28th June 2020, 10.30am

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use while we are unable to attend church. Pause to settle yourself in God's presence, knowing that other people are sharing in worship with you.

Take a few moments to be still, and to remember all the times this week where you have…
known God's care in acts of kindness
known God's encouragement in conversations
known God's strength when you've felt weak

Opening prayer:

Gracious God, we praise you for your love revealed in Jesus:
Beyond our understanding yet closer than our beating hearts;
formed years ago yet ever with us today and in the future;
turning our world upside down yet setting us firmly on our feet.
Gracious God, we praise you.
Amen.

Song: 'Blessed be the name of the Lord' (Singing the Faith 40)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYrcrP1ysjw

1) Blessed be the name of the Lord,
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
Blessed be the name of the Lord Most High!
(Repeat)

The Name of the Lord is a strong tower,
The righteous run into it,
And they are saved.
(Repeat)

2) Glory to the name of the Lord...

3) Holy is the name of the Lord...

We Pray:

Almighty God, in these strange times where we are experiencing uncertainty and we know the reality of an ever present threat, we are grateful for the networks of family and friends that we have, and the technological tools that keep us connected in our networks online and by phone, especially when we are physically distant.

As we explore the book of Ruth, we are watching the world change with new boundaries for living and we are faced with unfamiliar situations.

People have engaged in a bizarre kind of harvesting or gleaning – one characterised by gathering and hoarding without due consideration of those who are marginalised but also by generosity of sharing and provision for different kinds of need. We are sorry when…[add your own responses]

The rules constantly change and we are frustrated still by the limitations but remind us that we have much to celebrate and give thanks for… [add own response]

Loving God, help us to engage for a time through these resources, to hear you in our reading, listening, watching and wondering and to enjoy conversation with others whether they are beside us in person or across the virtual world. We offer you ourselves, our time, our presence and our open hearts. Amen.

Read Ruth Chapter 4

Rev. Phil Snelson reflects:

Well what a story! Elimelech and Naomi take their family off to a pagan country seeking food and it proves quite "unfruitful".

Naomi returns home to Bethlehem a widow declaring that the Lord has brought her home '*empty*'. Her daughter-in-law has come with her having made a covenant commitment to Naomi that 'your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.' A pagan Moabite committing in faith to the God of Israel!

In this final chapter so many things that were broken in the opening part of the story, by contrast, are now restored, redeemed. Boaz deals with the family politics, "someone" closer in line to take on the estate… oh and Naomi & Ruth. That "someone" remains unnamed and loses his sandal is all to his shame in contrast with honourable Boaz.

Boaz marries Ruth and after ten years of barrenness in Moab, now comes fruitfulness as God gives her a son – Obed ("he serves, provider, guardian").

All the prayers of blessing are fulfilled from Boaz over Ruth – 'May the Lord reward you' (Ch2), 'May you be blessed by the Lord' (Ch3) and of the elders that the Lord make Ruth '*like Rachel & Leah'* and Boaz '*to prosper and be famous in Bethlehem',* and the women of the town too '*May this child be famous in Israel*'. Naomi who was "empty" is now fulfilled as a grandparent.

And a short genealogy invites us to realise that this simple love story is also God's providence at work, not just for Naomi, Ruth & Boaz but for generations to follow as He prepares the way for the renewal of Israel under David, and ultimately the redeeming of the world through Jesus Christ.

Let us note the remarkable things that our God can do through ordinary people of faith. May we be encouraged by Ruth and Boaz, to live godly lives of kindness, grace, selflessness, loyalty, for we never know what effect it may have as our Lord continues to work behind the scenes to bring His purposes for redeeming His world.

Hymn: There is a Redeemer (Singing the Faith 338)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUqfdaCLm0Y

1) There is a Redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.

Thank You, O my Father,
For giving us Your Son,
And leaving Your Spirit—
Till the work on earth is done.

2) Jesus my Redeemer, name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain.

3) When I stand in glory, I will see His face,
And there I'll serve my King forever
In that holy place.

Prayers of Intercession:

We pray for those on the fringes of society;
for those who feel rejected;
for those who are overlooked;
for those whom others avoid.
May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for those who are lonely and isolated.
May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for those in prison. For people suffering from mental health issues.
May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for children excluded from school; for their families and those with responsibility for their education.
May they know the welcome of your love.

For those who make important decisions which affect many lives. Remembering especially the Methodist Conference meeting this week.
May they know the welcome of your love.

For the victims, families and friends of those attacked this week in Reading.
May they know the welcome of your love.

Loving God, as you welcome us, may we welcome others with warmth and steadfast love.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father ……

Song: 'When I was lost' (Singing the Faith 367)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZ4xkBNRwXc

1) When I was lost, You came and rescued me;
Reached down into the pit and lifted me.
O Lord, such love,
I was as far from You as I could be.
You know all the things I've ever done,
But Jesus' blood has cancelled every one.
O Lord, such grace, to qualify me as Your own.

There is a new song in my mouth,
There is a deep cry in my heart,
A hymn of praise to Almighty God - hallelujah!
And now I stand firm on this Rock,
My life is hidden now with Christ in God.
The old has gone and the new has come - hallelujah!
Your love has lifted me.

2) Now I have come into Your family,
For the Son of God has died for me.
O Lord, such peace,
I am as loved by You as I could be.
In the full assurance of Your love,
Now with every confidence we come.
O Lord, such joy
To know that You delight in us.

(Bridge section – not in Singing the Faith)
Many are the wonders You have done,
And many are the things that You have planned.
How beautiful the grace that gives to us
All that we don't deserve,
All that we cannot earn,
But is a gift of love.

There is a new song in my mouth,…

A prayer of blessing:

God our redeemer, comforter and giver of life, strengthen us for the changing days which lie ahead. Fill us when we are empty prepare us to partner with you in your mission. ***Amen***

Worship sheet compiled by Deacon Richard Beckett.
Some material from Roots resources.
Some material adapted from the Methodist Church in Scotland resources.
Message by Rev. Phil Snelson.