in life. God cares for them, but let us show our own love and concern for them as we pray, naming people we know in quiet trust before God.

## *Silence*

Each of us has things on our mind, perhaps things we hesitate to mention to anyone else. But our heavenly Father understands us totally. Let us pray to him in the honesty of our own hearts.

## *Silence*

These, Lord, are the prayers of your people this morning. We ask you to take each one of these prayers and answer them in your way

and in your time. And in the meantime, give us expectant and trustful hearts. For Jesus's sake. **Amen**

### **Closing prayer and blessing:**

God be in my head, and in my understanding;  
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;  
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;  
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;  
God be at mine end, and at my departing...

*sung by Robert Mitchell*

God who sows and God who reaps,  
God who allows growth even in the hard places,  
God who waits patiently for the right time,

send us out now into the fields of your world to plant hope amidst the weeds and seeds of life.

And may we learn to scatter love wisely till you gather us in once more.

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