



## Stamford Methodist Church and Circuit



### Online Worship : Sunday 15th May 2022 5th Sunday after Easter – Christian Aid Week “Behold, I am doing a new thing”

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#### **Introductory hymn: New every morning (Singing the Faith 137)**

Welcome to worship from Stamford Methodist Circuit. You are most welcome.

As we come to worship in this season, the heart of the Christian year, we share the Easter acclamation:

Alleluia! The Lord is risen

**He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

We join in Brian Wren's great Easter **hymn**

#### **Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.**

The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.

#### **Our prayers of adoration and confession**

Glory to you, Creator God:  
you raised Jesus from the grave,  
bringing us victory over death

Creator God, God beyond us  
**we give you glory**

Glory to you, Redeemer God  
for us and for our salvation  
you overcame death  
and opened the gate to everlasting life

Redeemer God, God alongside us  
**we give you glory**

Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

*Words: Brian Wren. Singing the Faith 297  
© 1995 Hope Publishing Company*

Glory to you, Spirit God:  
you lead us into the truth  
and breathe new life into us.

Spirit God, God unbounded  
**we give you glory**

*[based on Methodist Worship Book, Easter Season]*

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### **Prayer of confession**

It's easy where we are for our hearts to become hardened.

From time to time, we need to expose ourselves to areas of hurt and human suffering because when our hearts are soft God can use us.

In confession, we say, *Yes God, my heart is in your hands. Soften my heart, soften my heart towards people who matter to you.*

**Loving God,**

**We have sinned against you and those who matter to you.**

**We have looked away from those who long for change.**

**We have not heard those who speak up for love.**

**Our hearts have sometimes been cold.**

**Lord, forgive us and transform us.**

**Help us to see with your eyes.**

**Help us listen as if you were speaking.**

**Show us how to live as if we believe in a new tomorrow.**

**Through Jesus Christ our Lord**

**who walked alongside us.**

**Amen**

May our passionate God  
who makes all things new  
forgive us and renew us,  
draw us close and warm our hearts.

**Amen**

*[prayer from Christian Aid Week 2010]*

Almighty God,  
of your own free goodness and mercy  
you have created us,  
and through the resurrection  
of your only-begotten Son  
you have given us hope;  
guard us by your love  
and, in your wisdom, keep us in eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

*[Collect from Methodist Worship Book, Easter Season]*

### **For our younger members (of any age!)**

Anyone who's a fan of Strictly Come Dancing will remember Rose Ayling-Ellis and Giovanni Pernice doing their special Couple's Choice dance which made many of us, for the first time, really think about what it might be like to not be a hearing person. They had been changing perceptions since their first dance. But I don't know anyone who

watched this – first time, second time or twentysecond time – and wasn't and isn't moved by it.

Perhaps more than anything else in their series, it changed people's ideas about responding to deaf people.

(You can see Rose and Gio dancing *Symphony* online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QejOzrlovTQ>)

This morning's reading from the Bible is from the early days of the Church, after Jesus had gone, but before the message really began to spread out. This is Peter, who'd always stuck to the rules, suddenly being taken across the boundaries. What happened changed Peter's ideas about who could be a Christian. In the Bible, this is part of Acts chapter 10.

### **Our Bible reading**

Peter was staying with a family in Joppa, where he had already raised Dorcas, one of the fellowship there, from death. A centurion from the nearby Roman town of Caesarea had asked him to come there, because he wanted to hear the Good News first hand. Peter was convinced, by a vision, that he should stop thinking that only Jews could become Christians.

**Read:** Acts 10: 34-48 (read the whole chapter if you have time!)

Our **hymn** reminds us of what Peter learned. (If you are also sharing the online service, the film there is a different version.)

**1 In Christ there is no east or west,**  
in him no south or north,  
but one great fellowship of love  
throughout the whole wide earth.

3 Join hands, then, people of the faith,  
whate'er your race may be.  
All children of the living God  
are surely kin to me.

2 In Christ shall true hearts everywhere  
their high communion find.  
His service is the golden cord  
close binding humankind.

4 In Christ now meet both east and west,  
in him meet south and north.  
All Christlike souls are joined as one  
throughout the whole wide earth.

*Words: alt'd from John Oxenham (1852-1941)  
original version Hymns & Psalms 758*

### **A time of reflection**

*Lord, make us holy in your truth. Your word is truth. [John 17:17]*

Behold, I am doing a new thing, God says! That's part of a verse from the book of Isaiah the Proclaimer, chapter 42.

Doing a new thing – or rather, God doing a new thing – is one of my most often visited theological ideas. And today is about doing new things. We could have included readings from all over the Bible.

Our passage from Acts is part of a major shift in the focus of the book. Think of Acts, for a moment, as a complete narrative you might read in bed over a few nights. Much less of a commitment than Harry Potter!

Here, in a few chapters from 9 to 12, Luke the narrator makes a enormous transition. It's the change from the immediate post-resurrection story of the community in Jerusalem, to the wide ranging spread of the news to new communities, new cultures. The second

half of the book is truly the story of the creation of a new heaven and a new earth – that's Revelation, chapter 21.

So in Acts chapter 9 we've heard of the conversion of Saul – Paul, of course. Then the narrative shifts back to Peter, and we have the raising of Dorcas at Joppa. Not just the healing, but Peter's conversion – and conversion is not too strong a word! – Peter's conversion to accepting non-Jews as Christian converts.

It's such an important story for Luke that he includes it twice. He uses an author's trick: once, telling the events themselves; and then it's told again, when Peter reports it to the Jerusalem church. Luke is a careful author, so it's deliberate. Don't underestimate the importance of this story!

Luke uses it to mark a double transition in the narrative. Both parts are important: the first one, the change from Peter, if anyone, at centre stage to Paul as undoubtedly the main actor; and second, the change from the story of a Jewish sect to the early years of the worldwide, Gentile-oriented, Church. The narrative from now on shows God doing a new thing.

Not what the eleven had expected. Remember, they elected Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot, Matthias who'd been with them from the beginning; and they stayed centred in Jerusalem. But God broke out of that picture, and gave them Paul.

Paul: Jew, Pharisee, Roman citizen. He wasn't perhaps all that comfortable to live with. He hadn't been with Jesus. But he claimed parity with the other apostles. And he had the primary influence on the development of the church as we now know it, the church of which we are part.

So here's the lesson. Never believe you understand how God will necessarily act! God will always surprise us. We often aren't ready for him to do a new thing. We don't perceive it. We must expect the unexpected.

This Sunday is the start of Christian Aid week. Christian Aid because it is based in Christian giving, not because it only looks after Christians!

I remember while I was still at school, taking part in a house to house collection in the school area; and one person who came to their door said they wouldn't give. Their perception of Christian Aid is that it works overseas (which it does, though not exclusively!) and they thought "charity should begin at home". It was one of those times when you think of the right answer much later, rather than when you need it.

Charity maybe does begin at home; that's where we learn it and practise it. It's where our closest concerns are. Yes, it may begin at home. But it doesn't end there. Love your neighbour just like yourself, Jesus said. This is part of it. And if you think, well, I can't do anything worthwhile – what the Church does, what God does, is take everyone's little and create great things from it. Against expectations!

In the online service we share a video that tells the story of one person whose life has been transformed – something new has happened – through a Christian Aid programme called the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund, working alongside local partner organisations.

Christian Aid is increasingly focussed on climate justice, not least because the effects of climate change were strongly affecting the lives of the world's least advantaged people well before they began to have an impact in our part of the world.

You are probably already part of the Christian Aid journey, If not, I commend it to you. Look out for the envelope through your door, or go online through the links here.

We follow Janet's story\* with a **song**, also from Christian Aid.

### The song of Kingdom Come

I have a voice, you have a voice,  
we have a voice, and when we sing  
together  
a line is drawn, and hope reborn.  
This is the song, the song of Kingdom  
Come

We heard the cries of distant  
neighbours,  
the dispossessed, the refugee,  
and God's command to feed the  
hungry,  
and set them free – and set them free.

We heard the Word, the New  
Commandment,  
and we reclaimed the prophet's call  
to love the world without condition:  
God's love for all – God's love for all.

I have a voice, you have a voice,  
we have a voice, and when we sing  
together  
a line is drawn, and hope reborn.  
This is the song, the song of Kingdom  
Come.

A reckless love that knows no borders,  
that speaks the truth to those in power,  
that shines a light on cruel indifference:  
this is God's hour – this is God's hour.

when we will stand against injustice,  
with all who live against the grain,  
until their poverty is over  
and love shall reign – and love shall  
reign.

I have a voice, you have a voice,  
we have a voice, and when we sing  
together  
a line is drawn, and hope reborn.  
This is the song, the song of Kingdom  
Come.

We won't stand by while sisters suffer,  
or turn blind eyes to ruthless wrong.  
Our psalm of praise will be compassion,  
this Kingdom song – this Kingdom song.

A song of love and liberation,  
of healing hope, and lasting peace,  
a taste of life in all its fullness,  
God's masterpiece – God's  
masterpiece.

I have a voice, you have a voice,  
we have a voice, and when we sing  
together  
a line is drawn, and hope reborn.  
This is the song, the song of Kingdom  
Come.

\* If you have internet access, you can watch Janet's inspiring video on the Christian Aid resource space, and then share with us the Song of Kingdom Come.

<https://christianaid.resourcespace.com/pages/view.php?ref=6551&k=c5e5099242>

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/appeals/son-kingdom-come-hymn-video>

### Our time of prayer.

Keep **silence** for a moment.

Let us pray.

Renew the life and faith of the Church; strengthen our witness;  
and make us one in Christ:

We pray

for the Church throughout the world, both where faith is easy  
and where it is difficult;



for those newly committing themselves to you through baptism or confirmation;  
for those who minister to others, especially those preparing for ordination, and those  
who serve, in your name, in any role.

Grant that we and all who confess that Christ is Lord may be faithful in your service and  
filled with the Spirit,

You are the Lord of life – **inspire us to live as you command**

Guide the nations in the ways of justice, liberty and peace, and help them to seek the  
unity and welfare of all people

We pray

for those who seek a fair and proper use of the world's resources;  
for those who are steering our path through shared difficulties;  
and for those whose task is to lead where there are no simple answers.

Give to all in authority wisdom to know and strength to do what is right.

You are the Lord of life – **inspire us to live as you command**

Comfort those in sorrow; heal the sick in body or in mind and deliver the oppressed.

We pray

for the victims of natural disasters, seeking to rebuild lives;  
for the victims of violence and injustice, and of our human inhumanity;  
those who mourn.

Grant us compassion for all who suffer, and help us so to carry one another's burdens  
that we may fulfil the law of Christ

You are the Lord of life – **inspire us to live as you command**

Receive our thanks and praise for all who have heard your call, and have served you  
faithfully here on earth.

We thank you especially those who have revealed to us your grace in Christ.

May we and all your people share the life and joy of your kingdom

You are the Lord of life – **inspire us to live as you command**

Creator God, we long for your creation to find its perfection. As all peoples are your  
peoples, may all receive your grace and know your light; and share at the last in that  
knowledge of you which is eternal life: through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father ...

### **Closing**

I discovered our **closing hymn** when searching online; it's not in our own hymnbook  
though it is in the United Methodist Hymnal of the American Methodist Church.

**Help us accept each other** as Christ  
accepted us;  
teach us as sister, brother, each person to  
embrace.

Be present, Lord, among us, and bring us  
to believe  
we are ourselves accepted and meant to  
love and live.

Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our  
daily life  
we struggle to be human and search for  
hope and faith.  
Teach us to care for people: for all, not  
just for some,  
to love them as we find them, or as they  
may become.

Let your acceptance change us, so that  
we may be moved,  
in living situations, to do the truth in love;  
to practice your acceptance, until we  
know by heart  
the table of forgiveness and laughter's  
healing art.

### **We go out**

*A prayer from the Iona Community*

Bring us, bright God,  
From yesterday into today and tomorrow.  
Cheer us with courage  
Disturb us with justice  
Safeguard us with wisdom  
Bless us with wonder  
Cherish us with love  
Amaze us with all you are doing which is new.  
And may the blessing of God:  
God the Creator, God the Redeemer, God the Spirit,  
be with us all and stay with us always. Amen.

**Amen.**

***Thankyou for worshipping with us. Wherever you are, whatever your faith, may the blessing of God, Creator, God beyond us; God, Redeemer, God alongside us; and God, Spirit, God unbounded be with us all now and for ever.***

**Amen.**

You can join us for Evening Prayers online every evening at 7 p.m., either through our Facebook page or by searching YouTube for *Stamford Methodist Church and Circuit*.

Lord, for today's encounters with all who  
are in need,  
who hunger for acceptance, for  
righteousness and bread:  
we need new eyes for seeing, new hands  
for holding on.  
Renew us with your Spirit; Lord, free us,  
make us one!

Words: Fred Kaan  
United Methodist Hymnal 560