

**A Service at Home**  
**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020**  
**prepared by Rev'd Geoff Scarlett**

Draw near -- Our Father beckons us to come!  
Within the confines of our earthly home  
We feel and know the joy of heaven above,  
Since Christ reveals God's face of utmost love.  
No distancing can keep us far apart  
From all the love that flows out from his  
heart,  
And joyfully we crown him with our praise,  
Who keeps us in his care through all our  
days!

**Hymn: STF 347**

Crown Him with many crowns,  
The Lamb upon his throne.  
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns  
All music but its own.  
Awake my soul and sing  
Of him who died for thee,  
And hail him as thy matchless King  
Through all eternity.

Crown him the Son of God,  
Before the worlds began;  
And ye who tread where he has trod,  
Crown him the Son of Man,  
Who every grief has known,  
That's wrings the human breast,  
And takes and bears them for his own  
That all in him may rest.

Crown him the Lord of life,  
Who triumphed o'er the grave,  
And rose victorious in the strife  
For those he came to save.  
His glories now we sing,  
Who died and rose on high,  
Who died eternal life to bring,  
And lives, that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of peace,  
Whose power a sceptre sways  
From pole to pole, that wars may cease  
Absorbed in prayer and praise.  
His reign shall know no end,  
And round his pierced feet  
Fair flowers of paradise extend  
Their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of love,  
Behold his hands and side --  
Rich wounds, yet visible above  
In beauty glorified.  
All hail, Redeemer, hail!  
For thou has died for me:  
Thy praise and glory shall not fail  
Throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges and Godfrey Thring

**Prayer:**

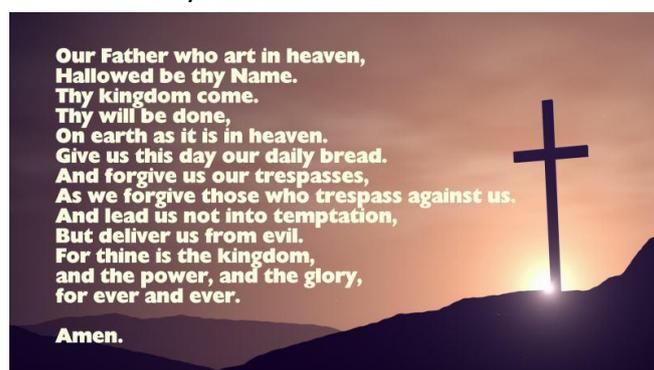
Father God,  
We are gathered in our homes in ones or  
twos, but we are not alone.  
We are joined with millions of Christians  
around the world.  
We praise you for the gift of your universal  
Church -- and, best of all,  
that you are with us!

We sing in different languages, often to  
different rhythms, but our theme of adoration  
is the same. We praise you for the gift of  
music to sing,  
or, if music is denied us, the gift to read and  
value the printed words  
-- and, best of all, that our hearts can sing  
your praises!

We possess different bibles, in different  
versions and tongues, but each of them  
brings us your good news of salvation. We  
praise you that salvation  
comes through your Son Jesus, crucified and  
risen -- and, best of all, the good news  
includes forgiveness for our sins!  
Take all our prayers. Use them to draw us  
closer to yourself. Cleanse us of our sins and  
refresh us for your service, in Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer**



## Reading: John 14, 1 – 14 -- The Way to the Father

<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God<sup>[a]</sup>; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup>You know the way to the place where I am going.”

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

<sup>6</sup>Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you really know me, you will know<sup>[b]</sup> my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup>Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

<sup>9</sup>Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. <sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup>Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.



## Hymn: STF 459

Captain of Israel's host, and Guide  
of all who seek the land above,  
beneath your shadow we abide,  
the cloud of your protecting love;  
our strength, your grace; our rule, your word;  
our end, the glory of the Lord.

By your unerring Spirit led,  
we shall not in the desert stray;  
we shall not full direction need,  
nor miss our providential way;  
as far from danger as from fear,  
while love, almighty love, is near.

Charles Wesley

## Reflection

At the moment we're in coronavirus lockdown, but once that is lifted, we'll be free. Free to walk streets locally. Free to drive to our usual places or explore further afield. When I'm driving off somewhere new, I read or google the relevant map, but, when Val's with me, I have an excellent navigator by my side. When I take her advice, I usually end up in the right place. When I don't listen and go my own way, I find I'm going in the wrong direction and have to make a U-turn to get back on course! Yes, I know, I should have GPS, but that's not infallible! We need a good guide, and Jesus is that reliable guide for us in life.



Sometimes we don't know the way. This is why our passage begins with Jesus' comforting words: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled'. Well, no wonder they're troubled. Jesus has just told his friends, that one of them will betray him and another deny him! They're entitled to be upset. But Jesus simply says, 'Trust God. Trust me. Stick with it. You may not always understand, but keep the faith. I'm your true guide'.

Where are we being guided to? What's our destination? That's the question our friend Thomas raises. Perhaps the others didn't dare! 'We don't know where you're going!', he says. Jesus answers him. 'I am the way, the truth and the life'. Not: this is the way, describing a process, a route, a guidance system, but I am the way. A personal guide, a living example, the real thing. Not Alexa'. Not boring and irrelevant, but life-giving. Not fake news!

It sounds as though we're being led to a **place**: 'You know the way to the place where I am going'. (verse 4) This, apparently, is the Father's house and a place of many rooms. This is often taken to refer to heaven and, indeed, these words are often spoken at funerals to offer comfort and hope to the mourners, and rightly so. But it also sounds as though we're being led to a **person**. 'No-one comes to the Father, except through me'. (verse 6). Jesus is offering us the way to get closer to God, the way to understand better who he is. He is leading us towards perfect fellowship with his Father! Other people, other faiths may offer us glimpses of God, but only Jesus shows God to us in all his fullness.

This is a great challenge and a great privilege, but what exactly is this Father God like, the One we're to have fellowship with? Up pipes Philip this time: 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us' (verse 8). Can't you feel Jesus getting exasperated by this time? He must wonder if all his teaching and work has been in vain. He needs patience and great love to keep going. 'Look!', he says, 'You've seen him already! You've seen him in me! Can't you get that into your thick heads?!' (This last comment is, alas, a mistranslation by me from the original language!). Jesus takes Philip's need on board and explains in detail, not just about God, but about a God, who is also **our Father** ....

'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father', says Jesus. 'Like Father, like Son'. There is a family resemblance. Jesus gives us a **true** picture of God, one of love. He shows the **living** power of God. So Jesus says here, 'Look at me. At my whole loving attitude – that shows you what your Father's like. Listen to my words – they are the Father's words I pass on to you. See the things I do - these are the actions of a caring Father'.

And in all of this we see Jesus' total dependence on his Father. If we go on to ask how we know what fellowship with God is like, we have only to witness Jesus at prayer. Isn't he a good example to follow? If we want to know how we can even think of approaching God, we shall find we can do so and are encouraged to do so, through the death, resurrection and intercession of Jesus!

The way to the Father can be a long one, a long pilgrimage to make with ups and downs on the way. We need breaks, just as we often do on any long journey. So we look for somewhere to stop en route. A B&B perhaps or a motorway hotel. On our spiritual journey Jesus travels with us, but also goes ahead to prepare the next stopping place to receive us. We may stop after we've been having a good time. Life's gone well for us. So Jesus says, 'Stop and reflect. Count your blessings and thank your Father. Then go eagerly on'. We may stop after we've been going through a bad time. Bad things have happened to us or we've done bad things ourselves. Then Jesus says, 'Trust me, when you can't understand. Repent and receive my forgiveness. And then go on to follow and serve me afresh'. So Jesus is there with us every step of the way, until he leads us at last to our final resting place in our Father's presence!

Let me conclude briefly with Jesus telling us that we will do greater things now he is going to the Father. This is Jesus telling us to carry on the work, and he will give us whatever we ask for in his name. Jesus, I'm quite sure, expects his friends to work together to achieve this. So we too are not alone. We work together as a Church, to challenge and comfort, to witness and care. Think of all the Church's achievements of the past and now. The Church's influence at every level of society and also with us individually today. And give thanks to our Father.

So Jesus has spelt out for his disciples of old and for us the way to the Father. That way is through him: our guide, the revealer of our destiny, our preparer of each resting-place. Where are you on your spiritual journey? Reflect and then travel on with Jesus. A glorious destiny awaits – deep fellowship with our Father God!

## Prayer

Father God,

Help us to be patient in this time of lockdown, to find things to do and to cheer others up.

Meet the needs of our family and friends we bring before you now...

Encourage your Church to explore more ways of communicating in a hi-tech age.

Strengthen and help those whose faith is being tested and those seeking to live under persecution.

Bless all who are active in eradicating domestic abuse and supporting its victims... in fighting against the virus and researching new vaccines... in providing the necessary services to keep the country going... in reaching out to all in trouble...

Bring relief to those suffering in our world, who lack the food, water, schooling and medical care, that we so often take for granted.

May our celebration of VE Day lead us still to pursue peace in our world...

Show us what we may do to answer these our prayers, in Jesus' name. **Amen.**



## Hymn: STF 297 Christ is alive!

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

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### Main verses of STF 411 used as a final blessing

May the God of hope go with us every day,  
Filling all our lives with love and joy and  
peace.

May the God of justice speed us on our way,  
Bringing light and hope to every land and  
race.

God will be our Shepherd as we go our way  
And will not forsake us when we go astray.

Even though the load of life is hard to bear  
We must not forget that God is always there.

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