

The Vine at Home - Fourth Sunday of Easter

A short act of worship for use in peoples homes while churches are closed.

A free resource funded by twelvebaskets.

For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource>

Gathering in God's Presence

Loving God,

We come before you as unique individuals,

Ready to acknowledge our strengths and weaknesses,

Ready to recognise the value of others, to value the difference,

Ready to hear your call as it morphs and changes,

Ready to hear your accepting voice and all that frees us to consider,

Ready to notice,

Amen.¹

Hymn: 88 STF - Praise to the lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HkjTCz6WVE&feature=youtu.be>

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!

All ye who hear; brothers and sisters draw near,

Praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;

surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.

Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,

Who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,

Fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee,

Then to thy need he like a mother doth speed,

Spreading the winds of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,

Who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,

Sheddeth his light, chaseth the horrors of night,

Saints with his mercy surrounding.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him.

Let the Amen sound from his people again;

gladly for aye we adore him.

¹ Call to Worship written by Jane Bingham

Opening Prayers

Lord we are called to worship you, but sometimes we find it hard.
We are called to respond to your love and to serve those in need,
but sometimes we just don't see.
We are called to help build heaven on earth, but we stumble at the first step.
So loving God help us this day to worship with all our being.
Open our minds and our hearts to your love and forgiveness.
Fill us with a sense of purpose, a sense of belonging, a sense of calling.
That as we pray, as we read scripture,
and we ponder in this service,
may we hear your still small voice deep in our hearts and may your spirit be upon us.
Amen.²

The Lord's Prayer

Readings: John 10:1-10 *Jesus the Good Shepherd*

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

² Opening prayers by Wayne Grewcock

Reflections on the readings

Today is Vocations Sunday and we share with you some of the thoughts of Alison Ransome, the Methodist Church's Vocations Advisor.

There are at least two types of calling.

The call of God to all humanity to respond to the love of God.

The second type of call is particular to each one of us, it is how we live our life in the knowledge and experience of hearing the voice of the Shepherd and of receiving the love of God.

We are all unique and so our path is different to everyone else.

How we each best respond to God's love in our unique life is our particular calling – our vocation?

But how do we know how we can best respond to God's love in our unique life?

The reading from John about the Good Shepherd tells us almost everything we need to know about how to respond to God's unique call. For a calling to emerge there needs to be a relationship between The Caller and the called.

This means that the key is for us to recognise the voice of The Caller – Jesus' voice.

It is simple to say but is a lifetime's work to really do and that is why it is good to learn new ways to pray. We do that by sharing our faith with each other as we read in Acts 2: 42 *"They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers"*

This Acts reading also makes clear that our calling is not just an individual one. The whole church has a calling to pray, to share with each other, and to share the good news with others. Perhaps that is more important now, than ever. Whilst we may not be able to meet physically, there are lots of ways we can practice community.

The more we pray the more we know how to pray, and then we learnt from Acts that the more we share our faith stories with one another the more we learn from one another which means we will learn more ways to pray. And the more we pray the better we get at knowing what is God's voice and what is our own.

A wise woman from the 16th Century called Mary Ward learnt that if we pray in a way that makes us feel like a failure, then although that way of praying might be good for others or for ourselves at other times in our lives, if it is drawing us further away from God it is not helpful for now. So if you have tried prayer and it has made you feel like a failure – rather than give up, try another way of praying.

Four ideas for prayer:

1. Every time you wash your hands you could say The Lord's Prayer
2. At the end of the day jot down 3 things you are grateful for,
3. If you have the internet check out some ideas on there,
4. We could find time together to share how we pray and we can learn from each other, like they did in the early Church as we read in Acts.

The more we are able to discern God's voice the more we will be able to work out what is our unique path – our calling, our vocation, both as individuals and as a community here.

Read through Psalm 23 and as you do, listen out for Jesus' voice. This Psalm was written as a lament as the poet who wrote it was in distress. But how about we read it with the knowledge that today is Vocations Sunday

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Sit quietly for one minute and wonder; did you hear Jesus' voice in the reading? If so, what do you hear Jesus saying? If you didn't – don't worry! Enjoy the quiet.³

Prayers of intercession

Amongst uncertainty about our futures, we look to you, Lord God.
Amongst doubt, and fear and a desire to respond to your call, we look to you, Lord God.
Perhaps we know what we must do, perhaps our vocation is clear before us,
Perhaps we do not yet know;
perhaps we have never been more confused about what we are supposed to do.

In this time, on this vocation Sunday, show us how we can respond to a world in need.
We spend a moment now, in quiet, bringing before you the situations on our hearts and minds which we wish to pray for. In the quiet, hear our prayers, Lord Jesus.

[Pause in quiet to allow people to pray].

We pray for all those affected by Covid 19, and all involved in responding to that virus, all those 'on the front line'.

By your grace, Lord Jesus, come amongst us.

Comforter and healer God, we pray for all who have been recently bereaved.

By your grace, comfort those of us who weep.

May we be an answer to pray today, in some mysterious way.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.⁴

³ Reflection written by Alison Ransome

The Vine at Home is compiled and produced by **twelvebaskets**

⁴ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

Hymn: 503 STF - Love divine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-dl3Dx-apA&feature=youtu.be>

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Come almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never, never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee;
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and Praise.

Blessing

Know then that God is with you,
even as the days look different.

Ask what you can do to make God's kingdom real for someone,
through what you do: prayer, chat, safe acts of kindness

Know God is at work.

Amen.⁵

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⁵ Closing prayers written by Jane Bingham

