

## Call to worship

Lord you have called us here,  
And we have come, to worship you.

Your Spirit is already here amongst us,  
And your love is all around us.

May we know your presence Lord, during this time together. Amen.

**"Welcome to you all this morning, its good to see you here at Bethesda, and its also good to be able to say hello to people in their own homes, whether they are watching a recording or reading the service sheets!"**

I'm Judith. You may be surprised to see me here - but probably not as surprised as I am!! Paul has, despite years of trying, still not managed to work out how to be in two places at the same time. He only realised late on Tuesday evening that he was double booked for today - he had agreed to preach at Haggate some months ago, even putting the date down in his diary, but then he didn't check his diary when it was realised that not only was Alec away today, but also Colin (wedding anniversary) and that Tim might be recovering from the Keswick to Barrow walk yesterday- so he volunteered for Bethesda too!! My apologies on his behalf!



It will be a different service today then from what has become the norm - we won't be singing for a start, although there will be music, and I'll need you to use your imagination for our encounter with Jesus.

Hopefully you won't be too disappointed to hear that you won't have a sermon either!!

You may have noticed that there were some photographs on the screen - showing the beauty of the world God has created for us, in Corporation Park. There will be more as we continue, so please enjoy and give thanks for the wonders of this lovely world."



## We share our notices as we begin our time together.

Refreshments after the service

Coffee Morning - Tuesday @ 10-12

Fellowship Meeting - Thursday @ 7.30pm

Harvest - 26 September (BMS, Foodbank)

Keswick in East Lancashire - 7/8 October

RISE Praise evening - 19 October at Beacon / Zoom

Praying for each other - updated copies available

Thanks from Philip Elson for prayer prior to and following his eye surgery - all well

Morag will be organising Operation Christmas Child again, further details coming soon.

**Let's still our hearts as we come into God's presence and encounter God together.**

**We watch, or read, words by Phil Jump, our Regional Minister, based on Exodus 33, 12-23.**

"If we have found favour in your sight O Lord, show us your ways. Help us to know you more; build us into a people worthy of your name. May your presence be always with us, for without your presence we are only in wilderness. In the midst of this world's struggles, may we stand out and be recognised as those with whom the Lord dwells. Whether scattered or gathered, we are your people; may Christ be seen in each other. Show us your glory we pray; open our eyes to your goodness; reveal to us the vastness of your undeserved grace, your mercy beyond measure. Hold us fast as we seek your face; draw us deeper into all that you are. Make this familiar place holy through your presence; and equip us for all that this journey requires."

**We join together in prayer;** you are invited to join in saying the words in bold type:  
Gracious God, you have loved us from the beginning of time and remembered us when we were in trouble.

**Your mercy endures for ever.**

Redeeming God, you have come to us in Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins,

**Your mercy endures for ever.**

Holy God, you have sent us your Spirit, to comfort us and lead us into all truth.

**Your mercy endures for ever. Amen.**



**Today we continue with our theme of "Encounters with Jesus:",** perhaps not some of the encounters you may have anticipated but occasions worthy of note I believe.

For our first encounter we listen to Jane, reading from **The Passion translation.**

**Mark 4 35-41**

### **Jesus Stills a Storm**

That same day, after it grew dark, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." Leaving the crowd behind, the disciples got into the boat in which Jesus was already sitting, and they took him with them.

Other boats sailed with them. Suddenly, as they were crossing the lake, a ferocious storm arose, with violent winds and waves that were crashing into the boat until it was nearly swamped. But Jesus was calmly sleeping in the stern, resting on a cushion. So they shook him awake, saying, "Teacher, don't you even care that we are all about to die!" Fully awake, he rebuked the storm and shouted to the sea, "Hush! Be still!" All at once the wind stopped howling and the water became perfectly calm.



Then he turned to his disciples and said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Haven't you learned to trust yet?" But they were overwhelmed with fear and awe and said to one another, "Who is this man who has such authority that even the wind and waves obey him?"

Judith: "**An encounter between Jesus and his disciples** – people he knew well, who had been with him for some time and had seen the miracles he had performed and had listened to his stories. These were fishermen – experienced fishermen, used to the local conditions, and they must have been aware that there was a risk of storms. No doubt they had been caught in them before. This time however, it was different, they were so terrified that they probably couldn't believe Jesus could actually be asleep – they so truly believed their lives were in danger that they woke him. And what happened? Exactly what they had hoped for – he calmed the storm and saved their lives. It was perhaps the first time they had personally experienced his power and they looked at him with fresh eyes – with fear and awe we are told, as they said- who is this man? He brought peace – physical peace on this occasion as he calmed the storm, and today he continues to bring peace into our hearts and lives."

### **We pray together:**

In the storms of life Jesus you say 'Peace, be still.'  
So as we worship today, we say '**Peace, be still.**'

Thank you for today and for the blessings that you bring to us this new day. '**Peace, be still.'**

Calming God, who speaks peace over the raging sea, we invite you into our worship.  
**'Peace, be still.'**

Caring God, who encourages us to trust, may our ears be attentive to listen to your voice. Open our hearts to receive so that we might leave changed.

**'Peace, be still.'**

Ever present God who is with us in the boat of life, open our eyes so that we can see your presence.

**'Peace, be still.'**

As we navigate the storms of life together, we say Jesus we need you and we need each other.

**'Peace, be still.'**

Strengthen and embolden us during this journey and breathe wind into our sails.

**'Peace, be still.'**

Amen.

**Those at Bethesda are now able to watch the Lord's prayer, in sign language.**

### **Judith continues:**

"You may know that whilst our church was closed, I found it helpful to join with The NWBA services, either live or watching them later, and they used music from a variety of sources, (some churches and individuals were recording music especially for use at this time - Lymm Baptist Church have a particularly talented group which includes musicians who play with the Halle orchestra!). One of the resources they used on a number of occasions was written by a songwriting group called Resound Worship. I particularly appreciated this simple melody, and invite you to join in watching, (or reading), Jesus, lead us to the Father, before Debbie leads us in our prayers for others."

**The words are very straightforward, and the song has a very steady tempo:**

Jesus, lead us to the Father, by your Spirit, help us draw near.

Jesus, lead us to the Father, by your Spirit, help us draw near.

As we come with awe and gladness, help us draw near.

As we come with awe and gladness, help us draw near.

Alleluia, alleluia, help us draw near.

Alleluia, alleluia, help us draw near.

(It begins with a solo voice singing the first two lines, then a different voice sings the following lines. It then builds and becomes a round, with the solo voice repeating Jesus lead us to the Father, whilst the next voices also sing their parts, so that all the words are sung simultaneously, slowly diminishing in volume as the song concludes)



**Debbie leads us in our Prayers of intercession.**

"Lord, thank you that you are the rock, the solid foundation on which we can build our lives and know that that you will never let us down. Thank you that your works are perfect and all your ways are just, that when we ask you to intervene we can be certain that you will do the right thing. Thank you that you are a faithful God, that you will never leave us nor forsake us, that you are always ready to listen to our prayers and answer them. We do not deserve such a relationship with you and know that it is only because of Jesus's death that we are able to encounter you on a daily basis. Forgive us when we take the privilege of prayer for granted or when we forget to share our joys and troubles with you and try to deal with things on our own.

We want to bring the country of Afghanistan before you this morning - it has undergone such a sudden change and we fear the outcome of the Taliban government for many of the country's citizens. We pray that you will speak to the hearts of those in charge and turn them away from evil deeds and wrong decisions. We pray for your

justice to be done, that all those who live in Afghanistan may live in safety and prosper. We pray especially at this time for the protection of Christians in a country where it was already very difficult to follow you. We pray that you would be very close to them, that you would strengthen them and enable them to show your love and share their faith, even in these dark times, and know that they are not forgotten. We pray also for girls and women who are being denied many of the freedoms they have enjoyed, such as education and the ability to move around freely, and we pray that these will be restored to them - especially we pray that you will protect those who have spoken out and campaigned for women's rights. We pray too, for those who have fled and are now refugees, we pray that they will soon find a place to settle and will be made welcome and be able to start to rebuild their lives.

We pray too, for the parts of the world who are experiencing the very real consequences of climate change, whether that is drought, extremely high temperatures or flooding. May you help world leaders to find and agree on the ways that we can all work together to care for the world you created, so that all may be able to live safely and well.

We continue to uphold our government, at both the national and local levels, as they have to make decisions related to Covid, what to allow and what to restrict. We pray that you will grant wisdom, as they seek to balance the competing needs of health and economy, as they seek to create a more normal existence, whilst still seeking to protect us money as possible from the virus. We thank you for the vaccination program and pray that, as a country, you will help us play our part in giving vaccines and support, especially to poorer countries with less resources. We pray that, as individuals, you would help us all to continue to think of others and put their needs and concerns about safety above our own. Give us a sense of caution where it is needed in our daily interactions with others. We pray that you would especially protect school students, as they now mix without the need for masks or social distancing.

We think, too, of the many young people about to start university, maybe after almost 2 years of disrupted schooling. We pray for all those who are nervous or worried, that you would help them to settle in and find good friends. We pray in particular for Christian Unions, local churches and Christian students, that they would be able to make their presence known and provide a welcome and support that reflects the love Jesus has for each and every student. May many take the new start as an opportunity to consider the gospel for themselves and may those who already know you continue to follow you and grow strong in their faith. We pray that you would guide Christian Unions in all that they do and would bless their work for you.

We pray now for our fellowship - for all who are ill or awaiting appointments, for those undergoing treatment or awaiting a diagnosis. Please be with them at this worrying time and may they know that all their fears and frustrations can be shared with you, that they are not alone. We thank you for answered prayers for members of our church family recently who have been ill - continue to bless their recovery we pray. We pray also for those who are lonely and missing family or loved ones. Please encourage them and may they know that you will always be a friend to them.

We pray for your blessing on the Tuesday morning drop-in that has started - we pray that you will draw in people from the Galligreaves community, especially those with needs or who are lonely - may this give us an opportunity to get to know them and help them. We pray, too, for your continued blessing on the Tiddlywinks group and Saturday film club. As we seek to explore doing messy church will you also guide and show us what this should look like.

Thank you Lord that you care about all these things and also that you know and care about things close to our hearts as individuals. I will just leave a few moments now for each of us to bring before the Lord people and situations that are on our hearts this morning ....

Once again, thank you, Lord, that you are our rock, that you are faithful and all your ways are perfect. Thank you that we know you will listen to our petitions and that you will respond in just the right way for each person and situation prayed for. Praise you, Lord Jesus, for being caring and powerful and that we can leave our prayers with you, for you are strong and mighty to act on our behalf.

In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen."

**We reflect together, as we listen to the words and music of the Taize song: O Lord hear my prayer**

Oh, Lord hear my prayer,  
Oh, Lord hear my prayer,  
when I call answer me.  
Oh, Lord hear my prayer,  
Oh, Lord hear my prayer,  
come and listen to me.

Whilst this is quietly played in the background, Judith prays:

"Jesus, you calmed the storm, commanded the waves to become ripples, and the wind to fall silent, Your words calmed the hearts of your friends.

Be still. Be still and believe. Be still and know.

**Jesus, calm the storms in the hearts of your people.**

In the hearts of those who do not feel safe in the place they should call home,  
In the hearts of those who live in war-torn nations, fearing for their families,  
In the hearts of those whose loved ones are far away, fighting in the midst of conflict,

**Jesus, calm the storms in the hearts of your people**

In the hearts of those whose lives have been torn apart by grief,  
In the hearts of those who live with regret,

In the hearts of those who feel helpless in the face of impossible circumstances,  
In the hearts of those who worry about someone they love,

**Jesus, calm the storms in the hearts of your people,**

Jesus, help us to calm the storms in the hearts of your people.

Compel us to speak peace,  
Embody peace,  
Make peace,  
In all we say,  
In all we do,  
In all we are,

In your gracious and beautiful name, we pray, **Amen.**"

**Again, Judith continues:**

"It's been a strange time hasn't it? I guess we have all found that there have been things we have missed over the last months - family, friends, places, routines, popping to the shops, for some of us especially charity shops!! Things we wouldn't normally have thought twice about have become significant in all sorts of ways.

So how do we react? How have we reacted? For some it has been incredibly difficult: some have responded stoically, some have questioned the rationale behind decisions!! For most of us though I guess, we have thought more about the past, what we used to do, people we used to see, places we used to visit. Some people and places have become more important in our memories - which in itself is an amazing gift.

So how do we remember? And what do we remember? That will be different for all of us, no one else has exactly the same memories as we have - even in the closest relationships we remember things differently - there used to be a song - ah yes, I remember it well!

We also read about an occasion where Jesus was asked to remember - as he was on the cross, when he was asked by one of the thieves to remember him when he came into his kingdom, and his incredible response today you will be with me in paradise- so we know that Jesus can and will remember us, all are important to him.

What has achieved particular significance in your lives? What do you miss or have you missed?

I have been very privileged over the years to be involved with the Friday luncheon club, and in particular the short communion service we held every month - a time when we could reflect in a small, intimate group, on the wonder of Christ and his sacrifice for us all. I have also been able to share in celebrating communion with people at home, or in hospital, even on a driveway, and some of these have been particularly moving times.

We haven't always eaten bread and drunk wine - in fact for many years LRBC didn't use wine at all but Cvit - a blackcurrant drink! Vimto also looks the part - but I've shared communion over a cup of tea and a biscuit; we talk about the ordinary things of life being made special, I believe the fellowship and relationship between ourselves and Christ are more important than the symbols we may or may not use to represent Christ's body and blood.

So where does this fit with "Encounters with Jesus?"

Already today we have listened to Jane reading about one encounter his friends, or disciples, remembered, I'm sure, for the rest of their lives. I'd like us now to use our imagination as we remember together another occasion that the disciples would have imprinted on their memories forever - although they didn't know at the time, it would be the last meal they would share with Jesus.

The Passover meal was of course highly significant to the Jewish people, reminding them as it did, and does, of their escape, by God's grace, from Egypt. This particular meal though might have been especially meaningful for the disciples after the events of the week - the wonder of Palm Sunday, alongside the growing tensions in the days following. It maybe that they were looking forward to sharing the special meal with Jesus, thinking that everything would be alright in the end, things would settle down again. They must have been puzzled by the apparent cloak and dagger (perhaps not a good metaphor!) of the decision where to meet, but maybe thought its ok, Jesus has got it all planned- which of course was quite true, but not in the way they anticipated.

We don't have bread or wine here today, but that is no bar to being there: I invite you to close your eyes and picture yourselves present at the table - the table that is open to all. We are all invited:

Invitation:

Jesus the Master Carpenter,  
Teacher, Healer and Friend.  
invites each of us to His table.  
He knows each of us by name.  
He knows our faults and fears,  
our needs and concerns,  
and He still says come to the table!

The table is ready,  
so come, your place is waiting,  
and is set with bread and wine,  
the things we are used to,  
which will be made special by the Holy Spirit.

Shall we accept the Master's invitation?  
Yes

Then let the feast begin.

The Narrative:

Lord Jesus, on the night you were betrayed, you graciously sat down with your friends, your disciples who had been with you for three years. And using the ordinary things of life, bread and wine, bread made by hand from wheat ground into flour, wine made from the grapes of the vine, you made them special with a blessing.

After breaking the bread you shared it with them saying,  
This represents my body which will be broken for each one of you,  
every time you eat it do so in remembrance of me.

After pouring wine into the cup you shared it with them saying,  
This represents my blood which will be shed for each one of you,  
every time you drink it do so in remembrance of me.

What must the disciples have thought as they heard these words - how would we have reacted? How do we respond today? Of course we have the advantage of knowing about the joy of Easter day that is to come - but is that actually preferable to not knowing that Jesus will be brutally killed the following day?

Can we pray these words?

#### The Thanksgiving:

Gracious God,  
We thank you that you sent your Son,  
Jesus Christ to be our Saviour,  
in return we offer our lives to His service.

As we remember what He did in an upper room,  
we ask that you will send down your Holy Spirit, upon us all.  
The gifts of bread and wine we imagine sharing today are gifts from you; as the Holy Spirit would take and transform them,  
may we also be transformed, just as those first Disciples were,  
and may we be made ready, to follow in their footsteps.

#### The Peace:

May each of us feel the peace which the Spirit brings: the peace Jesus left us with, and be not troubled or afraid, and have great courage.

Peace be with you:

So, in our hearts and minds, we share God's gifts:

\_ We take the bread and break it,  
as the body of Christ was broken:  
broken, as God's heart was broken:  
broken, as the seal of the tomb was broken:  
broken to make each of us whole.

The body of Christ, broken for us,  
Eat and remember. [we eat the bread together]

We take this wine  
It's a cup that brings us together, even in our social distancing, a cup of forgiveness and blessing.  
The blood of Christ, poured out for us,

Drink and remember. [we drink the wine together]

Thanks be to God.

**Heavenly Father,**

Thank you for the grace that makes space for us at your table.

Thank you for the familiar and beloved faces here and in our hearts and imaginations.

Thank you for the closeness we experience through both a physical presence and in our thoughts, and for being given an opportunity to share in worship together,  
Thank you for changing us.

In response, and having been nourished and strengthened, may we continue to live our lives filled with your uncontrollable love that spills over to bless the world, and may we be given the courage to change things for the better, now and ever more. Amen.

**As we recall those words spoken from the cross, we give thanks that we are so known and loved by God that Jesus remembers each and every one of us."**



**We watch on the screen (or read the words at home) another Taize chant:**

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom  
Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom

**As we bring our time together to a close, we say together the words of our final hymn, either aloud or in our hearts – it would usually be sung to the tune of The Ash Grove, so you may have the lilt of that tune in your minds as we read:**

Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,  
the people of God from His table take leave.  
The Supper is ended, O now be extended  
the fruits of his service in all who believe.

The seed of His teaching, our hungry souls reaching,  
shall blossom in action for all humankind.  
His grace did invite us, His love shall unite us  
to work for God's kingdom, his purpose to find.

With praise and thanksgiving to God ever-living,  
the tasks of our everyday life we will face.  
Our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,  
embracing as neighbours all those of each race.

One feast that has fed us, one light that has led us;  
unite us as one in this life that we share.  
Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving  
give honour to Christ and His name that we bear.

**Judith invited those at Bethesda to join in the words of the Benediction saying the words in bold type:**

We have seen your glory here, O Lord  
**May we see it in the world.**  
We have known your presence here, O Lord  
**May we know it everywhere.**  
We have received your love, O Lord,  
**May we give you ours.**  
Through Christ our Lord

**Amen**

**And finally Judith shared a Blessing:**

Go in peace, love and care for one another and those you meet in Christ's name.  
And may the Lord our God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
bless you and keep you safe until we meet again.

**Amen.**

**Peace be with you (signed)**

**Our time together concluded as we listened to the words of a Video blessing being sung over us.**

May the grace of Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the spirit be with us.

The Lord bless us, and keep us, his face shine upon us, his grace and his peace rest on us. Amen.