

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 30th January 2022

Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

Please take a moment of silence before we begin, you may wish to light a candle

Psalm 48: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King. (verses 1,2)

Opening Prayer

Lord, direct our thoughts and teach us to pray. Lift our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn: Praise to the holiest in the height

1 Praise to the holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise:
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.

2 O loving wisdom of our God!
when all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.

3 O generous love! that he, who smote
in man for man the foe,
the double agony in Man
for man should undergo;

4 And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his brethren, and inspire
to suffer and to die.

5 Praise to the holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise:
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) (Public Domain)

Introduction to Confession

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world and knows our every deed. Let us open ourselves to the Lord and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Confession

We have not always worshipped God, our creator. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**
We have not always followed Christ, our Saviour. Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**
We have not always trusted in the Spirit, our guide. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May God who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to be our Saviour forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve him in the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Collect

God of heaven, you send the gospel to the ends of the earth and your messengers to every nation: send your Holy Spirit to transform us by the good news of everlasting life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 43:27-44:4

When these days are over, then from the eighth day onwards the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt-offerings and your offerings of well-being; and I will accept you, says the Lord God.

Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut. The Lord said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut. Only the prince, because he is a prince, may sit in it to eat food before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.

Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and lo! the glory of the Lord filled the temple of the Lord; and I fell upon my face.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

New Testament: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Reflection

What a fabulous letter of encouragement Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth, I often wonder if we could still address each other in the way Christians addressed each other in the Bible, it would make such a difference to our relationships. Such love and respect shown, even when the message is difficult to relay. This passage is very popular at weddings, of course.

Some of you will remember the Bride Valley Wedding Festival we held back in February 2020, it was such a great weekend of celebration and friendship right across our churches and schools. Beginning with the schools who explored the story of the Wedding in Cana. Then all churches open on the Saturday with various examples of wedding displays, including hats galore even churchwardens in tails handing out champagne.

On the Sunday each church held a service to celebrate loving relationships, using this same passage from Corinthians to explore what human love actually means.

We also held our marriage preparation workshop that weekend for those planning to get married in 2020. But then we went into lockdown, most of the weddings were postponed and ministry across the Bride Valley (and everywhere else) became very different for a long while. It's easy for us to look back on the last two years and think about all the things we have been unable to do.

That's why for today, we have decided to use our United Service to celebrate all the things we have been able to do. One of the first things we did was initiate the telephone service, still going strong and even having a congregation of its own now, helping several people who are unable to get to church for a variety of reasons. Litton Cheney choir used the opportunity to record songs, they did this in their own homes, singing individually and yet we were able to listen to their voices blended together which became a beautiful part of our worship when restrictions meant we were unable to sing in church. We were blessed across the whole valley by people going the extra mile to support and care for each other. God's love in action.

Churches may have been closed but I was still able to marry a couple in their own home with a special license from the Archbishop. God's presence didn't leave us. Then in October 2020 we held a joint wedding and baptism, numbers allowed at that time were only 15 and it poured with rain, but do you know what, that family attended a wedding they'll never forget, it was so full of love.

We met together using ZOOM, online and we made new friends this way. It opened up deep conversations about our faith, we particularly enjoyed doing the Bible Course as a group. We even ended up doing the 2021 marriage preparation workshop online.

We had thought that the planned training of Lay Pastoral Assistants and Lay Worship Leaders would need to be postponed, but then agreed to start out and if eventually we would need to go online we would. We ended up with the Bishop commissioning 8 new LPAs and 3 LWLs in February 2021!

We were eventually allowed back into church and we improvised, holding many of the services outdoors, including a baptism at Swyre. It was amazing to see lots of people, some who hadn't been before or hadn't been for many years returning to join us. We did everything we could to keep people safe. Our Tots Time restarted and has now moved to weekly sessions, held safely outdoors, unless it rains which has only happened once in the whole seven months

We also managed to start up new things in September 2021, especially for children and families: Breakfast Church at Shipton Gorge and Big Q Church – after school at Thorners.

I would like to encourage you all to keep praying, keep being part of the family of God in this place we all call home. Despite what goes on in the world around us, despite any personal struggles, God is with us and proves this time and again. **Amen.**

Hymn: Purify my heart

1 Purify my heart,
let me be as gold
and precious silver.

Purify my heart,
let me be as gold,
pure gold.

*Refiner's fire,
my heart's one desire
is to be holy,
set apart for You Lord.*

*I choose to be holy,
set apart for You my master,
ready to do Your will.*

*[Take my life, Lord, and let it be,
consecrated, Lord to thee.]*

2 Purify my heart,
cleanse me from within
and make me holy.
Purify my heart,
cleanse me from my sin,
deep within.

Chorus

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Let us declare our faith in God

We believe in God the Father, **from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.**

We believe in God the Son, **who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, **who strengthens us with power from on high.**

We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession prepared by Lay Worship Leader; Heather Goffee. Let us pray

Heavenly Father, we pray for your Church worldwide, and especially today, for your church here in the Bride Valley. We ask that through the conviction of our words and the integrity of our deeds we may show the power and the love of you, our God, to all those with whom we share our lives.

Your Son, Christ Jesus, taught of the coming of a kingdom of righteousness and peace. He inaugurated that new creation in the life of the church. We pray that we all may be found faithful to such a precious inheritance and to such a high calling. We ask that in our shared life together, we may demonstrate the pattern of the life of your Son, in whose name we pray.

We pray for this beautiful area in which we live, and we lift one another to you:

For the parish of *Littlebredy* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For the parish of *Longbredy* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For the parish of *Puncknowle* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For the parish of *Swyre* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For the *Othona Community* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For the parish of *Shipton Gorge* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For *Burton Bradstock School*, the teachers, staff and pupils Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For the parish of *Burton Bradstock & Chilcombe* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come:

Thy will be done.

For *Thorner's School*, the teachers, staff and pupils Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

For the parish of *Litton Cheney* and all who live and work there Thy kingdom come: **Thy will be done.**

Merciful Father: **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Let us pray that we may know life and hope in Jesus Christ as we say:

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

Forgive us our sins,

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: Love divine, all loves excelling

1 Love divine all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

2 Come, almighty, to deliver;
let us all thy grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.

Thee would we be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

3 Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place;
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) (Public Domain)

To him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever.

Amen.

The service ends with the Peace

Peace to you from God our Father who hears our cry.

Peace from his Son Jesus Christ, whose death brings healing.

Peace from the Holy Spirit who gives us life and strength.

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**