

Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 28th February 2021

Lent 2

Seeds of Hope: Hope is our Anchor



Led by Anna Crawford

Opening music: Will your anchor hold?

Welcome **Margaret Armes**

In this season of Lent we reflect on our journey of faith with Christ, remembering that life was brought forth from the ground in our creation, and that new life for one man was created when Jesus took mud from the ground and made a blind man see. As his eyes

were opened for the first time, so our eyes are opened to the need for hope and healing in our world.

We light this candle on *this second Sunday of Lent*, remembering God's promise for all of us, new life here on earth, and eternal life hereafter.

Prayer: As the days lengthen, dear God, may we remember that it is you who gives us new life on earth, that we might know your love and peace, and share your love with the world. In the name of Christ, with whom we journey towards the cross, we pray. Amen.

Call to worship Anna Crawford

Your promises are coming true – our waiting hope fulfilled.

Your light has burst upon the world – the new dawn that you willed.

Your coming gives us hope to live, and strength with you, to build.

Come Jesus and be with us now,

Come Jesus be with us now.

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Confession

Lord, we live in a world of change. Every day is filled with uncertainty.

We are surrounded by twists and turns of life and we often feel we have little control

over things that happen to us.

Lord, we come we come to stand in your eternal presence. We come to find ourselves, to find our way. To find hope.

We come to you in thanksgiving because in Christ you first came to us.

Gracious God, we thank you that you are always with us, in the bad times and the good, the difficult as well as the easy, the sad as well as the happy.

Lord of all Hopefulness

Hear our prayer.

We thank you that though we have sometimes been unsure of the way ahead, you have always been there to guide us; though we have felt discouraged, you have offered us fresh inspiration; though we have been in despair, you have given us hope.

Lord of all Hopefulness

Hear our prayer.

We thank you for the assurance this brings us that your steadfast love never ceases, that your mercies are new every morning, that great is your faithfulness.

Lord of all Hopefulness

Hear our prayer.

May that conviction give us confidence in the days ahead, so that whatever problems we face, whatever disappointment we experience, whatever sorrows may befall us, we will still find reason to look forward, reason to believe in the future, and reason to hope.

Lord of all Hopefulness

Hear our prayer.

In the name of Christ Amen

Let us say together the prayer that Jesus gave us,

Our Father, which art in Heaven led by Kathy Le Fanu

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.

Hymn: I know that my redeemer lives

I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever living Head.

He lives to bless me with His love,
He lives to plead for me above.
He lives my hungry soul to feed,
He lives to help in time of need.

He lives triumphant from the grave,
He lives eternally to save,
He lives all glorious in the sky,
He lives exalted there on high.

He lives to grant me rich supply,
He lives to guide me with His eye,
He lives to comfort me when faint,
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.

He lives to silence all my fears,
He lives to wipe away my tears
He lives to calm my troubled heart,
He lives all blessings to impart.

He lives, my kind, wise, heavenly Friend,
He lives and loves me to the end;
He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.

He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death:
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.

He lives, all glory to His Name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!

Reading: Psalm 147 v1-11 read by Chris Porter

He Heals the Broken-hearted

1 Praise the Lord!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.

2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

3 He heals the broken-hearted
and binds up their wounds.

4 He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.

5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.

6 The Lord lifts up the humble;
he casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!

8 He covers the heavens with clouds;
he prepares rain for the earth;

he makes grass grow on the hills.

⁹ He gives to the beasts their food,
and to the young ravens that cry.

¹⁰ The speed of a horse is nothing to him.
How puny in his sight is the strength of man.

¹¹ but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Reflection:

The last six psalms are all psalms of praise and the portion of Psalm 147 that was read today is one of praise for God's actions in history and for the way in which God sustains life. It really set me thinking. At the moment, the news about the rates of Covid infections and the figure of well over 100,000 related deaths makes for depressing reading, although they are falling, it's still depressing, but alongside the tragic news there is also the wonderful news of the rising number of people who are now being vaccinated in this country against this deadly disease. We've seen the pictures of the

increasing numbers of centres opening around the country I am sure a number of you have had the first dose if not the second. I am delighted to be one of the now nearly 17 million plus, I'm therefore really optimistic that we're heading in the right direction. Thanks be to God who is sustaining life through this means.

Nature is beginning to remind us of God in new life too. Last year I planted a small clump of snowdrops in a position I could see from both the sitting-room and bedroom. I've never been terribly successful with them in the past, but these have taken. They're a great source of joy (and pride) to me and have been from the moment I looked out and saw them up and flowering. I've daffodils breaking into bud as well, and the camelia is showing its large red saucers of beauty. Although much of the garden is still very much in "winter mode" there are all sorts of little signs that new life is poised to break through, and that Spring is on its way.

The days are beginning to lengthen as well. It's no longer pitch dark when the dog wants his first visit to the garden in the morning and I'm not drawing the curtains quite so soon in the evening. (Unless it's been a miserable day and I've just got to the point where I just want to shut it out!)

All this positivity gives us Hope, but what do we mean by that?

Hope is a small word, but to me invokes comfort, a word that can give you a hug, sorely missed in present times. Hope is about looking up, having a glass half full, looking optimistically to the future. Captain Sir Tom gave us the best example of this; he could so easily have sat back after 99 years, but he used those last months of his life to bring hope and inspiration to so many, always saying tomorrow will be a better day.

When discouraging and depressing news threatens to flood the nation, the church, and the soul, we need God's help to lift up our heads, hearts, and hands. Once fear is cast out, we then have to build positive Christian hope in its place, a beautiful virtue and life-transforming grace that yields multiple benefits:

1. Hope moves us forwards:
2. Hope energizes the present:
3. Hope lightens our darkness:
4. Hope increases faith: Faith fuels hope - but hope also fuels faith.
5. Hope is infectious:
6. Hope is healing:
7. Hope is practical:

8. Hope purifies:

9. Hope stabilizes in the storm: There are sixty-six drawings of anchors in the catacombs, the caves and tunnels that persecuted Christians hid in during the Roman persecutions. Hope was their anchor during those dark and stormy times.

10. Hope defends: Paul also depicts hope as a defensive helmet.

So, to come back to our Psalm today which is all about God being present and active in the world- abundant in power and lifting up the downtrodden. A lot of people have been under considerable strain for a long time now. A lot of people are physically and emotionally exhausted. A lot of people are also just plain bored. Many have lost hope in the future, with loss of jobs, income and respect for themselves. It's been a gruelling year since last February but the psalmist's joy and confidence is not misplaced. God is with us and has been throughout the pandemic. God was with us in the speed with which the Covid vaccine was discovered and God is with us in this part of our history, sustaining us and leading us out of the pandemic. God is with us in creation as signs of new life begin to appear around us. In his praise the psalmist gives us a message of hope and encouragement. I can't help thinking that he's giving us a lead for a positive mindset at this tense time. As I write this, we await the announcements of when and how current restrictions will be able to be eased, or even done away with- but I'm still in

an optimistic frame of mind. We are making strides in the right direction and so Psalm 147's mood of praise and affirmation seems hugely apt at the moment.

Let us Pray.

Merciful Lord, whose Son healed the sick and restored them to wholeness of life, look with compassion on the anguish of the world, and by your power, make whole all peoples and nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayers of Intercession

Living God, we pray for those people who have lost hope- in their dreams, in their circumstance, in their life itself.

Lord of all Hopefulness,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have lost hope of finding a partner or raising a family, the hope of going to college, university, or further studies, the hope of finding a home or any permanent roof over their heads, the hope of

securing employment or a use for their skills.

Lord of all Hopefulness,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have given up on life – those with terminal illness who have lost the will to keep on fighting; those whose spirit have been crushed so they can no longer bounce back; those who want to take their own lives because they have lost all hope; those so afflicted by starvation and disease that they cannot carry on.

Lord of all Hopefulness,

Hear our prayer

Living God, there is so much despair in our world, and for many there seems little reason for hope.

Reach out to all those whose belief in the future has been destroyed, and grant new dreams where the old have died, rekindle purpose where confidence has been undermined, support where there seems nothing else to hold on to., and hope that one day your kingdom will come, and your will be done.

Lord of all Hopefulness

Hear our prayer.

Let us take a moment in the stillness to bring our own personal and private prayers to our Lord.

Lord of all Hopefulness

Hear our prayer.

And for ourselves

“Sometimes the pain of life seems overwhelming, we try our best, but no change is achieved; we want to help, to bring comfort and blessing, yet life’s harsh problems will not be relieved.

Sometimes the pain of life comes close and bites us, hurting the ones we hold in our hearts; Sometimes the pain of life seems never ending; hurt gets recycled and pain follows pain. God, who surrendered yourself to release us by your love bring us life once again.

Yes, we have faith in you, but we keep doubting too; even our hope can come close to despair. God bring us healing, your goodness revealing; God of all faithfulness we know you are there.

And together

“Yes, we have faith in you, but we keep doubting too; even our hope can come close to despair. God bring us healing, your goodness revealing; God of all faithfulness we know you are there.”

(John Campbell – Songs to Shake us up. Adapted)

Lord of all Hopefulness hear our prayer in the name of Christ our saviour and lord.
Amen

Hymn: All my Hope on God is Founded

All my hope on God is founded;
He doth still my trust renew,
Me through change and chance He guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown, He alone
Calls my heart to be His own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray His trust;
What with care and toil He buildeth,
Tower and temple fall to dust.

But God's power, hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep His wisdom, passing thought:
Splendour, light and life attend him,
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore from His store
Newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth th'almighty Giver
Bounteous gifts on us bestow;
His desire our soul delighteth,
Pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand at His hand;
Joy doth wait on His command.

Still from man to God eternal
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gift of Christ, His Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
Ye who follow shall not fall.

Blessing

Loving God, lead us out into the world, renewed in vigour, in hope, in faith and in purpose.

Send us back to live and work for you, sharing your love and living your life. Amen

Closing music: All things bright and beautiful

Responses led by Kathy Le Fanu

Opening music from <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet-2010/S-WillYourAnchorHold-Kirkpatrick-SPiano-48-CAM.mp3>

Closing music: <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/S-AllThingsBright-ROak-Organ-48-CAM.mp>

Hymns: [I know that my Redeemer lives!, \(Duke Street\) - † Free Music Backing Files for Churches - Piano, Band, Pipe Organ † \(smallchurchmusic.com\)](#)

[All my hope on God is founded, \(Michael\) - † Free Music Backing Files for Churches - Piano, Band, Pipe Organ † \(smallchurchmusic.com\)](#)

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