

*Hello*

*I offer the following based on a favourite passage of mine, the story of Jesus meeting the travellers on the road to Emmaus.*

*As we relax in the presence of God let us look for new and deeper meanings for these strange times as well as finding again the assurance that this passage always brings. Perhaps as you work through these materials something will trigger a thought about a situation or someone about whom you are concerned. If this happens then pause and take a moment to prayerfully share that thought with God. These words are offered for you to use as you wish.*

*Joan Bailey*

**Call to worship**

In life, in death,  
In life beyond death,  
Jesus Christ is Lord.

Over powers and principalities,  
Over all who determine, control,  
Govern or finance the affairs of humankind,  
Jesus Christ is Lord.

Of the poor, of the broken,  
Of the sinned against and the sinner,  
Jesus Christ is Lord.

Above the Church,  
Beyond our theologies  
And in the quiet corners of our hearts,  
Jesus Christ is Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

**StF 297 Christ is alive**

<https://youtu.be/fD8pxDgTZZU>

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

Brian Wren (b. 1936)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 297

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### **Opening prayers**

*For our first prayers we will use words from the set psalm for today. The psalmist begins by reflecting on times of deep sadness and then remembers how God intervened to turn sadness to joy.*

*We, too, can reflect on the times when life has been very bleak for us but when God has intervened to turn sadness to joy often through other people reaching out in kindness in answer to prayer.*

### **Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19**

<sup>1</sup> I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy.

<sup>2</sup> Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

<sup>3</sup> Death wrapped its ropes around me; the terrors of the grave overtook me.

I saw only trouble and sorrow.

<sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the Lord: "Please, Lord, save me!"

<sup>5</sup> How kind the Lord is! How good he is! So merciful, this God of ours!

<sup>12</sup> What can I offer the Lord for all he has done for me?

<sup>13</sup> I will lift up the cup of salvation and praise the Lord's name for saving me.

<sup>14</sup> I will keep my promises to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

<sup>15</sup> The Lord cares deeply when his loved ones die.

<sup>16</sup> O Lord, I am your servant; yes, I am your servant, born into your household;  
you have freed me from my chains.

<sup>17</sup> I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

<sup>18</sup> I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people— in the house of the Lord.

Praise the Lord! Amen

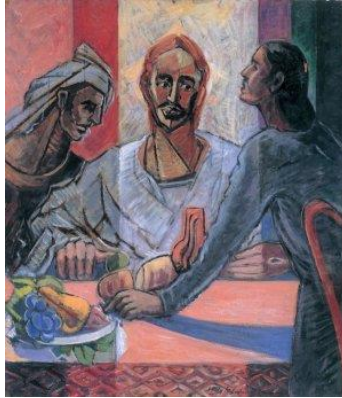
### **New Living Translation (NLT)**

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## Lord's Prayer

If you remember the production of *Hopes and Dreams* you may want to follow this link to the sing the words to 'Auld Lang Syne' <https://youtu.be/NvLN042VkQk> or you may wish to sing to the tune we sometimes use at B&D or simply say the words.

**Luke 24: 13 -35** (to be read prayerfully reflecting on the responses)



That same day two of them were on their way back to a village called Emmaus, about 7 miles from Jerusalem, talking about all that had happened. As they talked and argued, Jesus himself came up and walked with them.

*Are we walking to some purpose, Lord?*

*Or is our life's journey one long meander?*

*Do we 'talk together', Lord?*

*Or, to often do we argue amongst ourselves?*

**Forgive us our self-importance, our need to be considered wiser, richer, better than those around us. Teach us to listen to others and learn from them. But most of all, Lord, open our inward ears and teach us to listen and learn from you.**

Jesus himself came up and walked with them; but something prevented them from recognising him.

*Would we know if we met you Lord?*

*What are those things which prevent us from recognising you today, Lord?*

**Lord, show yourselves to us. Let us feel your closeness in this time of worship. Reveal yourself to us in the routine of daily living.**

He asked them, 'What is it that you are debating as you walk?' They stood still, their faces full of sadness and one, called Cleopas, answered, 'Are you the only person staying in Jerusalem not to have heard the news of what happened here in the last few days?'

*Is the news of Jesus important to us?*

*Does his life, does his teaching, do his actions, touch us today?*

*Is the core of our very being affected by him?*

**Forgive us, Lord, that we do not always put you first in our lives. Forgive us when we separate our religious life from our working and playing life, when we forget that you are with us in everything, in our sadness and our gladness.**

'What news?' he said. 'About Jesus of Nazareth', they replied, 'who, by deeds and words of power, proved himself a prophet in the sight of God and the whole people; and how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death and crucified him. But we had been hoping that he was the liberator of Israel. What is more, this is the third day since it happened, and some women of our company have astounded us; they went early to the tomb, but failed to find his body, and returned with a story that they had seen a vision of angels who told them he was alive. Then some of our people went to the tomb and found things just as the women had said; but them him they did not see.'

*Is what we 'see' and 'say' our version of events?*

*Is our understanding partial and fragmentary?*

*What sort of 'liberation' are we hoping for?*

**Forgive us that even in our well-intentioned piety we may miss the point and put our own slant on your words and present our own ideas as your teaching.**

'How dull you are!' he answered. 'How slow to believe all that the prophets said!'

*Dull? Our scientific and technological generation!*

*Dull? Our artistic and musical achievements!*

*Dull! Our liberal and democratic societies!*

*Dull! Our wonderful market economy!*

**Thank you, Lord, that because of you we cannot be dull. We do not sparkle because of what we achieve solely through our own efforts but because you have made us God's children. Through you we are forgiven, loved and free.**

Then, starting from Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them in the whole of scripture the things that referred to himself.

*Have we not heard again and again the message of the prophets?*

*Have we not understood the need for a suffering Messiah?*

*Have we not studied our scriptures too?*

**Enlarge our minds, Lord, that we may understand the mysteries you explain to us.**

By this time they had reached the village to which they were going, and he made as if to continue his journey. But they pressed him, 'Stay with us, for the evening approaches and day is almost over'. So he went in to stay with them. And when he had sat down with them at table, he took bread and offered it to them.

**Lord, we would reach the place where we are going.**

**Lord, we would invite you to 'stay with us'.**

**Lord, we would share our substance with you.**

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; but he vanished from their sight. They said to one another, 'Were not our hearts on fire as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

**Lord, open our eyes that we may know you.**

**Lord, enflame our hearts with love for you.**

Without a moment's delay they set out and returned to Jerusalem. There they found that the eleven and the rest of the company had assembled, and were saying, 'It is true: the Lord has risen; he has

appeared to Simon'. Then they described what had happened on their journey and how he made himself known to them in the breaking of bread.

**We, too, would be urgent about your business, Lord,**

**We, too, would share in your great fellowship.**

**We, too, would tell how you are known to us,**

**Lord of life and the God of our salvation. Amen**

*(adapted from the original in 'Worship and Preaching' April - June 2002 pub. Methodist Publishing House)*

### **On the road to Emmaus**

It's about 8 miles from Bedale to Northallerton. If we were to walk that distance it's certainly far enough to have a long conversation. We think that it's roughly the same distance as 2 of Jesus' followers were walking as they returned home from Jerusalem to Emmaus following the Passover celebrations, although, today, we are unsure of the exact distance or position of Emmaus. We have the name of one of the travellers, it was Cleopas, not a disciple we hear about a lot, but clearly a follower of Jesus. We are also unsure as to the identity of the second person. It may have been Cleopas' wife or a friend but it is obvious that they shared the same sense of grief as they walked and talked together. They walked slowly and sadly as, for them, this particular Passover had not been a time of celebration. They had watched their friend, Jesus, the one in whom they had invested such hopes, die a slow, shameful and agonising death on a cross.

And now, just as they were leaving Jerusalem someone seemed to be playing mind games with them and claiming that this dead man was alive. But these people making these unbelievable claims were the women, fellow followers of Jesus, whom they would normally trust. Had grief driven them mad? What did it all mean? They had had such hopes as they followed Jesus. He seemed somehow to be linked to prophecies from the scriptures but now there was nothing - just blackness, grief and crushing disappointment unless, unless what the women said was somehow true.

What happened in that conversation along the road?

The travellers at first didn't recognise Jesus. They were so wrapped up in their own thoughts or so blinded by grief that they couldn't see beyond. They were so full of the tragic events that had happened to them that they needed to share them with anyone, even a stranger. There is a healing in being able to share our pain and the mysterious traveller in this story was willing to listen, willing to share.

This is what Jesus does for us and for the church. Sometimes we are unaware of his presence, sometimes we are so wrapped up in ourselves that we do not recognise him but Jesus, the healer, comes alongside us, listens, empathises and doesn't leave until we are at peace.

As Jesus does for us we too must do for others.

After the travellers had had their say, had unburdened themselves then they were ready to listen. They found comfort in the words of scripture. Jesus interpreted and explained and, through understanding, the travellers began to see the way ahead.

Jesus is besides us in our intellectual searching. Never be afraid to ask and question. Jesus has shown that he has time to lead us through our searching. We may sometimes feel we are lost, feel our faith challenged, just as our travellers did, but perseverance will soon reveal the truth and may lead us to exciting and unexpected discoveries.

Much has been made of the meal that was shared at Emmaus. Importantly it was in that familiar gesture of breaking bread that they finally recognised Jesus. When we are close to and care deeply about someone it is often their gestures or the tone of their voice that we recognise first.

Suddenly after this Jesus left them and, hungry and tired as they were, the companions on the road rushed back to Jerusalem to share their news. Nothing else mattered as much at that moment.

Like us, the disciples had to move between the physical and the spiritual. If we make the 'Jesus event' to use trendy modern language too spiritual then we keep him at a distance from our everyday lives and don't allow him to work in and through us. If we make him too physical, too much like us, then we limit his power. Jesus is who he is, a bridge between earth and heaven, and to experience that changes our lives so that we, too, can share that experience with the world.

We do not know what happened to the travellers after they returned to Jerusalem. We assume that they were there at Pentecost and part of the early church but their particular story is not recorded for us to read. In the broad span of history the small people's names get lost to human record but each of us is known to God.

We are living in strange times and perhaps the lessons we are learning will lead to changes in our attitudes to many things. At this point we cannot tell but this we do know that at a time when the world was at a turning point, as it seems to be today, when God had acted decisively to change history, Jesus was there on a dusty road alongside two sad and confused people to comfort, explain and change their lives.

They saw and we see the power of Jesus resurrected, the humility of Jesus who then, and now comes alongside ordinary people and the holiness of Jesus revealed as he broke bread and blessed it as he had before in their presence.

*And thinking of all those from whom we are physically separated but to whom we are joined by shared concerns, memories and hopes for the future let us share together*

**StF 611**

**<https://youtu.be/hlNoxoOocZs>**

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace  
to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace  
to let you be my servant too.

Richard A. M. Gillard (b. 1953)

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### **Benediction**

Let us go now, with laughter in our eyes,

A smile on our lips,

A song in our hearts

And peace in our souls

And share the joy that Christ has given us.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
remain with us all now and forever. Amen