

Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2021

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Call to worship

We come from a world confused about truth.

We come with our own uncertainties.

Let us bring the darkness of human understanding
into the presence of God, who is light.

Let us bring the story of our search for truth
and share in fellowship the things we have heard and seen and touched.

God, whose light shines in the darkness,
shine on us today.

God, made known to those who met Jesus,
touch us through the experiences of our lives.

God, who gave Thomas what he asked,
give us what we need – that we too may come to believe.

Hymn StF 682 God of grace, God of Glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y9rBrtuZg0>

Prayers

We come in more sombre mood today;
the excitement of Easter past, we return to every day life.

But for Jesus' followers, after that first Easter,
life would never be the same again.

Their new life with the risen Lord was just beginning.

Let us stir ourselves to remember that we are children of the
resurrection, and we approach our Lord with senses alert
to the new life and lessons he has to share with us today.

Lord, you accept our doubts and embrace our questions
like a wise parent encouraging your children to express themselves;
hiding your hurt at our scepticism,

always hoping for the best and seeing our potential.

We worship and adore you for believing in us. **Amen.**

A prayer of thanksgiving with responses.

Thanks be to the God who embraces us even in our times of greatest doubt.

When our thinking is clouded and our spirit bewildered, God holds sacred space for us.

Thanks be to the Son who accepts our questions without judgement.

He who was questioned by pauper and priest alike remains a touching place for us.

Thanks be to the Holy Spirit who guides us to answers in our day.

The one who breathes God's understanding into us opens a safe place for us. Amen.

A prayer of confession.

We confess that we are so often judgemental of others.

In particular, we berate those who do not share our beliefs.

What need have they of proof? Why can't they just believe?

Yet we live in a world where little is taken at face value.

Fake news surrounds us, and the camera definitely does lie.

Therefore, Lord, forgive us when we look down upon the unbelievers, the doubters, the ones who demand proof; for this is the world in which we live, and the world to which we must proclaim your truth.

There is no proof we can offer in these times,

except to show our belief in the ways in which we reach out,

by accepting and loving unconditionally, by showing patience and forbearance to those who differ from us – or is it we who differ from them?

Therefore, forgive us when we fail to reflect your truths in our daily lives, and let us become testaments to your risen power.

May Christ be evident in us and in all that we do. **Amen.**

Lord, we thank you for your patience with us,
your acceptance of our doubting and questioning,
and your assurance of forgiveness.

How many times do we grieve your heart with our lack of belief,
and exasperate you with our lack of faith?

But like a good parent, you gather us to you,
and answer our misgivings.

With you, Lord, there is infinite forgiveness. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the example of Thomas who had the courage to test the truth of what he'd been told, even if it meant he had to stand alone. We thank you for the example of the other disciples and Jesus, who did not reject Thomas but helped him find what he needed to believe. **Amen**

Let us join together in the Prayer our Lord taught us. Our Father.....

StF 833 Psalm 133 said responsively A beautiful Psalm of wisdom

Hymn StF707 Make me a channel of your peace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8eorCEMIK4>

**Readings Act 4: 32-35
John 20:19-31**

Address

As we move through the Easter season we are reminded in our Acts reading of the new Christian community, their fellowship, caring for the well being of each other. Pooling their resources, in order to help each other and those in the community beyond, especially the poor. The heart and soul of our belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our world today there are many times when we hear fake news, scams are part of our everyday life, we need to question, what is right and what is false. Thomas in our story was asking for evidence that Christ was alive. He would have been able to see the difference in the Disciples themselves, in their appearance, the change in their demena but Thomas was inquiring, searching, wanting to know and see for himself. He probably felt left out, why had he missed the visit of his Lord and master.

We can all relate to this, with the situation in our world today, we have to search through the many different avenues in order to follow the right path. That is in all aspects of our life. We need to research, find the best way forward in our lives and develop our spiritual life through exploration of our faith. This may be through Bible study, sharing our understanding with others and exploring our own knowledge. We are constantly learning about our faith and the interpretation of Gods word.

There was also the issue of acceptance, as our Maundy Thursday To the Cross presentation highlighted. In the words of Simon of Cyrene

*Recently our old friends in the synagogue
Have turned against us. They have
Refused to speak to us again, ever.
We have made new, Christian friends,*

*Though sometimes we feel lonely,
As our Saviour did.*

The first encounter with the risen Christ as we heard last week came from a woman, Mary Magdalene. Jesus had suffered the cruelest of death on the cross, which was also regarded as the most shameful form of death, so many people at best were very cynical others hostile. The disciples were locked away in a room, for fear of the authorities. And it is to that room, that Jesus appears to his disciples. "Peace be with you" he said. What a relief that must have been, and yet?

Thomas doesn't choose to follow the disciples, he wants to test things for himself, research, question and form his own opinion. His encounter with his risen Lord gives him the truth, that his Lord is risen and he doesn't need the evidence of touch, the encounter is the proof he needed. Thomas was reconciled with the disciples- He had seen the Lord.

Doubt can often be a very negative reaction and yet we need to question- the safety of electrical equipment can be determined by testing. We need to test what we have been told in order to develop and progress and that includes our own faith. The Tuesday afternoon chat session can be part of this process. Everyone is welcome to join. Talk to Roger if you would like to join. We are able to explore the previous weeks service, to question and develop our understanding, to strengthen our faith.

Our final reading this morning is the Apostle John's response to the Church and to us today. Writing in his later years to the second and third generation of Christians, he offers a first hand insight to those who follow Jesus around AD 85-90 and for us today.

Reading 1 John 1:1-2:2

What this reading particularly brings out is the importance of our faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ, which leads to our fellowship with each other and those who we meet in our daily lives. May we continue to question, research and develop our faith and grow in confidence so that we can share our faith with others. May we use this final reading to inspire us, as it was intended to inspire those young Christians about 2,000 years ago

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we often have questions. We don't always find an answer, but we know we can trust you with the worries inside us. Help us always to look to you when we are unsure. **Amen.**

Hymn Christ's is the world in which we move. [Dream Angus]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTIwZ3XNyEY>

Christ's is the world in which we move.
Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love,
Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,
and Christ is the One who meets us here.

Refrain: To the lost Christ shows his face;
to the unloved He gives His embrace;
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ, makes, with His friends, a touching place

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Feel for the people we most avoid.
Strange or bereaved or never employed;
fear that their living is all in vain.

Feel for the parents who lost their child,
feel for the woman whom men have defiled.
Feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,
and feel for the weary who find no rest.

Feel for the lives by life confused.
Riddled with doubt, in loving abused;
Feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.

Prayers of intercession

Eternal, Everlasting God you are eternally patient with us, and no matter what we do, you persevere with us. Help each of us to show patience and perseverance with others; and with this prayer in our hearts and on our lips, we pray for those we know and love and hear of this day.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

For those struggling to accept the Easter message of resurrection; for those who long to have faith but miss the final step; who long to see Jesus but doubt what they see, seeing only as if in a mirror dimly; who long to hear your word, but

grasp only a muffle and murmur; who yearn to feel your presence but shy away from contact; for those who need convincing of the truth in an age of fake news and skewed views.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

For those whose health and well-being teeter on the edge of uncertainty or insanity, pain, disfigurement and anguish; for those living with Covid in all its forms, immediate and long term; for those whose treatment is delayed and who are ground down by the mental and physical pain that can't yet be treated; for those who live with darkness and dread bombarding their waking moments. We think particularly of Chloe, Julie and Guys daughter as she awaits surgery, In a time of silence we bring others known to us, needing your love touch and our thoughts and prayers.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

For those without meaning and purpose in their lives, who wake to the morning light and dread the empty day that lies ahead; for those who dread the dark nights of wakefulness, tossing and turning; for those who feel there is no hope for tomorrow, no vision for the future, no plan for their lives; for those without a stable home life, without meaningful work and prospects.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

For those without the shelter of a home, with no roots to a place, who are constantly forced to move on, change direction through war or violence, political unrest, prejudice, religious hatred and so much more; for those who seek refuge in new places and new lands with new languages and new 'norms'.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

For the countries who make news headlines and then slip from view with little changed; for the people of Myanmar, Mozambique, and Ethiopia whose struggle goes on to keep life together against so much hatred, prejudice greed and violence. We cannot imagine or comprehend the lives these people are forced to live, the challenges they face, the fragility and fear and destitution of their lives.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

For those who are victims of modern slavery, who are all but imprisoned, abused, made to feel worthless, undervalued, inhuman, who are frightened and bewildered and a long way from home, family and support.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

For those areas in our country where unrest and unhappiness with government plans or police tactics or religious divides bring people out onto the streets in protest. For those who want to peacefully make their stand but who are overtaken by the violent few who ‘up the anti’ and go armed for violence; for those who perpetrate the unrest that they may be helped to see that violence is not the answer and will often only fuel more problems; for those who make plans and laws and those who need to police society – may they and we seek unity, purpose and love.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

The disciples gathered behind closed doors not only for fear of the Jewish authorities but they gathered to grieve the loss of their friend, their leader, their visionary, their Lord. We pray for those who mourn the loss of family or friends and especially those who have had to grieve alone in these Covid times without the support of those who love them – may the gentle easing of restrictions and the lengthening of the days bring them light and hope for the life ahead.

God, in whom we believe: **Bless them.**

And for ourselves we pray, that we might banish shadows that hold us back and keep us fixed to what we are familiar with, even the new familiar, when we can be afraid to step out, step on, step forward, step up – we pray that we might know the wisdom of the psalmist, the grace of God, the blessing of the Spirit, the love and companionship of each other and the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

These are our prayers this day.

Amen.

Hymn. StF 668 Teach me, my God and King.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dByo0q3pNj8>

Blessing.

Father, your Son Jesus did not reject Thomas. Help us to value questions and questioners, and not to reject either when they are awkward; to discern what kind of evidence is appropriate and trustworthy in different situations; and to have the courage ourselves to be questioners and seekers of truth. **Amen**

Let us join together in the Grace. The Grace.....

This service was produced by East Leake’s Local Pastor Chris Watkins.