

## **Sunday 29<sup>nd</sup> March 2020**

### **Call To Worship:**

Psalm 130:5-6

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope ;

**my soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.**

### **Opening Prayer**

Breath of life,  
We are those who cry out to you today,  
those who long for the morning,  
those who are waiting for the period of isolation to end.

We pray that your ears will be attentive to our cry,  
for you know the longings of our hearts  
Amen.

### **Sing/ Read /pray: O BREATH OF LIFE, COME SWEEPING THROUGH US**

- 1 O breath of life, come sweeping through us,  
revive your Church with life and power ;  
O breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,  
and fit your Church to meet this hour.
  
- 2 O wind of God, come, bend us, break us,  
till humbly we confess our need ;  
then in your tenderness remake us,  
revive, restore ; for this we plead.
  
- 3 O breath of love, come, breathe within us,  
renewing thought and will and heart ;  
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,  
revive your Church in every part.

Elizabeth Ann Head, (Bessie Porter Head) (1850–1936)  
Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 391.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Breath of life,  
without you we are but dry bones.

Breath of life,  
without the love of God we are but dust.

Trusting in the Breath of life we make our own private prayers of confession, speaking those things which can only be offered in quietness.

(A time of silence)

With unfailing love, God offers us forgiveness — complete forgiveness that erases our sins completely, and allows us to begin again.

So be at peace – your sins are forgiven!

**Thanks be to God.**

**Sing/ Read /pray: AND CAN IT BE**

- 1 And can it be that I should gain  
an interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died he for me, who caused his pain?  
For me, who him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
- 2 'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!  
Who can explore his strange design?  
In vain the first-born seraph tries  
to sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
let angel minds enquire no more.
- 3 He left his Father's throne above —  
so free, so infinite his grace —  
emptied himself of all but love,  
and bled for Adam's helpless race.  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;  
for, O my God, it found out me!
- 4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
thine eye diffused a quickening ray —  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,  
my chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
- 5 No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!  
Alive in him, my living Head,  
and clothed in righteousness divine,  
bold I approach the eternal throne,  
and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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## **Bible Readings**

Ezekiel 37:1-14 - The Valley of Dry Bones

*He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' v3*

John 11: 1- 45 - The Death of Lazarus

*[Jesus] cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.' v43-44*

## **Reflection**

It does feel to me at least that I have had the wind knocked out of me, the majority of activity has stopped, and as a doer and as an extrovert I am left wondering: what is my role at this time?

In the four days that Mary and Martha waited for Jesus to arrive I ask myself what did they do with their time?

If the traditional picture of the sisters is true then Martha would have been active and Mary would have been still – and here in John's Gospel they remain true to type. Martha on hearing that Jesus is approaching GOES TO HIM, whilst Mary remains at home (for a time at least) until they, along with their community gather at Lazarus tomb. Can these bones live?

Jesus's words prove that they can!

With a loud voice Jesus calls Lazarus out from the tomb, Jesus then turns to the gathered community and INSTRUCTS THEM to untie, unbind, remove the grave clothes and let Lazarus go.

Here we see a foreshadowing, a mere hint of what is to come (on Sunday we will 12 days away from Good Friday) and of the price that Jesus will ultimately pay to 'unbind' humanity in setting it free from death.

As part of my candidating process for ministry within the Methodist Church I read the book *God of Surprises* by Gerard Hughes and these words have remained with me ever since: 'God' he writes 'is a beckoning word. God calls us out of ourselves and beyond ourselves, God is the God of surprises'.

Does it surprise you that we are called to unbind the world?

In this period of Lent with its watching and waiting, it is worth considering what our dry bones (and dry times) are, and to be reassured that we can offer them and ourselves up to God in receiving once more the breath of restoration and resurrection.

So in the week to come can I encourage you to look to where God is calling you, both in the familiar and surprising places we now find ourselves in, and may we each offer the words of God, the breath of abundant life to our community and out into the world.

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Gracious God,  
we know that we can come to you at any time, but we especially need your help in times of suffering, or trouble.

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.

**Lord, hear our voices  
and be attentive to our prayers**

Gracious God,  
we pray for those who feel like their hope is lost,  
who feel dried up and cut off from you.

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.

**Lord, hear our voices  
and be attentive to our prayers**

Gracious God,  
we pray for those who are oppressed,  
held captive by the power of death.

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.

**Lord, hear our voices  
and be attentive to our prayers**

Gracious God,  
we pray for those who weep,  
lost and lifeless in fear and regret.

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.

**Lord, hear our voices  
and be attentive to our prayers**

Gracious God,  
we pray for those who are dying,  
the light of life fading in their eyes.

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.

**Lord, hear our voices  
and be attentive to our prayers**

Gracious God,  
we thank you that you hear our prayers  
as we unite in praying  
**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,  
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.**

**Sing/ Read /pray: THE SPIRIT LIVES TO SET US FREE,**

- 1 The Spirit lives to set us free,  
walk, walk in the light ;  
he binds us all in unity,  
walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light, walk in the light,  
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*
- 2 Jesus promised life to all,  
walk, walk in the light ;  
the dead were wakened by his call,  
walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light, walk in the light,  
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*
- 3 He died in pain on Calvary,  
walk, walk in the light ;  
to save the lost like you and me,  
walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light, walk in the light,  
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*
- 4 We know his death was not the end,  
walk, walk in the light ;  
he gave his Spirit to be our friend,  
walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light, walk in the light,  
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*
- 5 By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,  
walk, walk in the light ;  
the Father's kindness is revealed,  
walk, walk in the light.  
*Walk in the light, walk in the light,  
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*
- 6 The Spirit lives in you and me,  
walk, walk in the light ;

his light will shine for all to see,  
walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,  
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

Damian Lundy (1944–1996)

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## **Blessing**

The Sovereign Lord revive you  
The loving Saviour redeem you  
The life giving Spirit restore you  
And the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Be with us and remain with us always!  
Amen

Please be assured that we are still here if you need anything at all during this time.

The circuit staff can be contacted by calling  
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