

# Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021

with Holy Communion

Seeds of Hope:

‘Turning the world upside down’



Led by Karen Smith

Opening music: God of grace and God of glory

## Welcome & Gathering Prayer

In this season of Lent we reflect on our journey of faith with Christ, remembering that Christ has offered us new life here on earth, that God so loved the world that he sent his Son, so that the world might be saved through him.

While we await the heavenly kingdom, we prepare for God's reign on earth. We light this candle *on this third Sunday of Lent*, remembering God's assurance of new life through the signs of spring in the earth.

Prayer: As the days lengthen and bulbs are preparing deep in the earth, dear God, may we be ready for what you are preparing to grow in us. Nourish us so that we might bear spiritual fruit. In the name of Christ, with whom we journey towards the cross, we pray. Amen.

## Call to worship

Lent calls us to journey, this and every day, following Jesus wherever he leads us.

**Lent calls us to journey:**

**to the place where God covenants with us,  
to receive the new names we are given.**

Lent calls us to worship together,  
to tell future generations the good news.

**Lent calls us to practice justice,  
to bring God's hope to all people.**

Lent calls us to faithful living,  
to trust the One who gives us life.

**Lent calls each of us to take up our cross,  
to trust the One who bears it with us.**

Lent calls us to journey with God.

**Let us worship God, who walks with us,  
this and every day.**

~ written by Thom Shuman, and posted on **Lectionary Liturgies**. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca/>

## Prayers of Thanksgiving & Confession

Loving God,

We take time out of our busy lives to come before You this day and to offer You praise and thanks. We thank You for this day and all the days of our lives. We thank You for the world in which we live and do not always fully appreciate or care for properly.

We thank You for the ability to gather physically or digitally to praise You and learn from Your word.

Lord, You love us so much. You do not leave us to wander this world aimlessly and without boundaries.

We thank You that You love us so much that You gave Your people commandments in the name of love, harmony and respect, commandments that have stood the test of time and remain as valuable today as they did when given at Sinai.

Lord, You love us so much that You sent Your son, Jesus to teach us how to live and to love. Not only that, You demonstrated that love through the death and resurrection of Your only son.

Thank You, Lord.

Good and gracious God,  
there are times when we choose not to follow the rules  
there are times when we stray off course  
there are times when we choose the path of sin.

In a time of quiet, we bring before You those times  
when we have failed to keep Your commandments  
when we have decided that we know better.

### *Silence*

The Psalmist writes:

“Clear me from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Forgiven, loved and free  
We join this time of worship with gratitude.

Open our ears to hear, our mouths to speak truth and justice and our hearts to love and care for Your people.

So be it. Amen

[Weekly Worship - 7 March \(churchofscotland.org.uk\)](http://churchofscotland.org.uk)

**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**

### **Seeds of Hope: How do your seedlings grow?**

#### **Prayer:**

Lord of the seeds,  
Blow your seeds of Love and Hope,  
Whirl them around by your Holy Spirit  
And as the seeds land, bless them,  
And bless those who will pick them up. Amen      © Ruth Dillon

**Hymn:** I danced in the morning      Words © 1963 by Stainer & Bell Ltd Co.,  
Carol Stream, IL 60188). All rights reserved. Used by permission.

I danced in the morning  
when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon  
and the stars and the sun,  
and I came down from heaven  
and I danced on the earth,  
at Bethlehem  
I had my birth.

*Refrain:*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

I danced for the scribe  
and the pharisee,  
but they would not dance  
and they wouldn't follow me.

I danced for the fishermen,  
for James and John -  
they came with me  
and the dance went on.

*Refrain:*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

I danced on the Sabbath  
and I cured the lame;  
the holy people  
said it was a shame.  
they whipped and they stripped  
and they hung me on high,  
and they left me there  
on a Cross to die.

*Refrain:*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

I danced on a Friday  
when the sky turned black;  
it's hard to dance

with the devil on your back.

They buried my body  
and they thought I'd gone,  
but I am the Dance,  
and I still go on.

*Refrain:*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

They cut me down  
and I leapt up high;  
I am the life  
that'll never, never die;  
I'll live in you  
if you'll live in me -  
I am the Lord  
of the Dance, said he.

*Refrain:*

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

**Reading: John 2:13 -22** read by Tom Dean

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup>Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for

doing this?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

This is the Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

### Reflection:

The Gospel of John creates the most incredibly vivid image of Jesus' actions in the Temple - making a whip out of cords, turning over tables, driving out animals intended for sacrifice and the people running these businesses in the Temple yard. There are lots of paintings depicting this scene, with Jesus brandishing that whip of cords – a flail that was traditionally used to herd cattle and sheep and certainly not the money changers as so much of that art leads us to believe!

You may wonder why this reading isn't corralled in to the Holy Week readings, as the other Gospel writers' narrative is. What is it that John is trying to tell us in the middle of Lent?

Firstly, John's Gospel places this first public action of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. John wants his readers to understand that Jesus will be turning their world upside down and it probably turns a learned interpretation we have upside down too. Unlike the other Gospels, the cleansing of the Temple here is not intended to once again upset the authorities who ran the temple and profited from the trade and so inexorably add fuel to their grievances about Jesus and therefore to his death. He hasn't even got started yet in John's Gospel!

Instead, by placing the incident at the beginning of the ministry I believe John is intending to show that throughout his ministry, zeal for the Father would consume Jesus and inform all he does. The Temple was obsolete now that he had come. Because the presence of God was no longer only to be found in the Temple but is in the person of Jesus. It is evidence pointing to the Messiah being present, but like so many other signs, it was not understood and was rejected.

Secondly, the time was Passover. In John's Gospel, Jesus's public ministry begins and ends in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. The city of Jerusalem would have been full and demand for ensuring ritual cleanliness at a feverish peak. Everyone would have made sure there was nothing in their home that might 'defile' them at this time – all leaven items removed; ceremonial cleaning of home and household would have been completed so the Passover could be kept according to ritual.

In contrast to that state of utter cleanliness, we see the Temple, which was a hive of activity and **business**. Unblemished animals were needed for sacrifice so you couldn't bring your own with you in case the priest rejected them. And when you bought one, you weren't permitted to pay with local money; the money changers were there to change everyday coins for acceptable hard currency. William Barclay writes about the tax paid at the Temple and the profit made by money changers being equal to a day's wage! It is a marketplace.

Right from the beginning of the Gospel, John is saying we must not confine God. The Word that was with God and is God and has become flesh - encapsulated in those wonderful words that open John's Gospel - the Son that makes God known, has arrived to reveal God. God is present in Jesus and, after his resurrection and ascension, God is everywhere to believers through the Holy Spirit. He is not confined to the Temple, the rituals, the ceremonial cleaning & the special coins. He is. That idea would certainly have turned everything upside down.

And something we have learned through these lockdowns of 2020 & 2021, is that God is everywhere, as we gather together in fellowship to worship and to celebrate Communion using technology for which we are deeply grateful. We have learned that being church is not only about going in to a much loved and honoured building, but we can still hear God's Word proclaimed in a way that helps us to see and experience God in all of life. And the reach of our services has taken that Word outward – from church to the world.

And as we look forward in hope and trust that we will gather in those treasured buildings we call church again in the future, to this 'new normal' others talk about, perhaps John's words might well turn some things upside down for us as church too, if we allow it. Perhaps if we acknowledge that God is everywhere we can continue to gather as his people, but rather than fretting about getting people to come where we are, just perhaps our future is to be outward – from church to world – and consider how we prepare, nurture and ultimately send people, worship and service out from the church, to see, identify and join with God in that world. To think about how we can work together to discover all the other places God is and think about what it would involve to support one another to discover where God's presence is being felt, seen and made real through the lives, work and faith of those who join with us in worship and faith in our churches.

Because if we think on the actions of Christ one Passover in the Temple of Jerusalem many years ago, we know in our hearts that God can no more be contained in a church today than he was in the Temple of Jesus' day. He will always turn the world upside down.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord of Lent, come to your church to spring clean our ways of life, our structure and our priorities. Point out to us the cobwebs, the extravagance and the waste.

Lord of Lent, **renew our lives.**

Lord of Lent, look with compassion on those whose minds are full of anxiety and bewilderment. We remember people who are lonely, despairing, desperate. Clear away from them feelings of fear, of guilt and worry.

Lord of Lent, **renew our lives.**

Lord of Lent, turn your healing love towards those who are ill and in pain today. We have in our hearts some known to us. We bring them to mind now.....May they sense your healing touch.

Lord of Lent, **renew our lives.**

Lord of Lent, we pray for ourselves. Help us to turn our lives to you and give us gentleness in dealing with others. Create in us a clear and loving heart.

Lord of Lent, **renew our lives. Amen**

**Communion** (music)

### **Invitation:**

Jesus shared meals in all kinds of homes:  
The home of Zacchaeus  
a collaborator and a crook.  
The home of Simon, a Pharisee  
where he defended the woman  
who caused a scene at the dinner party.  
The home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus,  
his friends,  
a house where he could laugh and relax.  
We're used to sharing this meal  
in grander buildings, spaces set-apart as sacred.



But this is where it all began:  
in ordinary houses.  
In upstairs rooms and wayside inns  
and around kitchen tables.  
In the spaces where people live,  
surrounded by the ordinary clutter of living.

Come, living Jesus, be our guest  
here in our homes.  
Come, living Jesus, be our host  
here at your table.   **Amen.**

### Thanksgiving:

Lift up your hearts!  
**We lift them to God!**  
Let's give thanks to the source of life!  
**We bring our thankful praise!**

We praise and thank you, Eternal One,  
Love that will not be contained.  
For you created the earth:  
it's grandeur, its detail, its delicate balance.  
And you created us, women and men,  
to tend and protect and delight in it.

And when we forgot our beginnings,  
neglected our purpose and lost our way,  
you sent prophets to call us back  
and laws to illumine our path  
and finally came yourself  
to show us how to live  
and to demonstrate the magnitude  
of your love for us.

Love that will not be contained.  
Love that will not give up on us.  
Love that will journey into the darkest places,  
even the grave,  
to find us.

And so, we lift our voices  
to join with nature's song  
and the great chorus of witnesses  
on earth and in heaven:

**Holy, holy, holy,**  
**Love that will not be contained,**  
**heaven and earth are filled with your glory,**  
**Hosanna in the highest!**  
Blessed is the one who is risen from the dead  
**Hosanna in the highest!**

### The story of the Lord's Supper:

Let's hear again, the story of Jesus' supper with his disciples on  
the night before he died, as it's been recorded by the writer of the  
Gospel of Matthew:

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread,  
and after blessing it he broke it,  
gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.'  
Then he took a cup,  
and after giving thanks he gave it to them,  
saying, 'Drink from it, all of you;  
for this is my blood of the covenant,  
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

### Blessing and sharing of the bread and wine:

*And so we pray...*  
Come, Holy Spirit  
pour out your blessing on our bread and wine  
and on us, your gathered people.

We don't need an altar,  
a silver chalice or starched table linen.  
It's your presence  
that makes these ordinary things holy.   **Amen.**

Here is bread:

broken, as the body of Christ was broken  
broken, as the heart of God was broken  
broken, as the seal of the tomb was broken  
broken to make us whole.

The body of Christ, broken for us. *[we eat the bread]*

Here is wine:

a cup that brings us together, even in our social distancing  
a cup of forgiveness and blessing.

The blood of Christ, poured out for us. *[we drink the wine]*

**Prayer after communion:**     *Please pray with me...*

Thank you for the grace that makes space for us at your table.  
Thank you for the familiar and beloved faces on our screens.  
Thank you for the closeness we experience through technology,  
and through sharing this meal together.  
May we continue our lives  
having been nourished and strengthened,  
filled with your uncontainable love  
that spills over to bless the world.     **Amen.**

<https://worshipwords.co.uk/lockdown-liturgy-for-communion-cara-heafey-uk>

## Blessing

We follow God who leads us into the world.  
We follow Jesus the man of action.  
We follow the Spirit who gives us courage.  
Father, Son and Spirit, leading us on to make a difference until all  
know the power of the love of God. Amen

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Closing music: Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing

Responses led by Maureen Coney

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

Closing music <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet-2010/S-LordDismissUs-2v-Dismissal-PipeLC-48-CAM.mp3>

Incidental music: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/13679/576-bread-is-blessed.mp3>

Hymn: [STF 247 - I Danced In The Morning part of Singing The Faith; Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

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