

North West Wiltshire Pastorate
Worship for Sunday April 18th 2021

We start by watching or listening to Stuart Townend's song, "Christ Be In My Waking".

<https://youtu.be/X4emGI1gHPA>

Jesus said 'Peace be with you.'
Let us step away from the busyness of the day;
allow our minds to clear the clutter,
encourage our thoughts to be still,
and find space to worship God.

Let us pray,

Eternal God,
In response to the words 'peace be with you,'
minds were swept into turmoil,
the appearance was unexpected, unplanned and unnerving,
feelings we know ourselves in the aftermath of Easter.
We gather in worship,
not as we would wish,
but in what we still call the new,
the new that has become the norm.
You open your arms in welcome,
but our hesitancy reveals our fear;
a result of the unknown that is so prevalent right now,
a symptom of anxiety about the future,
a reflection of a struggle to trust when
the answers we seek are not to be found – yet.

God who is love,
pure, unconditional, unlimited, love.
Surround us with the love we need,
that gives us the courage to move from the dark places
to the light of revelation
and the calm of common ground.
Amen.

Our readings today are from Psalm 4, and our Gospel, Luke chapter 24, verses 36-48

Psalm 4, by Malcolm Guite

Till troubles cease and only joys remain
Take refuge in the shelter of his love
Who hears your call and feels with you your pain.

Who does not keep his distance, high above,
But brings his light into your little room,
Nestles and settles with you like the dove

In its familiar dovecote. From the womb
Of Mary to her house in Nazareth,
The upper chamber to the empty tomb,

He comes to share with you your every breath
And to commune with you. To every heart,
That opens to him he will bring new birth,

For every ending offer a new start.
Lie down in peace and trust and take your rest
Safe in the love of one who'll never part.

You are witnesses

What is your 'go to' action when something has not gone according to plan?

Mine tends to be a cup of tea and a bar of Cadburys, I suppose I should say

"other chocolate is available" but in all honesty nothing else works for me.

If the event has really shaken me though, then I admit that what I need is space;

Lots of space.

And time.

And maybe a re-programming of what I thought I knew/believed/thought absolute.

I'm not too sure how I would have coped with Jesus' appearance.

Or indeed his bestowing of the title of witness, with all that implies.

Vernon Watkins puts it like this ...

This for which I care,

By the crowd denied,

Holds a truth so clear,

By none identified.

I would expound it here,

But my tongue is tied.

*What was the worst position, to be the one doing the convincing?
Or the one needing to be convinced?
The ones whose minds needed to be opened –
But wait, that implies that Jesus' followers since have open minds,
Need no encouragement to see things differently,
Have it all worked out ...*

*Luke puts a stress on the physical, what is happening is not the product
of a creative soul or, a vibrant imagination,
whilst there is clearly an emotive aspect to the risen Jesus,
it is an aspect that speaks to the personal alone.*

*The Easter stories move swiftly from the heavenly grace
which raised Jesus from the dead,
to the earthly realities.
Chief of which is witness and testimony.
They go together, a package
and this is just another stage on the journey that is
God's startling revelation.
The promise fulfilled in Jesus marries divine grace and human response.*

*Which do you find easier?
To receive divine grace and be worthy of it,
or giving an account of yourself?
The marrying of divine grace and human response
has been the central conviction of our faith
from its earliest days,
it's the central conviction – and one of the hardest components.*

*Those who had shared with Jesus, 'rushed back'
Some seven miles –
A long journey then, nothing of significance today.
What would we deem a significant journey?
Who would we want to share the important things with?*

*Today's thematic title is Open minds.
I leave you to consider how best you'd describe
the openness of your mind.
Amen.*

As a prayer at this point in worship we will listen to The Prayer, using it personally and reflectively.

<https://youtu.be/eor6Tb72zA4>

When our words are a jumble – you give them sense and meaning.
When we are rooted where we stand – you give us your feet to stand on.
When we close our minds because it is all too much – you show us what trust can achieve.
Let us know your presence with us
In all we do, wherever we go, whatever decisions we make,
guide us, inspire us,
lead us and bless us.
Amen.