

Order of Service 30th August 2020

Welcome

Introduction – Moses and the burning bush.

Enjoy the Wordsearch – they are Cathedrals, places where there is Holy Ground

Draw a picture of the burning bush, think about the shape and colour of the flames.
Draw the Spirit coming at Pentecost, think about the colour and shape of the fire.
How are the two different?

Draw or make an Angel

Call to Worship

The Lord is my rock,
my fortress,
my deliverer,
my God,
my rock
my shield,
my salvation,
my stronghold.

I will call upon the Lord...
who is worthy to be praised.

Hymn 20 Be Still, for the presence of the Lord

Prayers

We call on the name of our God.

He is Lord of Lords

King of Kings

Almighty

Judge

He is worthy of our praise

He is compassionate

Merciful

Forgiving

The good shepherd

The one who lays down his life

The bringer of hope

The bringer of life

The one who transforms

The one who renews.

We call on the name of our God...
Who is worthy of our praise.

Loving God we long to be in your presence
To have the reassurance of your peace.
To know the comfort of your love
The affirmation of your acceptance
The transformation of your forgiveness

Loving God we find it hard to forgive ourselves
We find it hard to forgive others
We find it hard to be gentle with ourselves
We find we long for others to be punished.

Yet you have promised that where there is regret,
Where there is sorrow
You will remember our sin no more
You will forgive us
You will grant us a new start
A new hope
A new life.
Gracious and Loving God
We admit our fault, seek your forgiveness
We welcome the new hope and new life.

We pray too that we may be transformed,
That we may discover the strength and grace to forgive
That we may learn to be gentle
That empowered by your spirit
We may seek justice and mercy rather than vengeance.
Amen.

Reading
Exodus 3: 1-15

Moses at the Burning Bush

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said further, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' He said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

The Divine Name Revealed

But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you."' God also said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you": This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.

Hymn 167 Light up the fire

Pause for thought

Part of childhood summers was lying in grassy meadows and seeing the most wonderful things we could in the clouds. We imagined the most wonderful things, from dragons to ice-cream cones, from trains to unicorns.

The Picture we can see at the moment is a cloud – I don't know what you can see, but I can see an angel. I don't know what you believe about Angels, I know it is a subject that can cause disagreements and sometimes arguments between people.

We are told that Moses saw an Angel. There are lots of ways to understand Angels – part of the created order and forming part of the heavenly court; others argue that Angels are a way of talking about the presence of God in a safe way – it was thought perilous and deadly to name God, you remember the story of Elijah on Mount Horeb he was only allowed to see God pass by; Moses on Mt. Sinai had to have his face covered. Holiness was dangerous.

Others simply say that talking of Angles is a way of talking about the way God communicated with us. What is clear though is that Angels are closely associated with experience of God and are part of what it means to be holy. I have shown a picture that might be an Angel in the clouds.

Moses saw and Angel and it was like this picture - it was burning bush, but unlike other burning bushes it wasn't burning away.

Whenever I think of the burning bush that wasn't consumed my mind is drawn to the story of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and how the Spirit sat on each person present and they weren't consumed. The presence of the Spirit of God is the root of what we are thinking of at this time. Moses saw an angel, a burning bush which drew him to the place where it was.

When he arrived Moses had a profound experience of God – he was told to remove his sandals, he was on Holy Ground.

The presence of God makes a place a Holy place and the Holy place needs to be treated carefully and differently.

We have a tradition within our Church, one that seems to have grown over recent years of making holiness something we associate with the spiritual and an inner attitude and way of being. We may have important places, but we tend not to treat them very differently.

We visit a Sikh Gurdwara and we are asked to remove our shoes – a sign that we in a holy place, the same is true in a Mosque and Hindu Temple. In a synagogue we are asked to wear a Kippa to cover the head, again a sign that we are in a Holy Place. The removal of shoes, the wearing of a head covering may feel strange, but it is something that points us to something different.

Growing up in a household where Church going was a major part of life, I remember being told to be quiet in church and certainly no running around in church. I also remember the heated debate when one of our circuit churches wanted to become a multi-purpose building, the strong argument that the church would lose something if it was in use everyday for community activity.

I want us to just pause and think about Holy Space is and what is Holy Space for me as we listen to the following piece of music

Pachelbel Canon in D.

Pause for thought part 2.

In recent weeks we have been talking about re-opening our church buildings and we have a plan and a programme that will let us do that. It has been interesting following the debate. Some people are desperate to get back to church, they need that sense of place and sense of space to worship – church is a Holy Space and without it worship cannot happen. Others have said they can't return until it is safe and that ZOOM creates a 'Holy Space' in which they can worship perhaps even more than they did in church. There have been expressions of opinion on all sides of the range and spectrum. There is an agreement that we need Holy Space to worship, but for some it is a spiritual space which flows out of the relationship with God and has not a sense of a place. It would be mischievous and misleading to suggest one view is right and one is wrong, God speaks to us as he will and does, and it right to recognise the diversity of Holy Places because we are a diverse people.

Here is a picture of Central – a familiar space to us and one we shall be worshipping in on 13th September when we welcome Marcianna into the circuit. Many have missed being able to be there and the same is true for Norton and many, many churches. We miss the familiarity, the sense of the presence of God, the being with friends. All of that is part of our understanding of Holy Space.

Here is a picture of a cross in a church side chapel. The cross becomes a symbol of Holy Space because it is a symbol of a significant action God has taken in the life of the world. Remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus, a significant part of our faith is a way of making a place Holy– we will put the cross where it matters to us and where it says something important, in a church it helps make the church a Holy Place. We have an image of the cross just on the street, it is a cross of the resurrection and it is our belief that the death of Jesus brings all creation and all people into a relationship with God, and so everywhere is a Holy Place. There is a truth to that, but if everywhere is special then nowhere is special and our need for Holy Places is to have somewhere special.

Here we have a picture of a nave of a Cathedral, I think this one is Ely. Cathedrals often give us a sense of being special, a sense of the spirit of God being with us. We can sense this when we think of the millions of people who over hundreds of years have prayed and worshipped in this place and this space and place is only there for worship. It is special, and we each have a different place where our encounter with God is real. It may be a cathedral it may be a small chapel, but there is a place where God is experienced.

How does somewhere become a Holy Place? Here we see a group of people standing in a loose circle, what we can't see is the circle of rope on the ground, we were gathered to worship outside and the leader had us lay out the rope and then stand within the circle we had made and declared the space a holy space. Sometimes places become Holy because we say they are, often churches become Holy because they are consecrated – we say these are Holy Places.

This is a picture of the North of the Isle of Man, this was special place for me and I would often go there to think and to pray and I believe that I met with God, and so it became a Holy Place not because I said it was but because it was an experience of God.

This picture is a picture of Conference,

Conference is a busy place of meetings and conversations and often strong differences of opinion. These symbols were set up in the middle of the Conference venue to remind us that Holy Space and the holiness it represents is not something out there or over there, it is to shape and form everything we are and everything we do. It means we cannot keep our faith in a vacuum, our faith has an impact on everything and shapes and forms everything.

This picture would underline that – some would see the playing fields as the Holy Place, some would see the church as the Holy Place, but we would recognise that the heart of being a Christian country is that Holiness permeates all we are.

Whenever I go to Ely I love this picture, and it is about the Holy Place and this reminds me that the Holy Place is there, the symbol of Holiness the presence of God is the cross and we engage in a journey of being a Holy People – Holiness then becomes a quality of faith, something that is dynamic and continually developing. We cannot talk about Holy Place without thinking of what it is to be Holy.

This image is the foundation stone of the Methodist church in Bon Accord, Tobago. It read that it was founded in 1992 and the building dedicated 2004. The Church existed before the building, there was a holy community before there was a holy place.

Holy place helps us to focus and to understand our faith; the reality is we have the holiness of God as a gift of faith and the life of the church is to be God's Holy People in God's Holy World, using those places where God is special and where experience of God is clear to help us in our journey and in our witness.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord we come before you standing on Holy Ground, being in a Holy Place. Today we would pray for families and young people, those who are anxious about returning to school after a long time away. For those who will be starting now phases of life, entering new schools, going to universities.

We pray that your love might be known...
and encouragement experienced.

We pray for those who feel that their space, their homes, their holy places have been destroyed and taken away; we think of the people of Beirut where homes were lost through bomb blast. We remember others who are refugees and forced to become asylum seekers. We think of those who are caught up in the devastation of storm and flood.

We pray that your love might be known...
and encouragement experienced.

We pray for you church, that it may become Holy Space – places where people can feel safe, a voice that longs for and demands that the needs of holiness be met – that freedom, compassion, mercy and forgiveness are not lost in public debate and discussion.

We pray that your love might be known...
and encouragement experienced.

We continue to pray for those whose lives have been blighted by Covid 19. We think of those who are struggling with long term symptoms, those who are struggling to cope with

the impact the disease has had on their lives, those who are bereaved. We pray that care will continue to be given and that people will find strength and ability to care effectively.

We pray that your love might be known...
and encouragement experienced.

Today we would pray for those who are unwell in our congregation. We pray for those who are facing treatment and visits to hospital. We pray for those who feel threatened and at risk. We pray for all of our church family.

We pray that your love might be known...
and encouragement experienced.

We thank you loving God that you hear our prayers and that you answer them. Help us lord to be Holy People who reflect and show your holiness in all of our doing and being. Amen.

Hymn 504 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

Blessing