

## Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.  
God is ever present, around us and within us,  
though separate let us worship together in God.

In the darkness,  
the breath of God  
rippled the deep dark brooding waters  
until the moment when the time was right  
and God illuminated the earth.  
A tiny spark in all the darkness,  
became a bright, warming light that stirred life  
into the formless shape and brooding waters,  
so they became a seething mass of creation  
and God's people were brought to life.  
In the beginning it was a light  
that shone in the darkness,  
the word of God,  
bringing meaning and love to God's people.  
It is a light that shines forever,  
that welcomes each new day,  
and warms our hearts with the love of God.

*Based on Genesis 1 and John 1*



**Suggested hymn**      God who spoke in the beginning  
Listen [here](#)

### Prayer

Creator God, we praise you. In you is the source of all being, in you is all life and you are within all life. The wonders of creation are testimony to your love which holds all life within its embrace as it has from the beginning.

As we worship together, we hear the stories through which we hear your voice and sense the guidance of the Spirit of creation. We hear your voice in the echoes of the prophets, in the leaders of your people, and in our own conversations as we reflect on your love within our lives.

As we worship, we give thanks for your love as we have come to know it through the teaching of Jesus, and we acknowledge your call on our voices to share the message of your love in our own words and actions. Your generous and unconditional love is the pattern for our days, your mercy the pattern for our relationships. As your church may we bring the hope of your love into the lives of those we meet

As we worship, connected by your love to people around the world we unite in prayer using the words of Jesus as we say,  
Lord's Prayer

**Reading**                      2 Samuel 7:1-10 (NRSV)

**Psalm 46** (Psalms for a quantum world)

When all around is chaos,  
when the world is changing and we are struggling,  
when old things fall and leave a void,  
God is with us and within us.  
God is the strength to carry on,  
and the knowledge that tomorrow will be.

God the creator, source of all being

is part of every moment,  
part of every atom, and every connection,  
God is in everything, and God is in me.

In the beginning  
the breath of God hovered over the chaos  
and life was formed.

In the tumult of chaos God is,  
and in the chaos of our lives God is,  
when things fall and disappear, God is.

Look around, see the beauty of nature,  
its patterns and its processes,  
God lives within this,  
and God lives within the aftermath of humanity's endeavours,  
in the triumphs and the failures,  
in the reaching out and the standing still.

God's love empowers peace.  
God's love changes hearts.  
God's love builds new lives and new worlds,  
in new ways.

Be still and know God,  
in your heart and in your life,  
in your tears and in your laughter,  
be still and know.  
Be still.

**Suggested hymn**            I lift my eyes to the quiet hills.  
Listen [here](#)

**Reading**                    Mark 6: 30 - 52

**Suggested Song**            The Lord's my shepherd  
Watch [here](#)

### Reflection

In our next instalment from 2 Samuel we find David settled in Jerusalem and his mind goes to 'settling God' in the form of building a temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. Nathan, a royal prophet agrees but then finds himself the bearer of a different message from God. Why does God need a temple, in all the travelling with the Israelites did God ever ask for a temple? David's plans, his hopes and his dreams are shattered. Such occurrences happen often in life, we think we know the future and then everything changes, or sometimes we know the future but fail to recognise the significance. We know the children are going to fly the nest, but we are not ready for what that will feel like, we know we are going to retire but the reality is a bit of a shock and leaves us floundering. There are times in life when it feels as if chaos has returned - a diagnosis, a sudden bereavement, a divorce, and we find ourselves unsure, uncertain and feeling lost.

Maybe that is how David felt when Nathan delivered his message, I imagine it is how the disciples felt out in the boat amidst the choppy seas. The story of the disciples often feels as if they take two steps forward and then one step back, and our life journey and our faith journey can feel like that. The disciples had just experienced the feeding of the 5000 with all its mystery and challenge. They had not really understood where Jesus was coming from when he said, 'feed them', and then they ended up gathering in more food than they could imagine at the end of the picnic. They had not really got their heads around it when Jesus puts them in a boat to cross to the other side of the lake. A storm blows up and they fear the worst, and Jesus is not with them this time. Then they see a figure walking on the water, and they discover it is Jesus, although how he got there they cannot imagine. We are told that they did not understand the bread – but their hearts were hardened. I take this to mean that their journey had just taken a step back. Not long before this Jesus had sent them out in pairs to

practice being disciples on their own and they had returned full of their stories of healings and miracles but now they were doubting again, unsure. It was another transition moment.

If you have travelled on the London underground you may well have heard the message 'Mind the gap', a warning to take care as you move from platform to train, or the reverse. This is a transition, not of the same magnitude as illness or bereavement but nevertheless a transition and there is a gap which could be dangerous. Margaret Silf, in her book 'The other side of Chaos', explores gaps reminding us that every gap is a space between certainty and bewilderment, between what we know and a whole new way of life. The gap, or space, is the now, the place we are living in the moment, having let go, however reluctantly, of the past and not yet having reached the next phase of life. Henri Nouwen commented that it was like the trapeze artist who must let go of the trapeze to reach the other one and for a moment there is uncertainty about when or if he will reach the other trapeze. There is jeopardy in gaps. The now is often filled with doubts and fears but it is the only place where we are empowered to choose a new path. In the chaos is the opportunity for growth. In the chaos of the storm there was an opportunity for the disciples to grow in faith.

In one of the Indiana Jones films, indie is being chased and finds himself on the edge of an abyss. In his mind is the knowledge that there is a bridge across the abyss, but it is not visible. He has a choice, step out and trust the bridge is there, risking falling to the bottom, or stay still and be caught. Either option may result in death, but if he trusts in the knowledge deep within him and steps out, he may escape, dare he take a step into nothing? He does, and the bridge appears beneath his feet, but he had to trust. As we cross the gaps in life, we too must trust; we have to have the courage that what we hope for is really there. There are sometimes bridges that tempt us because they look substantial, but when we take them, they disappear, there are others that look flimsy and rickety and it takes courage to step on them, but they lead us to the other side even if the journey is a bit hair raising. However often the best bridges across chaos are the ones we carry with us made from the strands of experience and the skills we have acquired along the way, rope bridges which we can use to span a gap.

In 1995 I saw an advert for the post of Resource and Development officer at the URC National Youth Resource Centre in Yardley Hastings. I was in a gap, studying with the Open University with a view to becoming a teacher, Norman had been through a period of unemployment and we had a house we could not afford. We needed a new future but had no idea what it might be. The advert asked for someone with vision, youth leadership experience, management skills, including budgets and church leadership experience. I had been a stay-at-home Mum for eighteen years, worked part-time in a school as a learning support assistant, was a school governor and involved in Scouting. Prior to having the girls, I had worked as a laboratory scientist in a hospital. I looked for a bridge, encouraged by friends, who later told me they had not really believed I would get the job. I applied, creating a CV out of strands of experience and acquired skills, my rope bridge. Scouting, eldership and Church Secretary, an Elder's course in which others had identified me as a person with vision, the necessary budgeting of a family experiencing many occasions of unemployment and uncertainty, and a passion to make a difference were woven together under the heading life experience. My work experience took just three lines and was largely irrelevant. I was offered the job and life changed, including later accepting a call to ministry. The growth came from the chaos of a gap.

Belief and trust are not the same thing. Belief is creedal, knowledge based and head. Trust is heart. Faith is about trust; faith is about letting go and risking all because we believe in a power beyond our experience. The disciples had to learn to let go of reason and trust. Transition is chaos. In the beginning the earth was formless, a void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. God created order from chaos, a new order, a new reality. Chaos is not bad news, it is not a mess we have to return to the previous order, but an opportunity to create something new, it is a sacred gift. How we respond to chaos will often inform the outcome of chaos, if we have a negative response the outcome will probably be negative, if we have a positive response the outcome will probably be positive. Often, the outcome is something of which we would never have dreamt.

We have all felt we were living through chaos during the pandemic. All that we relied upon had been swept away and we could not see a future. We longed for the bridge that led back to normality, that

restored all we had lost, but that bridge, whilst obvious and seemingly solid, would not help us grow and would not lead to the new creation that chaos offers. We must look for the rickety bridge, or even the bridge that we know in our hearts is there but which we cannot yet see, and we have to be ready to use the rope bridge we carry, our skills and experiences from the past coupled with new skills learnt in the chaos as we seek to build a new reality. We need to be open to possibilities and not afraid to let go. We cannot reach the other trapeze unless we let go of what was. When Jesus sent the disciples out, he told them to take nothing for the journey except a staff, no bread no bags, no money. Only the clothes they were wearing. He told them if they were welcomed stay and share the message but if they were not welcomed, to shake the dust off their shoes and move on. It was the way the people of Israel left Egypt and travelled through the chaos of the wilderness. Leaving things behind can be painful but you cannot travel far lugging a rucksack of possessions, and what we need is already embedded in our hearts and travels with us. We do not need bags of money because the place we may end up will probably have a different currency, and anyway the currency we need is courage. The staff is there as a reminder that we are to trust in God, we do not travel alone, and although we may encounter those who mock our dreams and our vision, we are to shake off their influence and move forward.

We do not yet know what the new expression of life will be when we find a way to live safely with Covid, and there may be other germs which move us into chaos again, but recognising this experience as an opportunity to leave behind the things which were preventing growth, we can move towards a new and positive experience of being church in the world, and being a people of love within our communities. Throughout the pandemic we have seen so many acts of random kindness, we have seen communities rediscovering community care, we have seen people of all faiths working together to support the people who are helping others and bringing love into lives. Through different ways of worshipping, we have grown closer together and now we must pick up the important strands of our past experience, and like a piece of sourdough, blend that into the new flour of the future to create the faith food for tomorrow. Chaos is painful and confusing, but Chaos is a gift.

**Suggested Hymn**            Come and find the quiet centre  
Listen [here](#)

### **Prayers**

During our prayers we will use the response in bold, this can be sung to the tune Kindle a flame – listen [here](#)

Eternal God, your presence is with us always and you are a part of all we experience, your love has the power to change the world, and we are expressions of your love. How we respond to the world around us, and the people around us shapes other people's experience of your love and the world. May we always be mindful of our response, recognising the times we are stressed and prickly, and seeking your calming presence to rebalance our lives.

**God may your love, lighten our hearts and chase our fears away.**

We pray for the world, a place of beauty and wonder and yet also a place of sadness and injustice. Your love lights the world, but our actions have become a filter on your love leaving too many people in the darkness of despair. Loving God where our actions have led to injustice, may we recognise the need to let go, and let chaos bring us to a new place. We pray for wisdom and insight to see the way forward towards your kingdom that all may live in peace and to the fullness of their creation.

**God may your love, now lighten our hearts and chase our fears away.**

We pause to reflect on the many ways in which injustice is changing people's experience of life – we think of those who do not have enough food, those who have no safe place to sleep or call their own, those who thirst for clean safe water, living water, those who sleep amidst the fear of fighting which threatens their homes and their lives, and the millions who have been forced to enter the chaos of fleeing their homes for a place of safety and hope. Eternal God you are within all this for you are everywhere and you know the pain and hurt that comes from injustice. May we seek to redress the balance between injustice and justice.

**God may your love, now lighten our hearts and chase our fears away.**

We pray for our church, a small part of the body that works with and for the Christ in the world. May we work together to make a difference in the world, linking with other Christians around the world through aid agencies like Christian Aid, and linking with people on a different path to you through aid agencies such as Khalsa Aid. We are one in your love, and your love together we can learn more of you and more about each other and what it might mean to be fully human.

**God may your love, now lighten our hearts and chase our fears away.**

We pray for the courage to journey through the chaos which has enfolded the world with eyes on a new future for your church and your people. May we take all that we have learnt during this pandemic and weave it together with the best of the past to create something which takes us closer to the place of your kingdom come. Life has been changed may our response to that change be one of love and hope for all that is possible.

**God may your love, now lighten our hearts and chase our fears away.**

We pray for ourselves, and our families and friends. We think of those who are grieving, for the loss of a loved one, for the loss of health, for the loss of employment or the loss of their home. May they sense your presence and know your love's embrace bringing glimmers of light in their darkness. We think of our response to the pandemic, loneliness and a sense of isolation, fear for ourselves and for loved ones, a sense of loss of freedom and frustration, the sense of uncertainty. We have not yet crossed the bridge to the future, but we are travelling across, may we have the patience to cross safely, caring for others on the journey, and continuing to grow in love as we move forward.

**God may your love, now lighten our hearts and chase our fears away.**

Resting in your love we draw courage and strength for the challenges in our lives, the moments when it seems chaos once more reigns. May we remember that you are within the chaos. Amen

### **Offertory**

As we worship together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

### **Suggested song**

Tune Michael

Listen [here](#)

Loving God, creation's founder  
source of life and living love,  
when the Spirit's power we follow,  
Wisdom guides us as we live.  
Then we know, as we sow  
seeds of love must die to grow.

If we trust in bricks and mortar,  
building empires, hoarding love,  
life becomes a frantic circle  
focussed on our treasure trove,  
till we stand, hand in hand,  
midst the wreckage of our plans.

Loving God, you call us forward  
from the chaos of our lives.  
Where we seek to look behind us  
you encourage forward sight.  
With the ground, all around  
crumbling slowly, love is found.

Trusting in this love discovered,  
new adventures wait each day.  
Crossing bridges to new places,  
we build kingdom on the way.  
In God's pow'r, life will flow'r  
as God's love sustains each hour.

Moving onwards we encounter  
new ideas and new dreams.  
With new vision for the future  
love demands a different theme.  
All are one, all are loved,  
God is oneness God is love.

Heather Whyte 2021

### **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.