

Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 16th May 2021



God's Healing Touch

Led by Rev'd John Whitton

Opening music: Heal us, Immanuel

Welcome & Gathering Prayer Hugh Le Fanu

Living God, as this day welcomes us with its challenges and joys, we remember you are with us every step along our way. We commit this time to you, a time of reflection, a time of fellowship, a time of worship, a time to share the blessings of your presence with us now. Amen

[Seventh Sunday of Easter- Year B part of The Act of Prayer Year B - The Act of Prayer by John Birch;](#)

Call to worship

Grace and peace to you from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayers of Adoration, Thanksgiving & the Lord's Prayer

God our Father,
Your love is at work in all You have made.
Son of God, in Your likeness we are made new. Holy Spirit, You touch our lives with hope. Receive our worship, claim us for Your service, set us free to honour You today.

Holy God, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against You and against our fellow men and women through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault.
We have belittled Your love and betrayed Your trust.
We are sorry, we are ashamed, we repent of all our sins. Forgive us all that is past and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light.

Jesus died and rose again for us. In humble penitence we ask for His pardon and to receive His peace.

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from You alone come everlasting joy and peace. Fill us with joy in Your promises and send us out to be bearers of Your peace through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. in whose name we are bold to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, led 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: Jesus' hands were kind hands

Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all,
healing pain and sickness, blessing children small,
washing tired feet and saving those who fall;
Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all.

Take my hands, Lord Jesus, let them work for you;
make them strong and gentle, kind in all I do;
let me watch you, Jesus, till I'm gentle too,
till my hands are kind hands, quick to work for you.

Margaret Cropper Words © 1979 Stainer & Bell

Reading: Mark 5: 21 – 43 read by Alice Knight

21 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22 Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." 24 So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. 30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" 32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." 35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" 36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe." 37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." 40 But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This is the Word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

Reflection:

Many years ago, I was the Deputy Warden at the Army Chaplains' conference and training centre at Bagshot Park. Each day began with a service of Holy Communion at 8am. Visiting chaplains would sometimes officiate at this service. I was always intrigued when an Anglican took the service. I used to wait for the critical moment when they asked us to stand and share the peace.

What then happened it could be quite funny. Some enthusiasts would wander around hugging people, the less demonstrative would shake hands but some people absolutely loathed the bonhomie. My boss, the warden, was a case in point. He would stand with a ferocious scowl on his face. Should anyone dare to approach him, they would be greeted by an arm stretched out

stiffly to shake hands and to keep them at a distance. He would then say, gruffly, "And a happy Christmas to you too."

Human touch is, since the onset of Covid 19, a burning issue. We have had three lockdowns during which our movements were seriously limited. Many people found this a considerable strain. Access to family and friends came under strict government guidelines. Particularly affected were those in the category 'clinically vulnerable'. Much concern has been raised in the NHS over the harmful effects of the restrictions. Human beings are naturally social animals and to be unable to turn to loved ones during the pandemic may have damaged mental health. To be able to touch those we love when we are worried or sick is an incalculable morale boost.

That is why today I've chosen as our reading the two stories from Mark's Gospel. In the first story, Jesus is touched by a stranger and, in the second, he touches a child. These encounters with unmarried females are controversial. In these stories we witness Jesus's willingness to touch and be touched.

One is a woman whose condition means she exists on the outskirts of society. She was shut out from synagogue worship and from the fellowship of friends. Jesus the holy man and healer comes to her town. She is embarrassed about her condition but she has faith in Jesus and decides to approach Him surreptitiously. She touches the edge of Jesus's cloak when she hopes He is distracted by everyone else milling around Him so no-one will see what she does. But Jesus realises that power has left Him and asks, "Who touched me?" The woman emerges from the crowd and admits to it.

The female in the other story is the twelve year old daughter of the synagogue leader. Jesus is asked by parents to lay His hands on their twelve year old child. At this stage in His ministry a synagogue leader would not necessarily have been an admirer of Jesus but his concern and love for his little girl breaks down the barrier and, in sheer desperation, he asks Jesus for help.

In each case, touch plays a part. Whilst the sick woman reaches out in the public sphere to touch Jesus, covertly, without a word spoken, in the other story it is Jesus who reaches out in the privacy of her home to touch the little girl.

With Covid 19 rife, touch is discouraged but physical touch is not the only way to touch the lives of others. As early as the 1990s I encountered many clergy joining the RACHD who, in their training, had been advised not to pay house visits because they might be compromised. I found this to be a great pity and a handicap because, surely, it is a minister's job to get to know their people as well as they possibly can and be with them in all aspects of their lives. After a home visit, relationships change and people know that whenever they have a problem and contact the minister, it is someone they know.

All clergy used to be encouraged to visit their congregation when in hospital. Now it seems to be the preserve of the hospital chaplain. Surely sick people would prefer to be visited by someone they know? These visits are also problematic just now for those who wish to keep in contact with their family and friends.

When touch is about healing and blessing, it's a wonderful, life-giving action.

Let me close with a story. In one of my army churches there was a lady in the congregation who was a quiet and very pleasant person. All anyone knew about her was that her first marriage had been dreadfully unhappy but she had found happiness in her second. One Sunday after the service, she asked me to pay her a home visit as she felt it was time to unburden herself about the past.

We fixed on 8pm one evening later that week. When I turned up she went to make coffee. Her husband, whom I had never met before smiled and shook hands before putting on his jacket. He said, "I know what you're going to hear, Padre. I'll just go to the Sergeants' Mess and leave you to it. Best of luck."

His wife sat on the settee, patted the seat next to her and said, "Sit beside me, Padre. It'll be easier for me to say what I have to."

I'll never forget what she told me. It was a tale of horrifically, violent abuse, frequent hospitalisation and police intervention. In the course of her story, she would break down several times, turn to me, throw her arms round my neck and sob her heart out on my shoulder. She would recover, smile with embarrassment, blow her nose and then continue.

When she finished her story, I was surprised to see it was 10.45. She thanked me for listening and told me she felt that an unbearable burden had, at last, been lifted. Shortly afterwards, her husband returned. He stuck his head round the door, smiled and asked, "You okay, Padre? Would you like a stiff drink?" I thanked him but said I had to drive home.

At the time, I knew there was no alternative than to allow her to tell that story in her own way, including the tearful interludes. If I had made her feel uncomfortable the story would never have been told. The pastoral imperative was for her to be unburdened.

These are all value judgements we have to make as Christians. I've always regarded the relief of grief and suffering to be of paramount importance. We all need to be open to the need of others and be prepared to give them the time and opportunity to speak of their pain.

Prayers of Intercession & Concern

Gracious God, rejoicing in Your blessings, trusting in Your loving care for all, we bring You our prayers for the world.

We pray for our country, for our Queen and her family, for those who frame our laws and shape our common life, for those who keep the peace and administer justice, those who heal, all who serve the community.

In the life of our land,

Your kingdom come, O Lord, Your will be done.

We pray for those in need: those for whom life is a bitter struggle: those whose lives are clouded by death and loss, by pain or disability, by discouragement or fear, by shame or rejection.

In the lives of those in need,

Your kingdom come, O Lord, Your will be done.

We pray for those in the circle of friendship and love around us, children and parents, sisters and brothers, friends and neighbours, and for those especially in our thoughts today.

In the life of those we love,

Your kingdom come, O Lord, Your will be done.

We pray for the Church in its stand with the poor, in its love for the outcast and the ashamed, in its service to the sick and the neglected, in its proclamation of the Gospel, in this land, in this place.

In the life of Your church,

Your kingdom come, O Lord, Your will be done.

These things we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord and in His name's sake. Amen.

Hymn: Make me a channel of Your peace

Words by Sebastian Temple

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving unto all that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

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: Lift up your hearts! We lift them, Lord, to thee

Responses led by Linda Storey

Opening music from [STF 650 - Heal Us, Immanuel! part of Singing The Faith: Contributed by Paul Wood & Ian Worsfold | The Worship Cloud](#)

Closing music from <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet/S-LiftUpYourHearts-Birmingham-PipeLC-48-CAM.mp3>

Hymns: Jesus' hands were kind hands <https://vimeo.com/user111977433> United Church of Boyce

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