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EASTER 2B

7th April 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Gathering / opening prayers

Sit down, close your eyes and breathe three deep, slow breaths.

Keeping your eyes closed - pay attention to your breath for a minute or more and in doing so, when you breathe in, imagine you are breathing in the love of God.

When you open your eyes look around you, what do you notice in your room that reminds you of the love of God?

If this is something you can hold, hold it, if it is to be looked at, look at it. As you do so, remember that you are in the presence of God.

When you are ready, offer this time of worship to God:

Around me and within me, Spirit of God I thank you for your presence here. I offer each breath in worship to you. Amen.

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

Hymn:

28 STF – Jesus calls us here to meet him - [YouTube](#)

Reading: John 20:19-31 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Thomas gets a bad reputation, doesn't he!? He wants to put his fingers in the wounds of Jesus, he expresses doubts at the story he is being told...and he gets labelled 'doubting Thomas' for the rest of history!

I wonder, would you have done differently in his position?

Today, as part of the Vine at Home resources, you have the opportunity to hear a bit more about the work the Methodist Church is involved in around the world, building partnerships and relationships with other Methodist churches and similar partners. This work comes under the oversight of the Global Relationships Team of the Methodist Church, but it involves all of us. One of the challenges the team faces is that it is difficult for us to feel a real connection with somewhere we haven't visited – we all suffer a bit from the impulse of 'Doubting Thomas' and just like we don't get to put our hands in Jesus' wounds, we can't all visit the work of all 107 of the Methodist Church's global partners!

But, we can find out a bit more about it, and recognise that this global mission is part of, and connected to, the mission and ministry each of us is involved in where we live.

Watch this short film from the Methodist Church's Global Relationships team: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rh6aciwnTQM>

[For those not able to watch the film, it shows a brief insight into the lives of Miriam and Pascal, both people from Tanzania who are living with different disabilities that have often left them excluded from their community. The video explains how the work of the local Methodist church, and their pastor, Peter, has enabled both Miriam and Pascal to start projects that are helping them to support themselves, but also change attitudes in the local

community so that they both feel involved and included. The video demonstrates how it is the support of the Global Relationships Team and funding from the World Mission Fund that has helped make this work possible and lists a number of ways that people can support this work – through prayer, by sharing stories in their churches and church events, by twinning their church with a partner church around the world and by financially supporting the World Mission Fund.]

By working together, by standing alongside those from other parts of the world, you can be a part of this work too. As you saw in the video, this work isn't just about supporting one-off projects or enabling particular pieces of work to happen, it is about changing attitudes. That is what Peter is doing in Tanzania, and it is what you can do in your church and community too – you can help to challenge and change the way your church and your friends talk about and engage with work happening in other parts of the world.

You can pray for our global partners (and look out for future prayer pointers in the Vine at Home to help you do that), but do also take a look at the Global Relationships section of the Methodist Church website for other resources and ideas, including how your church could twin with one of the churches global partners.

In today's reading, Jesus also repeatedly says 'peace to you' – this invitation into deeper peace that marks the resurrection and brings the Christian church in being. We are guardians of that peace, and an important part of having a global perspective is the groundwork it lays for better international relations and peace-building. Can you play your part in sharing stories of peace, advocating for peace and praying for an end to conflict?

As one of the other lectionary readings from this week clearly says (1 John 1:1-2:2): there is strength to be found in working effectively together. Making strong relationships with those in our communities and around the world is so important as a mechanism for bringing our faith to life, and making it effective in the world, bringing the love and goodness that Jesus represented into reality. That's the invitation from today's act of worship.

Hymn:

462 STF – Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world

Prayers for the world and for our communities

Imagine the world around you and let your mind go on a geographical journey as you think about the distances between where you are and the people with whom you share this life.

Today, Jesus, help me to look for ways in which I can work together with my fellow human beings. There is strength to be found in working effectively together.

Our world:

- Pause to think about anyone you know personally in different countries across the globe. You might like to open a map, find one on your phone/computer or look at a globe. Name some of the countries and think about any connections you have with these places. Think about the people who live there, the lives they lead, the situations they find themselves in.
- Pause to prayerfully think about the billions of people you don't know in the world. The news tells of joy and horror for so many people, and there are stories of joy you will never hear. You might like to ask God: is there anything I can do?

My country:

- Pause to prayerfully think about those you know and those you don't know who live in this country today. Think about politics and the way things work in the country. Think about what works well, and about things that don't feel right. Who do I need to connect with to harness the good and address the not so good?

My city, town or village

- Who are your neighbours? What does life feel like on your doorstep? Pause to think about the things that are wholesome and good. To think about the things that do not serve people well. You might like to ask God: what is mine to do?

Today, Jesus, help me to look for ways in which I can work together with my fellow human beings. There is strength to be found in working effectively together. Amen.

Blessing

May you go out and find a God of love who is already at work in all things, who is changing lives and bringing hope and opening hearts.

May you be a person of peace, welcoming the stranger wherever you meet them.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 8th April

- Pray into the news. Why not buy a couple of newspapers, or scroll through a couple of news websites on your phone or computer, and as you scroll or turn the pages, note down anything that catches your eye. You might like to find out more about the situation, particularly if you don't know the context of the news story.
- In a moment of stillness (you could light a candle?), offer up each of these places and situations to God.

Tuesday 9th April

- Let us pray for our global neighbours in Zambia – particularly in light of a recent cholera outbreak, with tens of thousands of people infected and (since January) the closure of schools.
- The United Church of Zambia is a partner of the Methodist Church in the UK and provides health care across Zambia, running four mission hospitals and seven clinics. With support from the Global Relationships team and the World Mission Fund, the church has been a key part of the response to the outbreak, including the building of new sanitation blocks in three clinics.

Wednesday 10th April

- Open your Bible at the Psalms and read one as a prayer to God. What resonates with you? Consider in what ways these old words feel new to you and offer them to God.

Thursday 11th April

- Find a globe or an atlas. Look for one of the countries you have been praying about recently – perhaps Zambia or Tanzania, from this resource, or perhaps one of the other countries that has been in the news.
- You might like to pray this short prayer whilst looking at the images of the world:
- God of the whole world, you have this whole world in your hands. Help us to take care of it, as you would have us do. Help us to love one another, as you demonstrated we could. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Friday 12th April

- Draw a picture of your local church. Include on the picture all the ways you see God at work, and all the things you want to ask God to work in. Pray about it.

Saturday 13th April

- Visit the Global Relationships section of the Methodist Church website to find out more about church twinning: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/global-relationships/opportunities-resources-and-twinning/church-twinning/>
- Pray about whether this is something that would enrich your local church community (if you have one), or pray for those who are involved in similar projects: that they may be spaces of mutual learning and growth, of support and prayer.