

Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 14th February 2021



Led by Sydney F. Shore CBE

Opening music: Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Welcome & Gathering Prayer Margaret Armes

We enter this day with joy knowing you are with us every step of the way,
knowing there is a purpose to each breath that we take,
knowing there is a hope toward which we walk.

We enter this day with faith knowing you are the strength which we depend on,
knowing you are the love that is all embracing,
knowing it is your peace which calms our soul.

We enter this day with praise knowing that we worship with service as with voice,
hoping that our words might reveal your truth,
hoping that your grace might touch another heart. Amen

[Prayers for the morning \(faithandworship.com\)](http://faithandworship.com) John Birch (adapted)

Call to worship Sydney Shore

The Lord is king, let the people tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

The Lord is great in Zion: He is exalted over all the peoples,
Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is He!

Psalms 99: 1 - 3

Prayers of Praise

Loving God, all good, all true, all powerful, almighty.

Response: We worship you

Gracious God, all loving, all faithful, all compassionate.

Response: We thank you

Mighty God, always active, always leading, always calling, always knowing.

Response: We commit ourselves to you.

Saving God, always forgiving, always restoring, always teaching. always encouraging.

Response: We confess our faithlessness to you.

Sovereign God, all in all, now and always, we praise you, we worship you.

Response: We lift up our hearts before you.

Father God, we celebrate your goodness, we rejoice in your blessings, we marvel at your mercy, we thank you for your guidance.

Response: We offer our lives in response to you.

Living God, take this service, this day, this church, our lives.

Response: Use them for your purpose and your kingdom.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer led by Hugh Le Fanu

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
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**

Readings:

2 Kings 2: 1 – 12 read by Alan Tyler

2Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ²Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. ³The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent.” ⁴Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to

Jericho. ⁵The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?” And he answered, “Yes, I know; be silent.” ⁶Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. ⁷Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

⁹When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” ¹⁰He responded, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.” ¹¹As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Mark 9: 2 – 9 read by Margaret Tracey

²Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” ⁸Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hymn: O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made;

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

*Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

And when I think of God, His Son not sparing;
Sent Him to die -- I scarce can take it in;

That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

*Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And lead me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow with humble adoration,
And then proclaim, "My God, how great Thou art!"

*Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!*

Reflection:

Today is Transfiguration Sunday which is not one of the easiest incidents in Jesus' life to understand. It comes at a time when His life on earth is coming to an end and the awfulness of the cross is looming high in His thoughts. He needed to ensure that His disciples were ready to carry on His great work. So, one day He asked Peter, James and John to accompany Him up the mountain. It is interesting that so many important events in the Bible happened on mountains. Moses sees a burning bush and receives the law. Abraham is called to offer up his son on Mt. Moriah. The Temple is built on Mt. Zion. The sermon on the mount is preached on a mountain. Jesus is transfigured on the mountain. Jesus, God's son offers up his life on Mt. Calvary.

Sometimes you have to climb a mountain to have a mountain-top experience - to know in our hearts and in our minds and the very nerve endings of our hands and feet that God is doing something – right now – right here – before our eyes – and in our ears. Sometimes you have to climb a mountain so that we can see things in a different way, from a different perspective. Indeed sometimes we have to climb a mountain to bring things into focus. Have you ever driven in an area with poor radio reception and then started up a mountain road with that radio still on. Before going up, the station you want is fading out but when then you start up the mountain the signal starts clearer the higher you climb, the static fades, until when you reach the peak it all becomes crystal clear.

Some time you have to climb a mountain to have what we call a mountain-top experience.

Maybe this is what happened to the three disciples who were with Jesus, for the signal came loud and clear that day, that voice from the cloud. “This is my beloved son, Listen to Him” We all need the mountain top experience so that we can listen better, get a clearer vision of Christ and who we are called to be. And even then, even when you have struggled to the top of the mountain, you must hope that the conditions will be right, and that your heart will be right, and that you will get the experience you seek and desire.

But, of course, it does not have to be a high mountain or even a mountain at all, for me it is often in the midst of a worship service when some joyous hymn lifts me above the distractions and I get a glimpse of the One who I am worshipping and sometimes it is on a walk, seeing the leaves dripping with colour as if freshly painted. The mountain top experiences are not something that happen every day. However, we are called to live and work in the valleys, where the rest of our brothers and sisters are, those people who need us, and whom we need if they and we are to be whole and complete. But we all need every so often to have some encouragement, some strengthening, some experience of the Holy, some experience of the word of God, and of the other world, the other side of reality as it were, if we are to have a dynamic and confident faith. We are called to experience as well as hope. We are called to know as well as to have faith.

And there is nothing like the mountain tops to bring those things into focus. To give us knowledge as well as faith, experience as well as hope, sight as well as belief. There is a great contrast between two mountain - top experiences On the Transfiguration mountain top, Jesus is revealed in glory. On the hill of crucifixion Jesus is revealed in shame. Here his clothes are dazzling white, there they have been stripped off and gambled for by the soldiers. Here he is surrounded by Moses and Elijah, the symbolising of all of the law and the prophets, the history and heritage of the nation of Israel, there his is flanked by two criminals, representing the level to which Israel had sunk in its rebellion against God. Here a bright cloud overshadows the scene, there darkness comes over the whole land. Here Peter blurts out how wonderful it all is, there he is hiding in shame after denying that he even knows Jesus. Here the voice of God declares that this is His own son, there a pagan soldier declares in surprise, that this really is God's son.

The challenge comes not in the experience, but in the aftermath. From the mount of transfiguration the disciples journeyed to the hill of Calvary. From the voice of God at his baptism Jesus journeyed into the wilderness. Moments of transfiguration come not to give us a warm fuzzy feeling, but to prepare us to meet a difficult challenge. When you feel closest to God, do not become complacent, there is a challenge waiting round the corner. God reveals Himself to strengthen and prepare you. That journey from the

mount of transfiguration to the hill of Calvary offers us much to reflect on. Two hilltop experiences, one illuminates the other.

Whilst this event was of tremendous influence on the three disciples it was also in part a preparation for the cross that was to come. Jesus has become human for us and He had to build up His human courage to face the awfulness of man's cruelty before He could once more aspire to the heavenly heights. I am quite sure that Moses and Elijah encouraged Him greatly. But, of course, there was much more to come as quite suddenly out of the bright cloud which had enveloped them a loud voice was suddenly heard and this time it was God himself. This is my son, whom I love, with Him I am well pleased, listen to Him”

Life had changed forever for these three disciples, they now knew for certain with whom they were dealing, things would never be the same again. Jesus was the son of God, the giver of life, the saviour of men and women. They were deeply shocked when they heard the voice of God and Jesus had to comfort them and to raise them from the ground to which they had thrown themselves.

When they were able to look up again they found that they could see no one but “Jesus only”. If you want a good motto for your life this morning you could do no better than to take those two words “Jesus only”. They provide a good motto for all of us. Peter was never to forget it. He wrote about it later in his second letter “We were eyewitnesses” he writes of His majesty. For He received honour and glory from the Majestic Glory

saying, this is my son, whom I love, with Him I am well please". We ourselves heard the voice that came from heaven, when we were with Him on the sacred mountain".

Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone else about the things they had witnessed until the son of Man had been raised from the dead. But why wait until the resurrection to tell it and why should it be told at that time? Because it is part of the gospel story. It tells us who Jesus is. He is the perfect lamb of God. He had been tested for three years and at this time He is on the way to the cross to die for the sins of the world. Jesus was the only one who could die a substitutionary death for mankind, because He was sinless. In His perfect humanity, He was transfigured. He was then and is now the only hope for mankind.

Jesus only.

Amen

Poem by Malcolm Guitte

For that one moment, 'in and out of time',
On that one mountain where all moments meet,
The daily veil that covers the sublime
In darkling glass fell dazzled at his feet.

There were no angels full of eyes and wings
Just living glory full of truth and grace.
The Love that dances at the heart of things
Shone out upon us from a human face
And to that light the light in us leaped up,
We felt it quicken somewhere deep within,
A sudden blaze of long-extinguished hope
Trembled and tingled through the tender skin.
Nor can this blackened sky, this darkened scar
Eclipse that glimpse of how things really are.

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

Dear Father, we thank you for your great gift of love – the love which we are able to share with those around us, which gives us a sense of self – worth and belonging, which enriches our lives in so many ways. We thank you for your love which defied all expression, constant, total, inexhaustible, flowing out to us like a never – ending stream. We thank you for loving us before ever we loved you and for continuing to love us even when we fail to love you in return.

Lord you have opened your heart to us, help us to do the same to you.

Father we pray this morning for all those who are weighed by the stresses and strains of daily life especially in our present circumstances. We pray for those who long for peace of mind, who crave rest for their souls but cannot find it. We pray for those who are oppressed by worry, unable to throw off their anxieties, held captive by their secret fears. Lord give them peace we pray.

Now a prayer from Christian Aid:

Lord we make our prayers for the present pandemic
For the health workers tending the seriously ill
for the scientists working on vaccinations
for the researchers analysing data and identifying trends
for the media outlets working to communicate reality
for the supermarket workers, hygiene and sanitation providers
for the good news stories of recoveries and effective planning
for the singing from balconies by locked-down communities
for the recognition that isolation doesn't need to mean loneliness
for the notes through letterboxes offering help and support
for the internet and telephones and technology that connects
for the awakened appreciation of what is truly important
Thanks be to God.

For those who are unwell and concerned for loved ones
for those who were already very anxious
for those immune suppressed or compromised
for those vulnerable because of underlying conditions
for those in the 'most at risk to coronavirus' categories
for those watching their entire income stream dry up
for those who have no choice but to go out to work
for those who are afraid to be at home
for those who are more lonely than they've ever been
for those who are bereaved and grieving.
God be their healer, comfort and protection,
be their strength, shield and provision
be their security, safety and close companion

And raise up your Church
to be your well-washed hands and faithful feet
to be present to the pain
to respond with love in action
if even from a safe distance.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen

Hymn: To God be the Glory

To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the lifegate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!*

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!*

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!*

Blessing

Closing music: O wondrous type, O vision fair!

Responses led by Hugh Le Fanu

Opening music from <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/S-ImmortalInvisible-Ab-PipeLC-48-CAM.mp3>

Closing music: <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/S-OWondrousType-Wareham-PipeLC-48-CAM.mp3>

Hymn: by permission [STF 082 - O Lord, My God part of Singing The Faith; Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

[To God be the glory | Evangelical Movement of Wales \(emw.org.uk\)](#)

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Compiled by Karen Smith February 2021