



Sunday 14 February 2021

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 I the Lord of sea and sky (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion, and confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Gloria

The Gloria is usually omitted during Lent.

The Collect for the Sunday before Lent

Almighty God,
by the prayer and discipline of Lent
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,
and by following in his Way
come to share in his glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord

All **Amen.**

First reading

A reading from the First Book of Moses called Genesis

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.' Then Abram fell on his face [in worship]; and God said to him,

'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God.' God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.'

God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.'

Genesis 17:1-16

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations') —in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations,' according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.'

Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him,' were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification. *Romans 4:13-25*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Beyond the days

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and

after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.' *Mark 8:27-38*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

When I'm waiting in the virtual meeting room before and after meetings, I quite often hear my colleagues say 'I need to lose half a stone, so I'm giving up chocolate for Lent'—or similar. Then they get round to me, whom they know to be a Christian, and they ask me what I'm giving up. So I give them the explanation about Lent being a time for prayer, and penitence, in order to get closer to God and understand His purpose for me, and that we are walking with Jesus in the desert. At which point I usually get some variation on 'That doesn't sound like much fun. What's in it for you?'

And this makes me think about what I **am** doing for Lent. Very often we do things that, while good in themselves, are not in fact done for God. For example, we might give the money we would spend on chocolate to charity. Or we might temporarily move to a plant-based diet because this is better for the planet. All well and good, but they make US feel better. We know we need to do the self-examination, the Bible reading, the prayer, the self-discipline and the obedience, but they are HARD. We put them off till tomorrow and forget about them, or just find them too hard and stop doing them, or we feel guilty about not doing them but still don't do them. The thing about Lent, though, is that it is a time for change, and the things we do for Lent often don't change us. They might change our weight, or our bank balance, or our perception of ourselves, but they don't change the fundamental self, or our relationship with God.

And our faith means that we need to get closer to God to understand His purpose for us. We can see this in the readings. By faith, Abram got closer to God and became Abraham, with a clear purpose. We see Peter in the process of getting closer to Jesus, and though he doesn't yet understand, he is changed into the person to whom Jesus entrusts his Church when he tells Peter to 'feed my lambs'. Jesus Himself went into the desert to learn God's purpose, and came out changed. We must change, too.

Lent should be the chrysalis stage of our Christian life. We enter it as big fat caterpillars, full of selfish thoughts and earthbound desires (and chocolate ...); and we come out the other side transformed into beautiful butterflies, soaring to Heaven, willing and able to receive and tell out the glorious message of resurrection and redemption. But what happens inside the chrysalis is a bit grim. There is no tinkering about the edges. It is a complete breakdown of the old, before the miraculous transformation into something new and wonderful can happen.

We need to break down the old us to be transformed into Easter people, so we have to do the hard bits. Why have I given up chocolate? How does it advance my relationship with God? Is it teaching me something (e.g. self-discipline) that I can use for God in another way, maybe by applying it to prayer or Bible reading? What does God want me to do for other people? What am I doing that God wants me to stop doing? I'm sorry, Lord, help me not to do it again. Am I even listening to God, or just asking Him for things, even if the things are for the benefit of others? We may not like the answers!

The way we move through Lent, the results of our self-examination, the purpose God has for us, will be different for each of us, and we will all find it hard. But guess what! God will help us through if we ask Him. He wants us to come safely through the chrysalis, whatever kind of butterfly we turn out to be. He wants us to forge new and better relationships with Him, and to understand what He wants us to be. So, in the name of Jesus and with the help of God, even though it scares me, and I'll probably end up as a Cabbage White not a Swallowtail, I am going to stop being a caterpillar, and get broken down and rebuilt as the best butterfly I can be in His service. Will you?

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

God of grace, we pray for your church throughout the world, especially where there is danger or derision for being Christian. Strengthen those in peril for your sake and surround them with your love.

We ask that you will give all your people such love and compassion that we cannot remain silent in the face of injustice and poverty.

As your grace fills our hearts so may we be stirred into action to demonstrate your love for all the world and for all creatures that live and move on this earth.

We ask that you would give us strength to be a voice crying for justice and peace. May your church be a liberating presence and offer love, compassion and whatever is needed to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer

God of mercy and love, we pray for countries where justice seems far away, where human rights are ignored. Let us remind those in power that prisoners are not forgotten.

We pray that the dignity of life is respected and remember those who have no peace, who are trafficked or who live with violence at home or in wars in the wider world. We ask that those who torment, victimise or profit from the vulnerable and stir up hostility will turn from their ways.

May they learn of your love and somehow come to newness of life even in the midst of despair.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer

God of healing, we pray for the countless numbers of your children who suffer in this world in body, mind or spirit, for those who are leaving this life alone, for those who are friendless or depressed. We pray for all who suffer because of flood or drought, lack of food, clean water or medical help and supplies. We pray for ourselves that we may learn to see more clearly the needs of your children and to respond to those needs for they are our brothers and sisters.

We thank you for our families and friends and pray especially for those in particular need today. We pray that your peace and love will surround them bringing them comfort and strength.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer

God of life, we thank you for those who have travelled before us on the way of the cross and are now at peace in your eternal presence. Help us to live in the assurance of your promise to us that this road of faith will lead into your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer

Merciful Father,

All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The peace

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 O thou who at this Eucharist ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Be thou my guardian and my guide ([click on link to hear the hymn](#))

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory. Amen.