

**THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:
Telephone Service for Sunday 18 July 2021 – Trinity 7**

The service for today has been prepared by Liz Howlett and can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley churches for the 7th Sunday after Trinity.

The Lord be with you
And also with you.

Psalm 23: 1 – 3

The Lord is my shepherd; therefore, can I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters. He shall refresh my soul and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Hymn: All creatures of our God and king

All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam:
*O praise him, O praise him
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

Ye light of evening, find a voice:
O praise him ...

Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship him in humbleness,
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One.
O praise him ...

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
Ye clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
Thou rising morning, in praise rejoice,

William Henry Draper (1855-1933) CCLI Licence 2370586

Invitation to Confession

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

Prayers of Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Generous God, you give us gifts and make them grow: though our faith is small as mustard seed, make it grow to your glory and the flourishing of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm 23: 4, 5

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me. You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; you have anointed my head with oil and my cup shall be full.

First Reading

Ephesians 2: 11 – end

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments

and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Gospel Reading

Mark 6: 30 – 34, 53 – end

The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Reflection

Following a recent celebration at Othona of the first community to live on that site and its founder, this reflection has a similar focus.

At Othona last weekend, there was a centenary celebration, with talks, a lecture by an Oxford professor and a dramatised reading of letters and reminiscences. Some people stayed for the whole event and others came for part. What was the centenary celebrating? A hundred years ago, on 31 May 1921, Miss Adela Marion Curtis bought 17 acres of land to the south of the Coast Road, which at that time was an unmetalled lane, dusty in summer and muddy in winter. There were no other houses and no trees – it was a field of rough scrub with a hedge boundary. Miss Curtis was a mystic, a vegetarian, a teacher, whose intention when she came was to retire – she had no thought of starting a community here. Previously she had set up and run a large settlement at Cold Ash in Berkshire through the years of WWI and that had had to close and the property and site sold. Those buildings are now part of the Downe House School campus. The failure of that enterprise had been a bitter blow to her.

Her intention here was to share her life with her nieces, who came from New Zealand as young women at her invitation and together to live a life of self-sufficiency, growing as much of their own food as possible. Their first homes were wooden huts, some of which are still standing, and when she built what is now the main building of the Othona Community, she thought that this was going to be their permanent family home, a farmhouse, known as Little Farm.

Not much more than a year later, however, she had put the farm on the market because her nieces felt it was too lonely for them to live here – they preferred to be in London. If a sale had gone through, Othona would not be here today! Whilst she was waiting for it to be sold, she let rooms in it to some of her former students – for even though she intended to retire, some of them had kept coming down and camping in nearby farms to hear her speak! By 1930 her farm had not sold and she decided to make the best of the situation by advertising it as 'The Bible Students' Colony' – there are still copies of the prospectus in the Othona archive. What kind of life would await the new students when they came? It was to be a combination of learning Miss Curtis' own unique form of meditative study of the bible and practical hands-on gardening and craft work. We know quite a bit about one woman who responded to the call, through various letters and a written reminiscence from her nephew John – Miss Harriette Evelyn Bendy or Sister Evelyn, as she became known in the community. For much of the time she lived in a two-room cottage with no mains water, electricity, gas, or flush toilet. She was a member of that community for almost twenty years, wearing the hand spun and woven robes, which gave the community the nickname of the White Ladies in the local area. As for all the sisters, gardening was a big part of her life here, and in 1939,

her nephew Alan, John's older brother, was appointed head gardener for the whole community – he had just completed his training in horticulture at the college in Cannington near Bridgwater in Somerset. Miss Curtis had strong views about many subjects, believing as she did that they were in accordance with Biblical teaching and practice. Some of them were about use of the land and they really resonate with concerns that are being expressed today, particularly about the environment. She was an early advocate of what became an organic approach to farming, and she deplored the way in which the land largely was neglected in favour of the nationwide move into cities. She followed the methods of Sir Albert Howard in compost making, using all-natural waste products available – this really did involve *all*, including human waste. The addition of that particular ingredient may not catch on today on a large scale, but more and more people are recognising the importance of caring for the earth and the dangers of overuse of artificial chemicals and the threat of global warming. In recent years, the church nationally has adopted five marks of mission, one of which reads as follows: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. More and more churches are taking up the challenge posed, and encouragement offered by the Eco Church scheme to become 'greener'. It is probably fair to say that Miss Curtis would welcome this focus and at the same time she would ask why it has taken the church so long to wake up to what in her eyes was a perfectly obvious requirement and responsibility for those seeking to follow Christ in the world.

The anthem chosen for this service, which we will listen to shortly, is called Touch the earth lightly, with music by David Ogden and words by Shirley Murray. Those lyrics finish this reflection:

Touch the earth lightly

Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger,
who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
we who would foster
clouds of disaster -
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

birth from the burning,
water that blesses and air that is sweet,
health in God's garden,
hope in God's children,
regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living,
God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,
teach us, deflect us,
Christ reconnect us,
using us gently, and making us one.

Shirley E Murray (1931-2020) © 1992 Hope Publishing Company.
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Let there be greening,

In lives where love is born this day
Thanks be to you, O God.
In families where forgiveness is strong today
Thanks be to you, O God.
In nations where wrongs are addressed, where
tenderness is cherished, and where visions for
earth's oneness are served
Thanks be to you, O God.
May those who are weary find rest.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray
**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,**

**May those who carry great burdens for their
people find strength.**
May the midwives of new beginnings in our world
find hope.
**And may the least among us find greatness:
strength in our souls, worth in our words, love in
our living, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

**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**

Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

The Blessing

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect in every good work to do his will; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Hymn: The King of Love my Shepherd is

1 The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine for ever.

4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

2 Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow
with food celestial feedeth.

5 Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me

6 And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never:
good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever.

Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877 CCLI Licence 2370586)

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Prayers adapted from John Philip Newell, *Praying with the Earth: A Prayerbook for Peace*, (The Canterbury Press Norwich: 2011)