

# Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021



## The Road to Emmaus

Led by Reverend John Whitton

Opening music: Praise him, praise him

**Welcome & Gathering Prayer** Hugh Le Fanu

God of grace,  
We open our hearts, minds and souls to worship you.  
Thank you that today we dwell in your kingdom and live in your presence.  
Thank you that as we gather together we join with all Christians across the world to glorify your holy name.  
Come be with us, inspire us and lead us in our time together.  
We ask all this in the beautiful name of Jesus.  
Amen.

## Call to worship

Blessed be the name of the Lord now and evermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting, the Lord's name be praised.

## Prayers of Thanksgiving & Confession

Gracious Father,  
Your might is beyond measure,  
Your wisdom beyond knowledge,  
Your love beyond all telling.  
You have put eternity into our hearts and made us hunger and thirst for You. Satisfy the longings You have implanted that we may find You in life and find life in You, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Merciful God,  
You made us in Your image with a mind to know You, a heart to love You and a will to serve You but our knowledge is imperfect, our love inconstant, our obedience incomplete. Day by day we fail to grow into Your likeness, yet You are slow to be angry with Your children. For the sake of Jesus Christ Your Son our Saviour do not hold our wrongdoing against us but in Your tender love, forgive. God of love Your Son gave us a new commandment that we should love one another even as You love us, the unworthy and the wandering. Give us a mind forgetful of past ill-will and a heart to love one another, through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son our Saviour.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,** read by Linda Storey  
**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: Now the Green Blade Rises

Words by John Macleod Campbell Crum

Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

In the grave they laid Him, Love whom we had slain,  
Thinking that He never would awake again,  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
He that who for three days in the grave had lain;  
Quick from the dead our risen Lord is seen:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,  
Then your touch can call us back to life again,  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

**Reading:** [Luke 24: 13 – 35](#) read by Mike Walters

### On the Road to Emmaus

**13** Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. **14** They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

**15** As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; **16** but they were kept from recognizing him. **17** He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast.

**18** One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” **19** “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. **20** The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; **21** but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

**22** In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning **23** but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. **24** Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

**25** He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

**28** As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. **29** But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

**30** When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. **31** Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. **32** They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” **33** They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together **34** and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.”

**35** Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

This is the Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

## Reflection

The great English novelist, George Elliot, called our reading today “the most beautiful short story in the world”. To me, the Road to Emmaus is a paradigm of Christian experience. Two of the disciples set off on the road to Emmaus. As they walk they meet the risen Jesus but fail to recognise Him. It’s only when Jesus, at table, takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it and gives it to them that they recognise who He is.

To understand the significance of the word ‘road’ you have to go back to the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew word for road or way (derek) is intended to mean a way of life.

When the people of Israel travelled from Egypt to the Promised Land the road they travelled came to mean the way of life they led as a result of the covenant at Mount Sinai. The Jewish people are to obey the commandments and live lives worthy of the Lord God. They are to walk in the way of the Lord.

Now this is important for our understanding. This initial instruction, to walk in the way of the Lord, is laid on all generations of Jews. They are to live by behaving the way God was expecting their forefathers to live.

In a very real sense that historical journey, or road, must be lived again as a divine way for Israel. You can still see traces of it in Jewish faith today. At the Passover the whole idea of pilgrimage becomes real. At the end of the Passover someone will cry out, “Next year in Jerusalem!” because the journey is central to Jewish consciousness. Indeed all the Jewish festivals are based on events on the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Faith becomes a pilgrimage, a way of life, in our imitation of God. This idea is carried over into the Christian faith and we are now almost at the point of understanding today’s lesson a little better. In Peter’s first letter, chapter 2, verse 21, he says, “Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.” Peter tells us to follow the example of Jesus, the suffering servant, who laid down His life for our redemption.

That is the genuine character of the ministry of Christ; Christ lived a selfless commitment to the Lord God, a commitment unto death in the breaking of His body on the cross.

So, in the breaking of the bread in the house at Emmaus, the disciples recognise the Jesus they knew who gave His life in their presence, in unstinting service, for three years. They meet the Risen Christ at a Eucharist.

But you have to also hold on to the truth that, central to the authenticity of His ministry, was Christ’s integrity on the roads of Palestine over three years. He lived the Eucharist every day of His life.

And he calls us, too, to follow in His path. This is Biblical: from the earliest days the Christian faith was known as ‘the way’. Christians are people of the way. It was a way of life and the way was modelled on the way that Christ Himself had travelled, accompanied by the first disciples. It was the way that led to Jerusalem and to the cross.

According to the great divine, John Baillie, “when the next generation of Christians spoke of ‘the way’ they meant that they were walking again the way Jesus had travelled: his journey up to Jerusalem and the crucifixion.”

Now we must **not** dismiss this as fanciful. Many early Christians faced martyrdom for their faith. And we talk proudly, in this country, of the ‘Thin Red Line’. We mean, of course, the scant ranks of red-coated soldiers in the Crimea. But there is another ‘thin red line’. A linear line over 2,000 years of Christian men and women who have been prepared to risk death for their faith. It is through their faithful living that we have the privilege of sitting here. By walking the way of Christ they made our faith possible. We stand in the faith of men like Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King and Oscar Romero.

And we read in Acts 11, verse 26, that in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians. What an honour to have been named after Jesus Himself. Their consecrated living of the way of Jesus made such an impression that their Christ-like lifestyle attracted the ultimate honour.

We are not Catholic or Protestant, liberal or orthodox, we are people of the way. We are Christ’s folk. We are Christians. So often I despair of denominational back-biting and supercilious

claims by people that they represent the one true church; that they are right and everyone else is wrong.

Faith, in scripture, is not just a creed: the niceties of what you believe. Faith is a way of life, a pilgrimage on which we learn as we go along, in the presence of Christ, just as the two disciples did on the road to Emmaus. Our understanding grows with our life experience. As we learn more we grow in faith and mould ourselves in the image of Christ.

There's a lovely story of a gracious old man passing two neighbours. Raising his hat he gives them a friendly smile and a cheery "Good morning".

"Isn't he a nice old chap?" said one.

"Absolutely!" said the other, "Isn't it amazing how he keeps on growing."

It is important to be converted and to commit one's self to Jesus. But that's only the start of a lifelong process of sanctification, of growing more and more like Christ as we travel in His way down the path of life.

When we celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, as we break the bread, we remember how His life was broken for us. And how we, in our turn, should walk in His example. It is in His self-giving that we will meet Jesus. The only way to know Christ is to walk in the path of consecrated service as people of the way.

## Prayers

Loving God, You care for all Your children,  
You know each one and hear each prayer.  
You know each house and see each need. Give peace and love to those who call upon You and receive us into the Kingdom of Your light.

Bless Your Church here and everywhere. Confirm us in the faith of the gospel, inspire us with love for Your house, zeal in Your service and joy in the well-being of Your kingdom.

Bless your servant our Sovereign Lady, the Queen, her ministers and all who serve in the high courts of parliament. We pray that they may fulfil their service for the welfare of the people and the glory of Your name.

Bless the whole world with peace. Kindle in the hearts of all people the true love of peace and guide with your wisdom the leaders of the nations that Your kingdom may advance until the earth be filled with the knowledge of Your love.

Bless with Your comfort all who are in trouble or pain. Strengthen those who are sick, support those who are dying, console those who mourn, supply the wants of those who are in need and we ask You, Father, to be near to those whom we now name in the silence of our hearts... grant them Your peace and show them your salvation.

Bless our homes that love and joy may dwell there and keep those who are absent from us within the protection of your love. These things we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord and in His name's sake, Amen.

**Hymn:** I want to walk with Jesus Christ

I want to walk with Jesus Christ,  
all the days I live of this life on earth;  
to give to Him complete control  
of body and of soul.

*Follow Him, follow Him,  
yield your life to Him -  
He has conquered death,  
He is King of kings;  
accept the joy which He gives to those  
who yield their lives to Him.*



I want to learn to speak to Him,  
to pray to Him, confess my sin,  
to open my life and let Him in,  
for joy will then be mine.

*Follow Him, follow Him.....*

I want to learn to speak of Him –  
my life must show that He lives in me;  
my deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak  
all of His love for me.

*Follow Him, follow Him....*

I want to learn to read His word,  
for this is how I know the way  
to live my life as pleases Him,  
in holiness and joy.

*Follow Him, follow Him....*

O Holy Spirit of the Lord,  
enter now into this heart of mine;  
take full control of my selfish will  
and make me wholly Thine!

*Follow Him, follow Him....*

©1974 Celebration Services (Yeldhall) Ltd

## Blessing

May the blessing of the Eternal God be upon us and upon our work  
and worship, His light to guide us, His presence to strengthen us,  
His love to unite us, now and always. Amen.

Closing music: Peace Perfect Peace

Responses led by Linda Storey

Opening music from <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/S-PraiseHimPraiseHim-Bonner-Pipe01C-48-CAM.mp3>

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

Hymns: [Now the Green Blade Riseth.mp3 - Google Drive](#) Holy Trinity Church Malvern

[I want to walk with Jesus Christ all my days. \(Swiss Melody\) - † Free Music Backing Files for Churches - Piano, Band, Pipe Organ † \(smallchurchmusic.com\)](#)

image: Worship cloud

PPT Image by Falco from Pixabay Image by [Ross Robinson](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Church Copyright and Music Reproduction Licence – CCLI 6025 expires 31/01/22  
Streaming Plus Licence - CCLI 1306113 expires 31/01/22  
Church Video Licence – CCLI 1981402 expires on 31/01/2022  
PPL Church Licence - CCLI 1807672 expires on 31/01/2022  
CLA Church Licence - CCLI 1353384 expires on 31/01/2022  
PRS for Music Church Licence - CCLI 641994 expires on 31/01/2022  
CCLI SongSelect Premium membership – expires on 31/01/2022  
PRS Limited Online Music Licence - OLE 00000025529 expires 17/04/22  
MCPS Limited Manufacture Licence – LM-0069526 expires 01/04/22