



Sixth Sunday of Easter

Morning Prayer

'New Song'



*You are invited to guard time for us to be together, united in prayer in one faith, to our one Lord. Dispersed community prayer at 10:30am.*

*You may wish to prepare by lighting a candle*

◆ denotes an optional pause to keep silence and meditate on the words

🔊 Denotes optional audio / video version from the church website:

<https://widcombe.church/our-churches/church-life/church-online/>

### **Preparation**

O Lord, open our lips

*and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.*

In your resurrection, O Christ,

*let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia.*

Blessed are you, Lord God of our salvation,  
to you be praise and glory for ever.

As once you ransomed your people from Egypt  
and led them to freedom in the promised land,  
so now you have delivered us from the dominion of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your risen Son.

May we, the first fruits of your new creation,  
rejoice in this new day you have made,  
and praise you for your mighty acts.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Blessed be God for ever.*

### **Easter Anthems**

1 Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us: ◆  
so let us celebrate the feast,

2 not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness: ◆  
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

*1 Corinthians 5.7b, 8*

3 Christ once raised from the dead dies no more: ◆  
death has no more dominion over him.

4 In dying he died to sin once for all: ◆  
in living he lives to God.

5 See yourselves therefore as dead to sin: ◆  
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Romans 6.9–11*

6 Christ has been raised from the dead: ♦  
the first fruits of those who sleep.  
7 For as by man came death: ♦  
by man has come also the resurrection of the dead;  
8 for as in Adam all die: ♦  
even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

*1 Corinthians 15.20–22*

*Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.*

### ***Opening prayer***

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;  
let us pray with one heart and mind.

♦

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever. Amen.

### ***The Apostles' Creed***

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

## Hymn

I will sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me;  
How He left the realms of glory  
For the cross of Calvary.

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
Sing it with the saints in glory,  
Gathered by the crystal sea.*

I was lost, but Jesus found me,  
Found the sheep that went astray,  
Raised me up and gently led me  
Back into the narrow way.

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
Sing it with the saints in glory,  
Gathered by the crystal sea.*

Days of darkness still come o'er me,  
Sorrow's path I often tread,  
But the Saviour still is with me;  
By His hand I'm safely led.

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
Sing it with the saints in glory,  
Gathered by the crystal sea.*

He will keep me till the river  
Rolls its waters at my feet;  
Then He'll bear me safely over,  
Where the loved ones I shall meet

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
Sing it with the saints in glory,  
Gathered by the crystal sea.*



## The Word of God

### Old Testament reading: Psalm 98

<sup>1</sup> Sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done marvellous things;

his right hand and his holy arm  
have worked salvation for him.  
<sup>2</sup>The Lord has made his salvation known  
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.  
<sup>3</sup>He has remembered his love  
and his faithfulness to Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.  
<sup>4</sup>Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,  
burst into jubilant song with music;  
<sup>5</sup>make music to the Lord with the harp,  
with the harp and the sound of singing,  
<sup>6</sup>with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn –  
shout for joy before the Lord, the King.  
<sup>7</sup>Let the sea resound, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it.  
<sup>8</sup>Let the rivers clap their hands,  
let the mountains sing together for joy;  
<sup>9</sup>let them sing before the Lord,  
for he comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness  
and the peoples with equity.

### **Gospel reading: John 15:9-17**

<sup>9</sup>'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: love each other.

**Reflection** 

### **Sing a new song**

This Easter season we are considering the new and today I am exploring the exhortation to sing a new song.

The irony that *I* have been asked to preach a new song has not been lost on me and tickles my amusement! For those of you have stood near me in church, back in the olden days, when we could sing together, you will know that whilst I may make a heartfelt sound, it is

rarely a melodic one! I rather think my singing is like Winnie the Pooh's spelling: I have all the right notes but not necessarily in the right order!

Preaching on a new song also happens to be my curacy 'swan song', my final sermon here in Widcombe Parish before I move on.

Consequently, I've been amused by the quote from Samuel Taylor Coleridge who said, "Swans sing before they die: 'twere no bad thing should certain persons die before they sing!"

And yet, the Bible exhorts otherwise!

As we begin, let's pray a moment: we welcome you Holy Spirit to stir within each of us the desire to sing a new song to the glory of God. Amen.

### **A singing Bible**

Psalm 98 begins with the exhortation: 'O sing to the LORD a new song'.

But if we step back a moment, we realise there's nothing new about this idea at all.

Throughout scripture we have people bursting into new songs.

This Bible is alive with the sound of music!

In Exodus 15, as God has delivered them out of slavery and through the parted Red Sea, Moses and then Miriam, sing the first song, evoking the whole people of God to join together: 'sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.'

They sing when God leads them to water in the desert.

We have covenant songs of God's faithfulness.

Deborah and Barach sing a song of victory after battle, as does David.

There are many sad songs of lament at injustice and suffering too.

Then there's the song to top all songs, the song of songs: an extraordinary and enduring love song of Solomon.

At the recognition of God's Messiah, Mary, the angels and others respond in a new song.

The Bible concludes with scenes of the perpetual songs of heaven. Fittingly, as Moses sings the first song in Exodus 15, so the song of Moses is the final song in Revelation 15.

Most stunning of all is described by Zephaniah:

*The Lord, your God,  
... will rejoice over you with gladness,  
he will renew you in his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing*

When I hear the skylark, I am reminded of this beautiful truth. God prophetically sings over His people as they partner with His victory and sing to Him!

It seems to me that all the examples of God's people singing a new song are in response to some form of deliverance.

Singing new songs is not a new idea and it occurs across every culture and era.

Indeed, it's even proven singing is good for our health: it reduces blood pressure and stress, it boosts the immune system, mood and pain management. It's good for our relationships: singing together aids learning and increases bonding with one another and with God. It's no wonder, then, that God invites singing as part of our discipleship to fullness of life!

We know that to sing a song is not new, it is an expression of our humanity, it is following the image of God, it's good for our whole-being health and its obedient discipleship.

### **NEW?**

Why not just recite the familiar old songs?

Why would we be exhorted to sing a *new* song, and what is that anyway?

*This evening at St Matts on Zoom we'll take this a step deeper because time allows, and we'll look at the effect of singing on the spiritual atmosphere and key for healing and breakthrough in contested prayer. Everyone is most welcome to join as we will also be inviting new songs from within our church family to be shared.*

For now, the way I see it is this: certainly, we are exhorted to praise God in song for every new deliverance, provision and so forth because all good things come from Him.

I believe there's also a rhythm of heart response to God's goodness that He is inviting to keep fresh and not allow to become stale or neglected.

We are delivered once and for all time from slavery to sin and death by believing in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. Daily I fall short of abiding in His love and keeping His commandments with all my being and so daily I have fresh opportunity to be reminded of His mercy that makes me His friend.

Just as God's mercies are endless and new every morning, so too may be our response. Endless song, new from the heart every morning.

Psalms 98 goes on to show that the new song is in anticipation of the appearance of God to rule righteously over the earth and peoples – we pray this regularly: thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Singing a new song is about reconnecting our heart afresh with our expression, not coldly reciting words because they sound good. We are reconnecting our heart with celebrating afresh the goodness of God and all the marvellous things He has done. A new song, by its expression, also holds fresh expectation of God's everlasting goodness and fulfilment of His promises.

Regardless of how we feel or our circumstances, a new song is a heart-connected celebration and expectation of God.

I am reminded of an impactful testimony I heard from Hae-Woo, a Christian lady who, only a few years ago had been imprisoned for her faith in a North Korean concentration labour camp. She described how the women slept on the floor of a crowded room and each morning there would be new corpses, those who had perished overnight. They endured cruel beatings, hard labour and near starvation. They would whisper words of scripture if she and fellow believers were unsupervised in the toilet block. What struck me most profoundly in her testimony was that she said she and fellow Christians would whisper one word of encouragement as they passed each other during their work in the fields. I

wondered what that one word would be: perhaps 'Jesus' or 'hope' or 'persevere'. What would be your one word in that situation?

I missed the point. She and our other brothers and sisters would whisper the word 'alleluia'. They were singing a new song each day from their heart, in a hushed whisper, because despite their unimaginable circumstances, they were aware of their eternal deliverance into abiding in God's everlasting love. They knew that by their friend Jesus laying down His life for them out of love, they could perpetually rejoice in the power of His resurrection. We are exhorted to call to mind and:

*Sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done marvellous things;  
his right hand and his holy arm  
have worked salvation for him.  
The Lord has made his salvation known  
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.  
He has remembered his love  
and his faithfulness to Israel; (and thereby to us through Jesus)  
all the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.*

Amen.

### **Intercessions**

We must love one another as Jesus loves us.

Knowing God's love and affection for us, let us pray to him now.

Father, wherever there is friction or conflict in the Church, or communities are divided and weakened; give us a greater longing for your healing and a deeper commitment to forgiving love. In the wake of the anti-racism report, 'From Lament to Action', let us heed the reminder that racism is a sin; we pray that the church can be a balanced church that reflects your values; and that, at an individual level, we don't harbour racism, however mild.

Silence: Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father, wherever tangled political situations seem impossible to solve, wherever conflicting interests threaten peace; wherever the ears of the powerful remain insulated against the cries of the oppressed; give us ears to hear your guidance. We are in a confused sea: with our United Kingdom potentially under threat of fragmentation; with our leadership addressing the greatest medical emergency in recent times whilst being challenged about their propriety; and with those in power experimenting with differing visions of our nation's position in the world; let us remember that we live in a democracy in which our political leaders are chosen by us. We pray that those we have elected have the vision and will to create a fair and just society for all who call Britain home and that our elected leaders are alert and sympathetic to the needs of people in the developing world.

Silence: Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father, wherever the ill and injured need comfort and assistance; wherever the elderly and housebound sit each day for hours alone; may we bring your love and help. As coronavirus compounds this situation, with people desperate for restrictions to be lifted, with people suffering in the wake of covid, possibly with loss of a loved one, long-covid or mental stress, we pray that you will give them the strength to cope and that you will give us the ability to see where help is needed and inspire us to deliver that help; however small.

We pause for a moment in silence to call to mind those known to us who are ill, injured or in need of comfort or assistance.

Silence: Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father, wherever people are travelling that last journey of death, may they be surrounded by your love and welcomed into your heaven, and may those who mourn be comforted.

And we pause again to call to mind those known to us who have died and those who mourn.

Silence: Lord hear us: **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father, wherever the beauty of creation reflects your love, may our hearts be lifted to you in thanks and praise.

Merciful Father, *accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

*Amen*



### *The Collect*

God our redeemer,  
you have delivered us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us  
to eternal joy;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

### *Lord's Prayer*

*Standing at the foot of the cross, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.



***To Conclude***

May the risen Christ grant us the joys of eternal life.  
*Amen.*

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.  
*Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.*

