

**Cadbury pastorate**  
**Order of service 18th April 2021**

**Call to worship**

Come, worship God, creator, redeemer, sustainer; giving peace to this space and time. We meet in the light of a new day.

Come, worship God, creator, redeemer, sustainer; transforming our anger and distress with silence and searching.

Our hearts and minds are awake for God's purpose to be revealed.

**Hymn:** All my hope on God is founded

**Opening prayers**

Gracious, loving God, you step into our lives and bring your peace. The calmness of your voice dispels darkness and distress. The extraordinary experience of resurrection becomes everyday encounter.

In your offering of yourself you make us whole. Equip us through our worship to be your witnesses, to serve in the church and in the world for the coming of your kingdom. Let your peace still our rushing and racing and enable us to see the possibility of new beginnings. Let your love heal the separation and division of our humanity, in our lives, in our communities, and in our world. Help us to savour your story; inspire our imaginations to fulfil your will and purpose in us and through us.

God our creator, we are your children, given a place within your heart. You know us at our depths, our longings, our aspirations, our temptations, our faults and failings, what is right and what is wrong in the lives we lead.

As your children we acknowledge the distress we sometimes cause to those we love the most, the harsh words we use, the selfishness of our selfish ambition.

As your children, we are invited to share in the stewardship of your creation but we fail to care; we are tempted by what is easy to use and readily available, and ignore the need to sustain all life.

As you children, we long for your presence; forgive us and bless us; renew our faith and life and help us to walk the way of Jesus in holiness and love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Readings**      Psalm 4 & Luke 24.36-48

## Address

Psalm 4 *I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.* Today's lectionary readings, two weeks after the Easter celebration of resurrection and new life, bring to us experiences of doubt and fear, for an individual in Psalm 4, and for the gathered disciples in Luke's gospel. Into that experience however the scriptures, so far apart in time, bring peace and hope.

We do not know the particular circumstances of Psalm 4; we hear the Psalmist wrestling with particular difficulties, experiencing separation and anxiety and yet affirming God's presence, offering hope even in the most desperate circumstances. The Psalm will conclude: *I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

Psalm 4 is a psalm of lament; not expressing penitence or sorrow or confession, but voicing complaint and outrage in the face of injustice - outrage at how things are, but not quietly accepting the status quo, that this is how things will always be. In the voice of protest, there is hope.

The Psalmist calls to God for help. It is perhaps a cry of desperation; human resources are at an end, but all is not lost. God is righteous God, God will vindicate him, God will act to save him. The Psalmist will keep faith and continue to trust; God will act for the sake of justice. The Psalmist seeks relief from his distress, knowing that God will hear and answer. The righteous God will respond in grace and mercy not because it is earned or deserved, but because it is God's nature and purpose. The Psalmist makes the complaint, utters the lament, but also bears witness.

The Psalmist addresses his accusers. We do not know who they are or the precise circumstances but their false and malicious accusations dishonour God. The Psalmist in the face of their opposition puts his trust in God, and is confident that God will hear his cry for justice. God will hear and answer the prayers of those who remain faithful in their offering of worship, and steadfast love.

The Psalmist's opponents must turn from their ways and their anger to stillness and silence. They must reflect on the goodness of God, examine their own consciences, and desist from their lies and false accusations. Then they too might make an offering to God that is acceptable, putting their trust in him. In the circumstances of the Psalm, they may long for God's blessing, but they need to accept that receiving that blessing depends on living in relationship with God. The offering that God delight in is offered by those who are in right relationship with

him and with others, rooted in humble, obedient, truthful, righteous living.

In conclusion, the Psalmist contrasts his own experience with that of his accusers. They long to experience God's goodness but mistake his nature. He points to the greater joy he knows, God's surpassing gift. Trusting God even in desperate circumstances and knowing the joy that God gives brings peace. The Psalmist will lie down and sleep. God alone is the source of his safety.

We turn to Luke's gospel... The disciples have gathered and have heard the account of those who met with the risen Jesus on the Emmaus Road, and revealed himself to them in the breaking of bread. Jesus now makes a third appearance following his resurrection. The disciples are perhaps growing in confidence and faith as stories are shared.

The disciples have gathered... then Jesus stands among them, with the greeting of peace, and they are terrified.

Jesus then demonstrates that his presence is physical. The disciples see, they touch, they feel and the physical reality of Jesus presence among them transforms their doubt and provides the impetus for God's mission. Yet, Jesus is among them both crucified and risen; he is raised to new life but bears the scars of crucifixion. There may be no mission without the experience of resurrection but there is no Easter Sunday triumph without the pain of Good Friday.

The physical presence of Jesus both crucified and risen changes the disciples' lives. From now on, they are witnesses; they are no longer passive learners but are actively engaged. They have lives to live, a story to tell, good news to share; God's word comes alive, the scriptures that they have known and learnt are brought to life; they become part of the story of God in human history.

The familiar greeting Jesus gave is no accident as his presence dispels darkness and distress. Their confidence may be growing but they will need continual reassurance. They will need all that this greeting encompasses – tranquillity, security, safety, completeness, wholeness, contentment, well-being, harmony.

As we reflect on the words and experience of the Psalmist and the words and experience of those gathered after the resurrection, we do so in the midst of our journey out of lockdown; at this time we enjoy new freedom, opportunities to travel and to meet together, and to renew bonds of friendship and fellowship after long months of separation and

isolation. Yet we move forwards slowly and with due caution, aware that the pandemic is still experienced in significant ways in other places across Europe and the world. We are not yet free.

We continue to live through unprecedented times. We have known separation and dislocation, confusion and sleeplessness, the loss of so much that make us human. We are not yet on the other side of the pandemic - there may be further impact on prosperity and well-being. Where is God for us in all of this and what is our response?

We affirm our trust in God, his righteousness and love and offer ourselves as witnesses. We seek to be ready to respond to challenges and opportunities, to declare and demonstrate the good news of God's love. God has revealed himself in Jesus and made his home with us. God has made us his children, his heirs, heirs of the kingdom.

As his children, when we call on him in love and trust, God hears us and answers us. We seek to discover and live out God's presence and purpose in us and for us, our part in God's story. Whatever we may face, whatever we may be called to go through, God is faithful. All is well - I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

### **Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession**

Lord of life, we bring you our praise. You meet our needs in body, mind and spirit. You dwell in us, inspiring our thoughts and sharing your gifts with us to be used for the coming of your kingdom in love, peace and justice.

In the diversity of our relationships we meet you and offer our experience, our imagination, our skills and talents, that they might speak of you and your goodness and love for all creation.

Living Christ, your presence is celebrated at city gates and in market squares, by those in need of healing and those who are amazed. In moments of wonder and unexpected change, senses are disrupted by the extraordinary, but we see you in our midst, and hear your word of peace, to inspire us and give us courage and confidence as we see your kingdom among us in the ordinariness of our world.

When explanation, argument and logic threaten to diminish faith, help us to marvel at the growing knowledge of science and to discover more of you in starlit skies, minute molecules and atoms, in the intimate knowledge of creation full of opportunities. Help us to be aware of you

in unexpected ways and places and thrill us with the mystery of what we are yet to know and become.

In the continuing journey through pandemic, we thank you for those who offer signs of resurrection through their work and commitment. We pray for all who bring hope and healing, and restore harmony and well-being, sometimes at risk to themselves. We pray for the scientific community and the work of research and development in the prevention of disease and the care of those who suffer. We pray particularly for all involved in the development of vaccines and programmes of immunisation programmes, especially for communities who will be the last to receive the support they need.

Living Christ, we give thanks for the gifts of all who have shared life with us, through whom we have met you in simple words and actions. We offer our prayers for all who mourn at this time, even as we treasure the memories of those we have loved and lost. Be with us as in word and action we offer words of hope, of peace and joy and love. In Jesus name, who taught us when we pray together to say: Lord's Prayer

**Hymn:** It is well

### **Blessing/Closing Prayer**

Risen Christ, alive in our hearts, our conversations, our words, our actions, our attitudes. Send us out in the gift and power of the Holy Spirit. Equip us to be your people, bearers of good news, sharing what we have heard, and what we have seen for the coming of your kingdom. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you, go with you and remain with you all, now and always.  
Amen

Blessing: The Lord bless you