

Worship at Home – 1st June 2025 (7th Sunday of Easter)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Helen Watson.

Introduction

Hello, my name is Helen Watson and I'm a Methodist Local Preacher in the Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit. It's good to be with you today!

Call to worship - Psalm 97:1

The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad, let the distant countries be full of joy!

Hymn – STF 20 – Be still, for the presence of the Lord David J Evans (born 1957)

- 1 Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here;
Come bow before Him now with reverence and fear.
In Him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground;
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.
- 2 Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned.
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.
- 3 Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace.
No work too hard for Him, in faith receive from Him;
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

Opening prayers

Let us pray.

Lord God, you are with us always.

We praise you for your goodness and for your love for everything here on earth.

We praise you that you never change, that your love is the same now as it was before the earth began and that your love will continue in the same way so long as life continues.

God of new life,

Whose buds grow in the days of darkness to open in the increasing light,

Accept our thankfulness for the beauty of springtime and for the beauty of this earth,

Give us patience to wait for the flowering and the fruit of your love

Give us joy in the harvest of your generosity.

Teach us to respect and care for the earth and for all the creatures and people who live upon it.

We praise and thank you for the whole of creation. May we be infused with hope and expectation, and may we take our place in your plan to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth.

Thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ, your word made flesh, whose love restores and unites.

Almighty Saviour, when we chain ourselves to the ways of the world:

forgive us.

When we are locked up in our excuses of why we are not following you:

forgive us.

When we forget the freedom of eternal life, which you offer:

forgive us.

We know that in your great mercy, you are always waiting to forgive and to set our lives free, in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Bible reading – Acts 16:16 – 33

Paul and Silas Are Thrown Into Prison

¹⁶ One day we were going to the place of prayer. On the way we were met by a female slave. She had a spirit that helped her tell people what was going to happen. She earned a lot of money for her owners by doing this. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us around. She shouted, "These men serve the Most High God. They are telling you how to be saved." ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became upset. Turning around, he spoke to the spirit that was in her. "In the name of Jesus Christ," he said, "I command you to come out of her!" At that very moment the spirit left the woman.

¹⁹ Her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone. So, they grabbed Paul and Silas. They dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them to the judges. "These men are Jews," her owners said. "They are making trouble in our city. ²¹ They are suggesting practices that are against Roman law. These are practices we can't accept or take part in."

²² The crowd joined the attack against Paul and Silas. The judges ordered that Paul and Silas be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³ They were whipped without mercy. Then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ When he received these orders, he put Paul and Silas deep inside the prison. He fastened their feet so they couldn't get away.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying. They were also singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a powerful earthquake. It shook the prison from top to bottom. All at once the prison doors flew open. Everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up. He saw that the prison doors were open. He pulled out his sword and was going to kill himself. He thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ "Don't harm yourself!" Paul shouted. "We are all here!"

²⁹ The jailer called out for some lights. He rushed in, shaking with fear. He fell down in front of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out. He asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you and everyone living in your house will be saved." ³² They spoke the word of the Lord to him. They also spoke to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night, the jailer took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. Right away he and everyone who lived with him were baptized.

Reflection on the reading

With the injustices we see around us today, we are continually faced with a choice. Do we do nothing or do we actively engage in the work of change. The complexity of the world often leaves us in a space of waiting not sure of how to act or overwhelmed by the scale of injustice that we see. However, in this Bible reading we are invited to come out of that space and to believe that God's kingdom is not just in the future but is something that we can help to build today. Here we see how Paul and Silas make a real difference.

In Acts 16 we meet a slave woman who is being exploited. She is a tool for profit for her masters. God intervenes through Paul, offering a profound restoration of her dignity and identity.

Paul and Silas are thrown into prison for their actions, but this does not stop them singing praise to God and telling the other prisoners about Jesus. They continue to show goodness to their jailer, too. He was about to kill himself because he would be severely punished for allowing all the prisoners to escape. Paul stops him and tells him the Christian story, leading to his whole family being baptised.

Just as Paul and Silas did, we, individually or as a community, can step beyond fatigue and hesitation.

We can confront exploitation and actively restore dignity in our shared world. We can do small things to make life better for someone we know, someone who is in trouble, or some situation which we know is not right.

One lady in our church, Margaret, had not come to a meeting at which she was expected. She had also been behaving oddly, very unlike herself, for a few days beforehand. My friend Mary plucked up her courage and visited Margaret unexpectedly. She found that Margaret was ill and needed urgent attention. If Mary had not visited, Margaret would not have got the treatment which made her well.

We may say that we have no power to make changes to our world, but God's power surpasses any system of oppression. If we work with God to transform the world around us and to break the chains of injustice and suffering, we **will** make a difference and we **will** play our part in building God's new world, His Kingdom, on earth here and now. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 317 – At the name of Jesus Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

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| 1 At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of Glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word. | 2 Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed: |
| 3 Bore it up triumphant
with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest. | 4 In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true;
crown him as your captain
in temptation's hour:
let his will enfold you
in its light and power. |
| 5 For this same Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with his Father's glory,
with his angel train;
all the wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of Glory now. | |

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

Loving God,

We pray for those around us who are sad or in trouble. Give us eyes to see them and ears to listen to their story.

We pray for those throughout the world who are affected by wars or by famine. We remember the people in Ukraine, in Gaza and in Sudan. Lord, help them and bring them people who will understand and bring them that help.

Give them understanding minds, loving hearts and a willingness to help.

We pray for those who are sick, whether in body or in mind. We remember those who are waiting for hospital appointments, for the treatment that they need or for the care which will make a difference to them.

Let your hand be upon them, bring ease and healing and comfort in their distress.

We pray for people who are imprisoned in our world today.

For those imprisoned against their will, exploited and abused...

for those imprisoned by special needs that the world doesn't understand or have time for...

for those imprisoned by the darkness of depression and anxiety...

for those imprisoned by addictions...

for those imprisoned by their pursuit of wealth...

for those imprisoned by fears of any kind.

Give them justice and freedom, so that they may worship you and praise you.

We pray for ourselves, that your blessing be on us and let your love shine out of us so that all can see your glory.

We ask all our prayers in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn – STF 297 – Christ is alive! Brian Wren (born 1936)

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| 1 | 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. | 2 | Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time. |
| 3 | 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. | 4 | 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. |
| 5 | | 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. | |

Blessing

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all and with those we love now and evermore. **Amen**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

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