

# twelvebaskets



## EASTER 3A

A complete Sunday service ready to use  
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **theworshipcloud.com**

**Third Sunday of Easter - Year A**  
23rd April 2023



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine OR**

**313 STF – Thine be the glory**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**519 STF – Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do OR**

**156 STF – From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun**

Readings: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 1: 17-23; Luke 24:13-35

**Hymn:**

**450 STF – Open, Lord, my inward ear OR**

**513 STF – Take this moment, sign, and space**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**445 STF – He came to earth, to be served OR**

**673 STF – Will you come and follow me if I but call your name**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**492 STF – Christ be my leader by night as by day OR**

**322 STF – How sweet the name of Jesus sounds**

Blessing

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The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).

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## **Call to worship**

Come gather, come worship,  
Come and explore the miracle of a love so indescribable, so alive, so personal, so universal.

Come and love, as you were first loved,  
For here, all are truly welcome.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

## **Opening Prayers**

Gracious God,  
We have come, to worship you, in this space and time.  
Come amongst us, by your grace.

Living and life-giving God,  
You spoke, and light dawned.  
You breathed, and life flourished.

By your words and hands creation burst with colour and vibrancy,  
and we praise you.  
From your words, the stars shone.

By your goodness, the mountains rose, and the waves crashed.  
You ordained all things that we may see a glimpse of your glory and power,  
and we adore you.

Through your grace, we were made in your image,  
From your great love, your son came.

In him, you revealed yourself and we saw love made man,  
and we thank you.

We praise the works of your hands and the love that you lavish upon us. Your love shines into each part of our lives, bringing light and warmth wherever it reaches.

Lord God,  
You are grace and you love mercy.

In the face of our sin, you breath out forgiveness.

We confess those times Lord, when our lives have not reflected love into the world.  
We confess the words that we have said, the things that we have done and thought that have lacked love.

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

We confess  
when we have knocked others down and not built them up.  
when we have not shared all that you have given  
when kindness has been an afterthought and we have loved in hindsight.

We give thanks that it is your very nature to be forgiving and ask that you renew your love and light in our lives.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## **We say together the Lord's Prayer**

### **All Age Talk**

The Bible story we will hear later in this service tells us that God made it so that the two followers of Jesus did not recognise him, even though he was walking alongside them and talking to them.

Sometimes we are so busy looking at what we think we see that we do not see what's right there in front of our eyes. It is as though they are camouflaged. Sometimes it is even as though God is camouflaged – we have to look for him in the world around us.

Right – it's challenge time.

This week – can you go on a Prayer Walk?

The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord. Psalm 24:1

On the road to Emmaus, the friends walking together did not realise immediately that they were walking with Jesus. We do not always notice what is all around us. Everywhere we look, God is close to us. There are signs in nature, our surroundings, and the people we meet. Go for a walk in your community. What can you see?

I wonder where you see God?

Stop, look, and listen at various stages of your walk and talk to God about what you can see and hear: gaze at the sky and the patterns the clouds make, listen to the trees and the birds, look at the colours, and feel the different textures. How many different plants, animals, and insects can you see, and how many different textures can you explore? Who do you meet on your walk? What about the buildings and signs you see and the traffic that passes – where is God in these? What do you notice about your community?

There's a challenge for each of us to try if possible. Have a go for yourself.

Speaking of prayer, let us now pray.

Loving God, as we go through our life, draw close to us. Help us to see you in all that we do and say. Guide us to be more like you and share your love and life with all those we meet.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

**Hymn:**

519 STF – Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do OR

156 STF – From the breaking of the dawn to the setting of the sun

**Readings:** Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 1: 17-23; Luke 24:13-35

**Hymn:**

450 STF – Open, Lord, my inward ear OR

513 STF – Take this moment, sign, and space

**Reflections on the readings**

At St Andrew's Methodist Church in Wythenshawe, Manchester we have been partnering with Emmaus South Manchester, a new project within Emmaus UK who "support people to work their way out of homelessness, providing meaningful work, training, support and a stable home for as long as someone needs it."

So far we have turned our large hall into an Emmaus Charity Emporium and together we run a Community Cafe in the entrance vestibule. One of our specialities is toasties which our customers keep telling us are the best they have ever had :-)

It is interesting that lots of local people have found the Charity shop and said that they didn't know St Andrew's was there (it is only 61 years old after all). It is also interesting that so many people who visit have never heard the name "Emmaus" before, they have no idea how to pronounce it, absolutely no idea of any biblical connection or why the Charity is named Emmaus.

Yet, within Christian contexts, lots of things are named Emmaus. Some Churches in your area may have used versions of "The Emmaus Course" which are about exploring Christian Faith.

The reason that Christians name so many things "Emmaus" is, of course, that this story is so loved by so many Christians and that it is seen as a powerful, transformational experience of resurrection.

This contrast between those who have never heard of "Emmaus" and those who find the story so exciting, so relevant that they keep using the name for new projects seems to have an interesting parallel with the passage itself.

When the two disciples meet (but do not recognise) Jesus, there are similarities between their reaction ("Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days") and the one we can be tempted to have at St Andrew's.

"Are you the only person in Wythenshawe who hasn't come to St Andrew's for a wedding, a funeral, a pantomime, a dance class, dog training, the NHS Mental Health Arts Project, the community choir, the tea dance, the morris dancing, to vote, etc etc" and

"What do you mean you haven't heard of Emmaus, it comes from everyone's favourite Bible passage - you know the one after Easter where two disciples don't recognise Jesus until he breaks bread?"

and yes, I really hope we never actually say these things to anyone!!

Then the disciples get to tell Jesus their view of what has happened and how they feel about it. Again in a similar way, just as Jesus showed interest in their story we find lots of these first time visitors want to know about our story and what we are hoping for (to build a community with accommodation for 20 to 30 people being helped out of homelessness so they can build new lives, with St Andrew's able to continue to be the inclusive centre for vulnerable and excluded people in Wythenshawe for the next 60 years).

The next step in the story is where (as usual) God turns everything upside down and brings new understanding and transformation. Suddenly Jesus isn't the stranger who knows nothing about what has happened but instead is the one who can connect it all up and explain it.

Again we see parallels with our experience. We have the lady who told me that she had never been in a Church and was very suspicious of Church because it is full of hypocrites and abusers. Over more than a year she has become a friend, a volunteer and a brilliant advocate for Emmaus and St Andrew's. Plus someone who thoroughly enjoys trying to wind up the "vicar"!! It is just possible that she gets teased back, just a little!

We keep meeting people who have amazing stories to tell, gifts to share, enthusiasm and years of commitment to helping others. Together connecting, relating, supporting, encouraging.

The continual challenge to us is how long does it take for us to recognise Jesus in our new friends? Are we like these disciples who don't recognise Jesus until he breaks bread for them? Or has Luke succeeded in helping us learn from Cleopas and his companion to be looking for Jesus in the strangers we meet, especially as we switch from telling them our views to listening to their knowledge.

In what I hope will be an elegantly seamless way I want now to make connections between the Road to Emmaus story in Luke, our experience at St Andrew's and the passage from Acts.

The connection is just how flipping annoying and irritating Christians can be. Our complete confidence that we know the answers and that we know better than everyone else is how we are sometimes seen.

Here we see it in Luke "Are you the only stranger ..." and in Acts with Peter saying and this is how you must respond "Repent, and be baptised ... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" and us potentially saying "Are you the only person who hasn't heard of Emmaus or been to St Andrew's".

One of the many problems for us is that both in Scripture and our lives today God doesn't appear to have much patience with our arrogance and self confidence.

As soon as the disciples say to Jesus "don't you know" and tell him exactly what they think he should know, God turns it all around and teaches them what they have not understood and recognised.

As soon as Paul (and many Churches/Christian Leaders to this day) says this is exactly how you respond to God, we see example after example throughout Acts of people not following that set pattern. Sometimes, water baptism comes before the Holy Spirit, sometimes after. Sometimes we think only certain gifts demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit, other times we recognise the Holy Spirit in the breath of life in all.

In theory, at least, the Methodist Church believes in Prevenient Grace ("a Christian theological concept that refers to the grace of God in a person's life which precedes

and prepares to conversion.” Wikipedia) so when Peter says “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” we should connect the two and realise that the “everyone” who is called is indeed everyone. Again, that is God radically turning it all around from us interpreting scripture as rules, procedures, and process to God acting to call everyone and do so in an infinite range of different ways.

For us welcoming people into “our” Church and finding that they see it and our community differently and with insights and experiences that we desperately need is again God turning things around.

Rev’d Paul Wood likes to challenge Churches with the idea that the Church should be changed by every new person. Jesus was the new person who changed the disciples on the road to Emmaus. All those who came to Christianity in ways Peter didn’t expect (think of Cornelius and household) were God turning things around and changing Peter. All the people we meet can be God turning things around for us as part of transformation and resurrection.

Amen.<sup>4</sup>

### **Hymn:**

445 STF – He came to earth, to be served OR

673 STF – Will you come and follow me if I but call your name

### **Prayers of intercession**

As we gather here in worship we gather before the ultimate creator and in this moment of quiet we reflect on our world.

*[Pause]*

As we wonder at your creation we cannot help but see that through our actions and inactions, our desires and our greed we have caused our world to hurt, for that God, we are sorry. As fires burn and sea levels rise help us to be a people who treat your world as the precious life-giving gift that it is with fairness, responsibility and love.

We give thanks to you Lord, for you are good, your love endures forever.

As we gather here in worship we gather as members of your family, a people called to worship you here, and in this moment of quiet we reflect on our community. *[Pause]*

Thank you God that you don’t call us to journey alone, we pray for our community, for those who are hurting may they feel your comfort, for those who are leading may they feel your guidance, for those who are ill may they feel your healing. Call us ever deeper into community with each other, may we truly be one body with many parts all working together for your glory.

We give thanks to you Lord, for you are good, your love endures forever.

As we gather here in worship we gather before your cross and your throne and in this moment of quiet we reflect on our own thoughts, words and actions.

*[Pause]*

Forgive us for the times this week where we have not thought the things you would have us think, have not said the words you would have us say and have not acted in

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Dave Warnock

the way you would have us act. In our moments of humanity where we have fallen short we ask for your mercy. Help us to see the world the way you see it, to recognise your creative, loving hand in all aspects of creation, help us to walk this Earth in a way that shines your light in to the lives of all who we meet.

We give thanks to you Lord, for you are good, your love endures forever.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

### **We will now take up the offering.**

Heavenly Father, resurrected Christ, Spirit of God, we offer you these gifts for your mission. Help us to be inspired and transformed by our encounter with you, that we might play our part and use our gifts to build a better world.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

### **Hymn:**

492 STF – Christ be my leader by night as by day OR

322 STF – How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

### **Blessing**

Go out, you travelling people of God,

And meet with Jesus on the road.

Seek for him, listen to him, and be transformed by the encounter with love.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Lauren Brabbs

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker