

We have our patterns, our rituals
and they make us feel safe,
but safe is not always loving,
and safe is not always truth
and safe is not always your way.
You invite us to step out from behind safe,
to accept the challenge of adventure, the unknown,
the probable rather than the possible.
You invite us to life in all its fullness,
to love in the extreme,
putting all we have, the familiar, the ritual and the safe
to one side and flying free like doves, to trust in your way,
the way of LOVE.

HW 2021

Hymn A new commandment

[Listen here](#)

Reading Mark 14:3-9

Reflection Sealed in love

They called him a King,
on the streets leading to Jerusalem the crowd anointed him
with their cheers and jeers,
but the priests kept their counsel and their distance,
watching, waiting and planning
for he was a threat.

Jesus did not follow convention,
he challenged the perceived wisdom,
he challenged their ways
with his healings, his openness, his fearlessness.
He sat with lepers for God's sake.

Surrounded by lepers,
he enjoyed the fellowship and friendship of friends,
men of the way and men from along the way.
Suddenly, within their midst a woman,
and before they knew it the room was filled with the scent of perfume,
sweet and cloying, an overpowering scent of death.
They were shocked, not by the scent but by the woman,
but before they could draw breath,
she anointed Jesus.

Why? Why, they asked?
What a waste they shouted,
their shock fuelling their anger.
And the woman, she has a place in this story, in his story,
her generosity, her understanding and her innate love
sealed her place,
but more than that the oil of compassion
sealed Jesus in love.



HW 2021

Hymn My song is love unknown

[Listen here](#)

Story – A strange night

It had been a long day; they were always long days, but Passover time was worse. There were so many things to prepare, the room, the food, and the master seemed especially tense this year. Usually, we knew who was coming to the feast but this year I had not seen any invitations made, it was quite strange.

Late in the afternoon, there was a commotion outside and then Stephen appeared and brought with him three men to see the room. I had never seen them before, but they looked around and then nodded and left. When it was dark, and the meal was almost ready, they reappeared with a group of about fifteen men and women; the guests had arrived. They looked a mixed group but there appeared to be a leader, they all shuffled around until he sat at the centre of the table and then began to pray. We bustled around bringing in the food and setting it on the table until it seemed to groan under the weight of everything. It was always the same, always too much but when you were remembering a time of having nothing, I guess it made sense.

After the stories and the rituals, the conversation levels grew as everyone chatted about their own experiences. Everyone that is apart from the leader, he sat quietly lost in thought, or so it seemed. Shadows played on the candlelit walls, and he seemed to shrink into the shadows themselves and almost disappear, he was so pensive. Then, in one of those lulls that happen in a group, he suddenly seemed to reappear; nothing had changed in the room but he seemed to be highlighted in the candles where before he was lost in the shadows, he looked around and then in a quiet but powerful voice said, 'one of you it going to betray me'. There was silence then as they all looked at each other, hunting for a clue, who could it be? The tension was palpable, then after a moment one of them said, 'surely you don't mean me?'. The leader said nothing, then, after a few moments, he picked up a loaf of bread and held it up, almost as if saying a prayer, then he broke it in half and looking around said, 'my body will be broken, like this, when you eat together remember me'. I thought it was a strange thing to say but then he lifted his cup of wine, held it for a minute, and I thought I heard him say it was his blood, but that would be strange so I must have misheard. Then, he said, 'this cup holds the promise of the future, a new promise, a new relationship with God'. I had never heard anything like that at a Passover before, and I am not sure anyone else had either as there was a silence after he had spoken.

Of course, it did not last long, and soon the conversations were flowing again but there was another surprise to come. The leader, I never did find out his name, asked Rachel to bring him a bowl of water and a towel. We thought he wanted to wash his hands, but he got up, took off his outer robes, tied the towel around his waist and then began to wash the men's feet. It seemed a strange thing for a leader to do, but then this was a strange night. When he got to one of the men who had come in the afternoon, the man pulled his feet away and looking startled said, 'Master you are not going to wash my feet, that is for a slave to do, I should be washing your feet'. The Leader did not stop, he bent and held the man's feet and said, 'if I cannot wash your feet how can I show you I love you?' Looking around the room he said, 'I have done this, all of this, to show you the new way of being in God, we are all one, we are all friends and we are all servants, we are all teachers and we are all learners, that is the new way. You are to love one another, just as I have shown.'

There was a wonderful look of pure love in his eyes, it has stayed with me all these years. I was not one of their group, but that night changed my life and everything since has been different. HW 2021

Hymn Tree of life and awesome mystery [Listen here](#)

Reading Mark 14:43-46 & 15: 66-72

Reflection **Washed, healed, restored, forgiven**

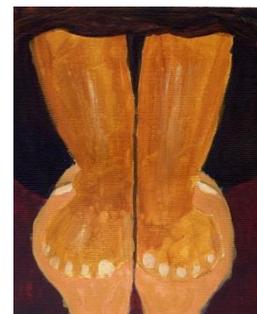
Why? Why do we do it?

Always turning away, shaming ourselves, shaming you,
haven't we learnt anything?

Even when we get it wrong you dry our tears and offer a hand.

Holy and Loving God,
embracing our feet, you accept us as we are,
lifting us, loving us, cleaning us.
Emptying yourself in service, you dry our feet and lead us on.

Remorse can drive us ever deeper into ourselves
but you, serving God, you hold us,
tenderly massaging away open wounds and calloused feet,
reawakening our inner self and energising our soul.



For this is love, not oblivious but observant;
reaching in and leading on,
giving hope through healing impurities
and indwelling our awkwardness,
validating who we really are.
Eternal God, hold us, wash us and
nurture us to new life in your way.

Music Karl Jenkins Agnus dei

[Listen here](#)

HW 2008

Reading Mark 15:21-32

Reflection **The cross**

The cross is a peak but not the summit.
Somewhere to visit but not to live;
Somewhere to pause but not to stay;
Part of the picture but not the whole;
Part of the story but not the end.
It can be rough getting there and rough leaving.
It is part of the journey that takes us to God.



HW 2005

[Listen here](#)

Hymn When I survey the wondrous cross

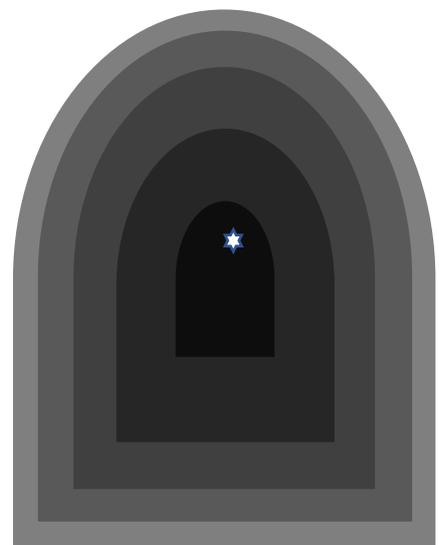
Reading Mark 15:33-39

Reflection **Darkness**

So much darkness.
There was the physical darkness,
the night in Gethsemane and that strange eclipse at midday
when it seemed the light had left the world forever.
The light that was born at creation,
that light that shone from his eyes,
the light of love itself,
had vanished, vanquished by the power of fear.
There was the darkness in our souls.
The light had vanished from our lives,
we felt bereft, despairing,
an overwhelming sadness surrounded us as we turned away,
our hopes and dreams in tatters.
There was nothing left but darkness.

How do you move forward when you cannot see the path?
How do you put one foot out of bed when there is nothing,
not even a shadow on the wall?
We disappeared, fear taking us backwards.
For days we stayed hidden,
paralysed by the darkness,
even though light had returned to the world
it could not lift the immense sorrow
that seemed to squeeze the life from our hearts.

But we learnt something new,
the light is more powerful than the dark.
It was only a flicker at first, a rumour even,
but a rumour that spread like the sunrise,
a glint here, a glint there and then realisation.
It took us a while but that light relit hope,
and suddenly we could see the way forward
and light and life took us to the future.
Love filled our hearts once more.



HW 2021

Prayers

Eternal God as we gather in prayer we reflect on your wonderful gift of love, and on the teaching of Jesus which transforms and frees our fixed ideas of your being. Fear can drive us to separate you from our lives, but faith impels us to bring you closer. May we engage in your love for the world, so that the world may be transformed and suffering end.

Generous God may your love be the antidote to the world's fear.

Loving God, injustice drives fear, and prejudice, oppression, jealousy and greed distort our experience of life and create a world of inequality, a world divided. Jesus showed a different way, a way of oneness, but the world takes the seemingly easier path of the known, the familiar, the unjust. May your love strengthen our faith that we may show a different way and strengthen our voices to challenge the injustices which create fear and unrest.

Generous God may your love be the antidote to the world's fear.

We pray for the hungry, the homeless, the unemployed, the lonely and the fearful, for people whose lives have been changed because of Covid restrictions and people whose lives have always been difficult and different from our experience of life. May your love open our eyes to need, and our hearts to share. Recognising your presence within us may we be creative in our living, seeking solutions that encourage oneness.

Generous God may your love be the antidote to the world's fear.

As we look around a world struggling with a pandemic we see the cracks, the places where the systems are failing and where despite all the compassion of front-line workers people are hurting, struggling with issues they do not understand. As we move forward may we show our love by creating spaces for hurting people, safe spaces of exploration and rest, of sharing and support. May your churches be greenhouses of love.

Generous God may your love be the antidote to the world's fear.

You are always present, around us and within us and your grace accepts our mistakes and encourages a new way, may we do the same for the people around us. As we accept your forgiveness may we become more open, more welcoming, more generous in our forgiveness, mirroring the grace we receive in our words and actions. Where there is darkness may we bring light, where there is despair may we share hope.

Generous God may your love be the antidote to the world's fear.

As we reflect on this Holy week, when the worst of our humanity threatened hope may we hold fast to faith and imagine your Kingdom come and wholeness restored through the power of love.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Our offering

For all your wonderful gifts we bring you our thanks and praise. As we continue to give faithfully may our offering be of our whole life and may we sense your blessing upon us. Amen.

Hymn

From heaven you came

[Listen here](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.