

**Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup>** *For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or at another time*

### **Prayer**

Christ, our risen Lord, no tomb can keep you, no door is closed to you,  
no heart is barred to you, and no mind is shut off from you.  
Come lead us out of darkness into light, out of doubt into faith,  
out of death into the life eternal: through Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen.

### **Hymn**

This joyful Eastertide, what need is there for grieving?  
Cast all your cares aside and be not unbelieving:  
*come, share our Easter joy that death could not imprison,  
nor any power destroy, our Christ, who is arisen!*

No work for him is vain, no faith in him mistaken,  
for Easter makes it plain his kingdom is not shaken: *Come, share our Easter joy...*

Then put your trust in Christ, in waking or in sleeping.  
His grace on earth sufficed; he'll never quit his keeping: *Come, share our Easter joy...*

Fred Pratt Green (1903 – 2000) CCL nos. 168415, 495683, 102550, 962013 & others

**Psalm set for today:** 16 v 1 – 11

**Lectionary Gospel Reading :** John 20 v 19 – 29

### **For thought**

*What strikes you in this Bible passage?*

*Is Thomas remembered unfairly (as 'doubting Thomas')?*

### **Hymn**

All heaven declares / The glory of the risen Lord  
Who can compare / with the beauty of the Lord  
Forever he will be / the lamb upon the throne  
I gladly bow the knee / and worship him alone.

I will proclaim / the glory of the risen Lord  
Who once was slain / to reconcile us to God  
Forever he will be / the lamb upon the throne  
I gladly bow the knee / and worship him alone.

Noel Richards (b 1955) CCL licences as above.

### **For Prayer**

During this uncertain time we pray for all those who doubt that God is real and that God is loving. We ask that we might know once again that God is in control, that if we turn to him we will receive the reassurance that the risen Christ offered to his first disciples.

We pray for our world, our country, the Methodist Church and our own Central Norfolk Circuit, our community, our local church and fellowship, our family and friends, ourselves.  
We pray for anyone, and everyone, coping with the coronavirus emergency – in any way.  
We say the Lord's Prayer...

**Offer to God your offertory for the week:** and, if cash, put it aside in a special place.

## **Message from a Circuit Friend** (different person each week)

People will often say, "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I'd never have believed it!" Sight is the sense we trust most as evidence and proof. There are many who assume that God does not exist because they cannot see him with their own eyes, so it is interesting that God has chosen to withhold from us that very proof of existence that we prize most highly. It's almost as if he is challenging us to be less dependant on this sense because our very mastery of sight can blind us to other kinds of perception.

The disciples had the women's eyewitness account to trust, yet they did not trust it. They were only convinced of Jesus' Resurrection when he suddenly appeared right there in the room with them, talking with them and fully alive. We may think that we are convinced of the Resurrection, but supposing the risen Christ suddenly appeared in our living room? Supposing he spoke to us and looked us straight in the eye as he did Thomas, might it be only then we be fully convinced?

I took my first service at a Local Arrangement in 1993, I had been going to church for 14 years and had had no blinding revelation but was one of those who felt "blessed because I had believed but had not seen". I reasoned that if it was good enough for the disciples, especially Thomas, then it was good enough for me. It wasn't until my first husband was ill with cancer that I had my real Thomas moment and prayed for proof. It came in a very unexpected way which would take to long to explain now but when it did all doubt was lifted from my heart and I truly believed.

The really exciting thing about faith is that we can meet the living Lord Jesus personally. We may not be able to see him visibly with our own eyes, but there is no doubt that he is here with us in person whenever we gather to pray. Sometimes Jesus' presence is full of peace; sometimes it is reassuring. Other times it is challenging but as we come into a closer relationship with our Lord we come to realise that sight isn't the most important proof after all.

***Betty Trinder (Circuit Minister)***

### **Collect for the day**

Faithful God, the strength of all who believe  
and the hope of those who doubt;  
may we, who have not seen, have faith  
and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing  
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen

### **Hymn**

The head that once was crowned with thorns  
is crowned with glory now;  
a royal diadem adorns  
the mighty victor's brow.

The highest place that heaven affords  
is his, is his by right,  
the King of kings and Lord of lords,  
and heaven's eternal light.

The cross he bore is life and health,  
though shame and death to him;  
his people's hope, his people's wealth,  
their everlasting theme.

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**May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us (and all those we love) this day and always, Amen.**