

## Welcome and Notices

Sad news: For those of you who knew Kay Unsworth this is to let you know she died peacefully yesterday. She was 107. We give thanks for her life and pray for her daughter in America. For those of you who have known her for many years remember the younger more active Kay and what she meant to each of you.

Also please remember Mary Day in your prayers. Alan passed away on Saturday evening after a struggle with cancer.

Happy news about Jim and Sheelagh's new granddaughter, Lily, born last Monday.

Christian Aid week is this coming week. The link for Christian Aid week donations is [caid.org.uk/week](http://caid.org.uk/week).

Birthdays:

Pat Cutting for last Thursday who celebrated the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her 21st birthday!!  
Frances 'birthday is 13<sup>th</sup> May so perhaps you could wish her happy birthday from everyone next Sunday.

## Call to worship:

Jesus said, "I am the way – come"

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth – come and receive."

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life – come, receive and respond."

## Introduction to hymn

Friday was VE day, and at the service of celebration held at Westminster Abbey 75 years ago, this was one of the hymns sung.

**Praise:** Now thank we all our God

<https://youtu.be/s99dNPKYtHk>

1. Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things has done, in Whom this world rejoices;  
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.
2. Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;  
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;  
And guard us through all ills in this world, till the next!
3. All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,  
The Son, and Him Who reigns with Them in highest Heaven—  
The one eternal God, Whom earth and Heav'n adore;  
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

## Picture Quiz

## Offering Prayer

**Praise:** We are marching in the light of God

<https://youtu.be/yn16ABWn20c>

We are marching in the light of God  
We are marching in the light of God  
We are marching in the light of God  
We are marching in the light of God  
We are marching marching

We are marching Oh Oh  
We are marching in the light of God  
We are marching marching  
We are marching Oh Oh  
We are marching in the light of God

**Reading:** based on John 14:1 – 14

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I will be going away soon, but don't worry, because I am going to prepare a place for you in my Father's house, which has many rooms. When the time is right, I will return and take you there, so that we can all be together.' Wanting to know where this place would be, Thomas asked, 'How will we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. I will show you the way to God the Father.' But Philip wanted Jesus to show them the Father. Jesus sighed. 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still don't recognise me?' Jesus continued, 'Believe in the Father and believe also in me, because I am in the Father and the Father is in me. If you can't do that, then look at the things I have done and you will know what God the Father is like. If you believe in me, you will be able to do even greater things than I have done. All you have to do is to ask in my name and I will do it for you.'

**Prayers:**

Together, Lord, we come to seek the 'Jesus way'.  
May your truth fill us with wisdom to see your presence  
in all that we do.  
And may we receive new life, that we may serve you  
in all that we are.  
Amen.

A prayer of confession  
Forgive us, loving Lord, that we have strayed from your way.  
Forgive us for the times our lives have not been shaped by  
your truth.  
Forgive us for denying your life in us and in others,  
by the way we have lived.  
In the name of Jesus, the way, the truth and the life, we pray.  
Amen.

A prayer of adoration  
Gracious God, you are the rock of our lives.  
Your strength sustains us.  
Your power delivers us.  
Your mercy brings forgiveness to us.  
We come to you in adoration,  
praising you that our whole life is in your hands –  
held, sustained, protected.  
Glory be to you, merciful Lord,  
glory, honour, majesty and worship,  
in the name of your Son, our redeemer.  
Amen.

**Sermon:** You will do greater things...

In this morning's reading from John's Gospel, Jesus gathers with his disciples to prepare them for the difficult times that are to come. When his disciples express anxiety about Jesus's departure, an exasperated Jesus asks, "Have you been with me so long and still you don't know me?" He makes an astounding claim for himself: he and the Father are one, so much that Jesus is able to do the things which only God can do.

But then there is more. Jesus prepares his followers by empowering them, reassuring them that they are going to do greater things than Jesus has done. Greater things than even Jesus has done? How can that be?

We know that Jesus had done some pretty amazing things by this point in the Gospel of John. We've all heard about the healings, the changing of water to wine, the restoring of sight to the blind, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, as we have moved through the Gospel of John this lectionary year. But then comes the clanger, the verse that so often takes some real explaining for any preacher - you will do even greater things than I have done. Let's just let that one sink in for a moment....

The implication is that these disciples, so filled with fear and anxiety, are also being filled with a miraculous power because of their relationship with Jesus. Even as Jesus has glorified the Father through his powerful works, so will we glorify the Father, through Jesus, by the works that we will do. As Jesus leaves his disciples he promises them a divine power surge.

Now when we reflect on what church is all about, you may think of warmth, friendliness, or maybe even joy, but do you feel power? There are so many aspects of modern life that make us feel powerless. We can live our lives feeling like we are reduced to a number, not a name. It can easily appear like we have lost control, like others have more of a say than we do. The promise in a democracy is that each of us would feel empowered to help shape the direction of our society. Sometimes that can feel like a pipe dream for many who often feel completely uncared for and voiceless.

Earlier in John's Gospel we read that Jesus, the light of the world, came into the darkness. And there was great resistance on the part of the world's darkness to Jesus's light but "the darkness doesn't extinguish the light." The light, the world's true Light, will eventually, powerfully triumph. And we believe that. But this morning John's Gospel would have us to believe even more: the triumph of God also comes through us. Here is Jesus's astounding promise: "I assure you that whoever believes in me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am going to the Father"

Jesus is returning to the Father. He returns, not as an able assistant of God the Father, but as God's Son, one with God. The spotlight now falls on people like you and me. Now Jesus empowers us. Here were a bunch of fearful, self-centred, anxious disciples, huddled together and asking only one question: "Oh Jesus, what is to become of us?" And it was to these that Jesus promised, "Those of you who believe in me will do even greater work than I have done."

Right....Do you believe it? Do you believe that our church, for all its faults, is empowered to do even greater works than the works done by Jesus? How did this Gospel of John begin to tell the story of Jesus? It began in much the same way as all the Gospels began: with Jesus calling a group of ordinary people to be his disciples. That's the way Jesus works. In fact, the Gospel of John itself, written by some early follower of Jesus, is itself a fulfilment of Jesus's promise.

Jesus preached some powerful sermons, did some mighty acts, but we would have known about none of it, had it not been for the eloquent testimony of the writer of this Gospel. Jesus empowered some ordinary person to give an extraordinary divine witness to Jesus.

As your minister here at Emmanuel, if I had the time in this sermon, I could testify to the truth of Jesus's promise: you will do even greater works than I. As evidence for that claim I would think of many of you sitting at home right now.

Jesus raised the dead. I have seen some of you rise up from a heart-rending relationship break-up, pick up the pieces and start a whole new life. Jesus healed the blind. I have seen you open the

eyes of a lonely and despairing person to the vision of a new world simply by loving that person, by standing with them and giving hope when there was no hope to be seen.

Jesus turned water into wine. I have seen you transform what could have been a dull prayer meeting or Lent group into a spirit-filled absorbing of the new wine of God's presence, not just by what you said, but the way you humbly shared your experience of God.

I could go on. Sure, it takes a great deal of faith to believe that Jesus is who he says he is in today's Gospel: Jesus and the Father are one. When we've seen Jesus, we've seen God.

But it also takes some faith to believe what Jesus says about us: God is doing ever greater works through not-so-great people like us!

By the way, in the epistle reading for today, 1 Peter 2:2-10, the writer says to a struggling early Christian congregation, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession" (v. 9). What an astounding thing to say to this little group of early believers, hanging on by their fingernails in the face of persecution and mocking!

The word priest is rarely used in the New Testament. When the title priest is used, such as in the letter to the Hebrews, it is always applied just to Jesus. Yet here the case is different. Here priest is applied to these ordinary Christians, these laity who are living out the faith in their time and place. They are called "a chosen race"; they are the "royal priesthood," the main preachers who tell the world about the ultimate triumph of God in Jesus Christ.

It's a great deal to claim for ordinary people like you and like me. We are God's great answer to what's wrong with the world. We are God's great, spirit-induced power surge into the world. The ongoing challenge for us, particularly in these times, is to live like it!

**Praise:** All I once held dear  
<https://youtu.be/oxpPla-BskY>

All I once held dear, built my life upon  
All this world reveres, and wars to own  
All I once thought gain I have counted loss  
Spent and worthless now, compared to this  
Knowing you, Jesus  
Knowing you, there is no greater thing  
You're my all, you're the best  
You're my joy, my righteousness  
And I love you, Lord  
Now my heart's desire is to know you more  
To be found in you and known as yours  
To possess by faith what I could not earn  
All-surpassing gift of righteousness  
Knowing you, Jesus  
Knowing you, there is no greater thing  
You're my all, you're the best  
You're my joy, my righteousness  
And I love you, Lord  
Oh, to know the power...

### **An Act of Commitment for VE day commemorations**

Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God and our fellow men and women: that we may help, encourage and comfort others, and support those working for the relief of the needy and for the peace and welfare of the nations.

**Lord God our Father,  
we pledge ourselves to serve you and all humankind, in the cause of peace,**

**for the relief of want and suffering,  
and for the praise of your name.  
Guide us by your Spirit;  
give us wisdom;  
give us courage;  
give us hope;  
and keep us faithful now and always.  
Amen.**

O Lord our God,  
as we remember, teach us the ways of peace. As we treasure memories, teach us to hope. As we give thanks for the sacrifices of the past, help us to make your future in this world, until your kingdom come.  
**All Amen.**

Almighty God,  
from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: kindle in the hearts of all people the true love of peace; and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward,  
till the earth is filled with the knowledge of thy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**All Amen.**

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, the Commonwealth, and all people, peace and concord;  
and to us and all his servants, life everlasting;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
come down upon you and remain with you always.  
**All Amen.**

**Sending out prayer:**

May God bless you, guide you and direct you.  
May God bless you, give you strength and the assurance of his love.  
May God bless you and fill your life with his presence –  
today and always.  
**Amen.**

**Praise:** Lord for the years

<https://youtu.be/wbkNICet7iE>

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord for the years, we bring our thanks today.

2.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

3.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

4.

Lord, for our world where men disown and doubt you,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without you:  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.  
5.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us-  
self on the cross, and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.