

Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 7th February 2021

with Holy Communion

‘The Lord shall renew our strength’



Led by Karen Smith

Opening music: I am the bread, the bread of life

Welcome & Gathering Prayer

Good morning everyone, and welcome to today's worship with the churches of Fleet URC and Beacon Hill URC. We are so glad you have chosen to join us today as we worship the Lord together and have fellowship! We hope anyone who has not worshiped with us before will feel at home with us.

Pause

God of beginnings and endings
Help us to remain focussed on you.
God of hope and love
May we in silence hear your voice.

God of joy and peace
Open our hearts and minds
To encounter you in the
Great variety of human experience. Keith Brown

Call to worship

Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.

Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus beckons us to a way of risk,
letting go of our security.

Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus challenges us to listen
to the voices of those who have nothing to lose.

Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,
where despair is transformed by the promise of new life.

Let us walk his way with joy.

[WB Service of the Word.pdf \(urc.org.uk\)](http://urc.org.uk)

Reading: Psalm 147: 1 – 11, 20c read by Jennifer Radford

¹Praise the Lord! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.

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

³He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds.⁴He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

⁵Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.⁶The Lord lifts up the downtrodden; he casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre.⁸He covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills.

⁹He gives to the animals their food, and to the young ravens when they cry.¹⁰His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;¹¹but the Lord takes pleasure in

those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. Praise the Lord!

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

[Virtual Church Choir - Newcastle Cathedral](#)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty,
the King of creation;
O my soul, praise him, for he is
thy health and salvation:
Come ye who hear!
Brothers and sisters draw near.
Praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things
so wondrously reigneth:
shelters thee under his wings, yea,
so gently sustaineth.
Hast thou not seen –
all that is needful hath been
granted in what he ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper
thy work and defend thee.
Surely his goodness and mercy here
daily attend thee?
Ponder anew –
all the Almighty can do,
he who with love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is
in me adore him!
all that hath life and breath
come now with praises before him!

Let the Amen
sound from his people again:
gladly for aye we adore him.

Words: Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Translated: Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)

& Rupert Davies (1909-1994)

Tune: Lobe den Herren Praxis pietatis melica 1668

Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving

Loving God, we give you thanks and praise for all that you have done for us.

For your whole created universe bursting with life and infinite possibilities, a universe created and yet still being created.

For the beauty and fragility of our spinning planet, the blue oceans, swarming with life, and the green and verdant earth.

For our fellow human beings, people of many colours, of many languages, of many abilities, yet all your children.

We give you thanks for the life, death, and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. For the message which he brings, for the life in us which he renews, and the example he has given us to follow.

We give you thanks for the Holy Spirit, sweeping through all of life with boundless energy, at once as gentle as the breath of a child, and yet as fierce as a raging storm, lifting us up in your grace.

Hear us, Lord, as in our own hearts and minds we give you thanks for your presence in our lives....

Silence

For all these things we give you our joyous praise, through your Son, Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

O God, your heart is full of mercy. May we hear and trust your words to each of us: 'Your sins are forgiven.' May we forgive each other and forgive ourselves. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

So come to us, come to us, God in Community, Holy in One,
even as we pray together, saying,

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**

Reading: Isaiah 40: 21 -31

Isaiah 40:21-31 (NRSV) - engageworship (adapted by K.Smith)

| | |
|------------|---|
| Reader 1 | Have you not known? |
| Reader 2 | Have you not heard? |
| Reader 1 | Has it not been told you from the beginning? |
| Reader 2 | Have you not heard from the foundations of the earth? |
| ALL | It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, |
| Reader 1 | and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; |
| ALL | who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, |
| Reader 2 | and spreads them like a tent to live in, |
| ALL | who brings princes to naught; |
| Reader 2 | and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. |
| Reader 1 | Scarcely are they planted, |
| Reader 2 | scarcely sown, |
| Reader 1 | scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, |
| ALL | when he blows upon them, and they wither, |
| | And the tempest carries them off like stubble. |
| Reader 2 | to whom then will you compare me, |

| | |
|------------|--|
| Reader 1 | or who is my equal? says the Holy One. |
| Reader 2 | Lift up your eyes on high and see: |
| Reader 1 | Who created these? |
| ALL | He who brings out their host and numbers them, |
| | Calling them all by name; |
| | because he is great in strength, |
| | mighty in power, |
| | not one is missing. |
| Reader 2 | Why do you say, O Jacob, |
| | and speak, O Israel, |
| ALL | “My way is hidden from the Lord, |
| | And my right is disregarded by my God?” |
| Reader 1: | Have you not known? |
| Reader 2: | Have you not heard? |
| ALL | The Lord is the everlasting God, |
| | the Creator of the ends of the earth. |
| Reader 1: | He does not faint or grow weary: |
| ALL | His understanding is unsearchable. |
| Reader 1: | He gives power to the faint, |
| ALL | and strengthens the powerless. |
| Reader 1: | Even youths will faint and be weary, |
| Reader 2: | and the young shall fall exhausted. |
| ALL | But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their |
| | strength, |
| | they shall mount up with wings like eagles; |
| | they shall run and not be weary, |
| | they shall walk and not faint. |

As we pause together this morning to consider the light of your
Word shining for each of us to see our personal way in this world,
may we hear what it is you have to say to each one of us, loving
God, from the scriptures we are privileged to hear and read. Amen

Reflection:

I wonder how you are faring in this lockdown period? Can you
believe it's already 5 weeks since this particular phase of lockdown

began and if the signals coming from government are to be believed, we have a further month at least to go before the restrictions lessen. We reached an awful landmark when the number who have died from the disease went above 100,000. And this week, we have heard of the death of Captain Sir Tom Moore. It's not surprising that many are struggling with the impact of staying home, home schooling and feeling exiled from what used to be the norm.

Thank goodness for the vaccine developments; it's been so encouraging to hear that so many of you are having your first injection. It brings a frisson of excitement and positivity we haven't heard for some time. Thank goodness for those who send us love and good wishes. Thank goodness for electronic communications and items that look at bringing a different perspective. Beacon Hill URC had a beautiful video prayer circulating this week, reminding us that so many human skills, traits and abilities are not locked down; creativity, imagination, prayer, hope are not locked down.

But we must acknowledge that the lockdown can be hard: people wondering silently, and some very much aloud, where is this taking us? bound only by the certainty that we face an unknown future. Some are very weary of the restraints after a very wearying year.

Our reading from Isaiah speaks to just such a time for the Israelites. They are in exile in Babylon, feeling unmoored, at sea, wondering what on earth is going on? How can this have happened? What does the future hold?

Though I don't feel this passage from Isaiah can really be described as just a 'reading'. What is written here is a powerful hymn which, in metaphor after metaphor, tells the people of Israel it is Yahweh alone that provides the hope – He is the creator who keeps on creating. A message we need to hear in February 2021 as much as they did in ancient times, when we may feel deflated and unable to rise above our circumstances, physically, personally or spiritually.

We will be exploring this passage in much more depth as one of the Lent Bible Study 'Seeds of Hope'. But today, I'd like to sow a seed of interest in its style and message, looking briefly at the opening and closing of this hymn.

The opening lines we read today begin with a series of four rhetorical questions, which was a technique in Hebrew to make an absolute, strong statement: surely you know, surely you have heard, surely it has been told to you; surely you understand the foundations of the earth! And if you know the foundations of the earth, you must know God, who is the foundation, is still at work in our world. It is a call to recognise that God does not go back on his word and he does not grow weary, as we do. He is strong, he is present, he renews the strength of those who have faith, who trust with all their heart.

We might be walking through what appears to be a mundane, monotonous, limited style of what we currently see as our daily existence, but he is walking with there too. Not every day is filled with excitement and adventure, if we're honest; we just think it used to be. Most days are spent strolling through the every day. But we are still serving God when we walk with him, developing our discipleship, keeping in touch with people, caring for this planet we call home, spending time in prayer, as Thelma spoke of last week, in the normal, in the every day, in life. Because God's power is for anyone who walks with him. Because if we walk with God in the every day, we will be ready when the exciting times come and we need once again to sprint to keep up and then continuously bemoan the fact that there aren't enough hours in the day..... Because "He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless."

And then the final section - The closing metaphor, "they shall rise up with wings like eagles" is the pinnacle of this hymn of praise. For a significant birthday a few years ago, my daughters gave me a day as a zookeeper at Colchester Zoo, mainly to work with the elephants that I adore, but I had an afternoon working with the

birds of prey. One bird I was allowed to send into flight was an eagle. When an eagle stretches its enormous wings, it pushes off with enormous force, and it is away – airborne in seconds. Such power! As it flaps its wings and heads into the sky it is a beautiful thing to experience so close. I remember being filled with wonder and joy as I watched the eagle in the sky.

And that is what hope in the Lord can do for us; on the bad days, during the boring days, we can recall Isaiah's words, acknowledge that God renews our strength and thereby unlock our imagination, our prayers and hope to fly as high as an eagle. Trust him and rely on him to renew your strength. He will lift us up!

Let us pray:

Loving Father I know that my strength can only be found in Christ. Help me I pray, to trust implicitly in the power that I can only receive from my Lord, Christ Jesus. I pray that I may truly rise above all the difficulties of life and run with patient endurance the race that is set before me, looking to Jesus, who is my only source of strength and my only means of refreshment. In His name I pray, AMEN.

Source: <https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/isaiah-40-31>

Prayers of Intercession

God, we wait, we watch, we long for you. Refresh our spirits, restore our well being; for you give new strength to the faint and power to the powerless. May your church be found working among those who lack resources or rights. May we seek to care for those who cannot care for themselves.

We pray for the great powers of the world, the strong nations, and mighty governments. May their power be used properly that the poor are protected, the weak are not exploited, and no one is oppressed.

We give thanks for all who have cared for us in times of weakness; for those who have uplifted our spirits and given us new hope. We pray for our friends and families, especially any who are finding life difficult at the moment. We pray for any in our community that may feel neglected or rejected.

We pray for all who are in weakness of body, mind or spirit, all who have come to the end of their tether. We think of all who are losing their mobility or agility, those who are losing their memories, and all who have lost their grip on reality; of those who no longer trust in anyone, and those who doubt the love of God; we think of all who are caring for loved ones in illness.

We give thanks that Christ is our healer and our companion on the Way; he will not allow us to be lost. We pray for loved ones departed who are renewed and refreshed in the love and light of God.

May the Light of the world truly be that lamp set out on the lampstand to them. Amen.

— written by Rev. Fraser Macnaughton, of the St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall. Posted on the Church of Scotland's **Starters for Sunday** website.

Music in preparation for Communion: I am the bread, the bread of life

[STF 587 - I Am The Bread part of Singing The Faith; Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

Communion

Invitation to Communion

Come to this table where God invites you to wait for the pain and hope of new life embodied in human birth.

Come to this table where God invites you to wait for the fragments to be gathered and brokenness to be held.

Come to this table, where God invites you to wait for dreams and expectations to be met with hope and joy. ©Jan Berry

The Story

We eat because on the night before Jesus died, he ate with his friends. The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: 'This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We remember Jesus' birth and his presence as God with us.
We remember Jesus' life and his love.
We remember Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.
We remember the resurrection and the promise of life.

Let us pray:

God of grace, thank you for this bread and wine,
and for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ.
God of hope, fill us with your Spirit today.
Through this meal, strengthen us to be followers of Jesus,
a community of peace in a broken world.

The Sharing of the Bread and Wine

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

Closing prayer:

Most gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.

Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your

love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

[WB Fourth Order of Holy Communion.pdf \(urc.org.uk\)](http://urc.org.uk/WB_Fourth_Order_of_Holy_Communion.pdf)

Blessing

May you run and not be weary.
May you rise up on the wings of eagles.
May you know without doubt
that the everlasting God goes with you! Amen

— written by Mary J. Scifres, and posted on the [Ministry Matters](http://MinistryMatters.com) website.

Closing music: The Lord is my light

Responses led by Linda Storey

Opening music from The Worship Cloud

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

Incidental music: [STF 587 - I Am The Bread part of Singing The Faith; Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

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