

## Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

### Opening Prayer (from Psalm 119 vv. 103, 105, 112)

O Giver of all good gifts,  
How delicious your words are,  
so good in our mouths, sweeter than  
honey!  
Your word is a lamp to our feet, a light to  
our path gladdening our eyes and  
showing the way.  
Incline our hearts to keep all your  
commands  
to treasure your words forever, to the  
end. Amen

### Hymn: 161 Speak O Lord

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or  
listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/OzAIHjyPgU>

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you  
to receive the food of your holy word.  
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;  
shape and fashion us in your likeness,  
that the light of Christ might be seen  
today  
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.  
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us  
all your purposes, for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,  
holy reverence, true humility.  
Test our thoughts and our attitudes  
in the radiance of your purity.  
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to  
see  
your majestic love and authority.  
Words of power that can never fail;  
let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;  
help us grasp the heights of your plans for  
us.  
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time  
that will echo down through eternity.  
And by grace we'll stand on your  
promises,  
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with  
us.

Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built  
and the earth is filled with your glory.  
*Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend  
(b. 1963)*

### Let us pray together

Ever-speaking God  
your strong words called worlds into  
being  
you spoke light out of darkness, life out of

emptiness, beauty out of chaos,  
you still speak. We praise and worship  
you.

Ever-speaking God you are the eternal  
Word, Jesus, God's 'Yes' to us. You have  
the words of eternal life.

You spoke and lives changed, bodies  
healed, hearts quickened, you still speak.  
We praise and worship you.

Ever-speaking God you are the Spirit who  
brings words to life. You continue to pray  
for us when the words run out. You speak  
in the world and in our hearts, you call  
words to mind and teach us, leading us  
into truth.

You still speak. We praise and worship  
you.

In this time may we drink in your Word,  
feast on your Word, hold on to your  
Word. **Amen**

Faithful God your words give life, forgive  
us when our words damage and  
discourage.

Your words bring peace, forgive us when  
our words stir up anger and discord.

Your words reveal truth, forgive us when  
our words flatter and falsify.

Your words bring healing, forgive us when  
our words harm and hurt.

Jesus who spoke out against oppression  
and hypocrisy, forgive our complicit  
silence.

Jesus who stood in holy silence before  
power and violence, forgive the wild  
words we should not have spoken.

In the quiet of our hearts, may we hear  
the word of grace. Jesus Christ speaks:

*'Your sins are forgiven'*. Thanks be to God.  
**Amen**

### **Today's Gospel Reading: John 6 vv. 56-69**

Those who eat my flesh and drink my  
blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as  
the living Father sent me, and I live  
because of the Father, so whoever eats  
me will live because of me. This is the  
bread that came down from heaven, not  
like that which your ancestors ate, and  
they died. But the one who eats this  
bread will live for ever.' He said these  
things while he was teaching in the  
synagogue at Capernaum.

### **The Words of Eternal Life**

When many of his disciples heard it, they  
said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can  
accept it?' But Jesus, being aware that his  
disciples were complaining about it, said  
to them, 'Does this offend you? Then  
what if you were to see the Son of Man  
ascending to where he was before? It is  
the spirit that gives life; the flesh is  
useless. The words that I have spoken to  
you are spirit and life. But among you  
there are some who do not believe.' For  
Jesus knew from the first who were the  
ones that did not believe, and who was  
the one that would betray him. And he  
said, 'For this reason I have told you that  
no one can come to me unless it is  
granted by the Father.'

Because of this many of his disciples  
turned back and no longer went about  
with him. So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do  
you also wish to go away?' Simon Peter  
answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we  
go? You have the words of eternal

life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

**Time to Reflect** *Finding the right words...*

You pause, chewing the end of your pen or with your hand hovering above the screen or keyboard trying to 'find the right words'. There is something very important to share, something sensitive to disclose and perhaps these simple words have to bear the weight of strong emotion. Sometimes recently bereaved people find they are avoided or ignored by others who 'can't find the right words' and are embarrassed and feel awkward. We've come up with the idea of 'mis-speaking' to refer to times when words come out wrong or unintentionally convey an unfortunate or unacceptable meaning. Those of us who have had to write or record words during the pandemic, particularly those who have tried to speak of God in this context, have felt the pressure of finding the 'right words'. At times when we could not touch, could not pass on a gift or share food together and our words have been weightier and more precious.

Jesus's words here were and are difficult and disquieting. And people can't take it, they back off, they walk. And Jesus asks, so poignantly and directly, if the disciples want to leave too. This is where Peter makes a great confession of faith, faith which knows that it has nowhere else to turn. In the Gospels we often hear of Peter putting his foot in his mouth, foul-mouthed Peter denying his Master. But here Peter speaks so clearly, speaks for all the disciples and all of us, 'where else can

we go, you have the words of eternal life'. Jesus's words are here not bland and reassuring. Jesus does not tell the disciples or us 'what we want to hear'. These words are strong and they stick in the heart and mind, they take root in us. They are compelling, they draw us in. Even when things don't make sense, and we don't quite 'get' what these words mean, the words of Jesus hold us, Jesus holds us. In these days Jesus holds us, and holds onto us still, through the words we read in the Bible, the words we sing to ourselves in our homes, the words of worship we share with each other. There are times when we can't find the words, and times when words run out, when words cannot be enough. There are times when we can't put into words what we feel as individuals or together. There are times when we can't adequately explain how our experiences connect with what we believe, but like Peter, we grasp the words and Word which draw and hold us. This is what we've got, what we stick with, this is enough, enough for life and faith: 'where else can we go?'

**Take a time to sit quietly. A time of prayer**

Holy God, you want us to know and believe that you alone are God. Give to your Church such confidence in you that we may do and dare much in your name. We remember those congregations we are connected with and those fellowships we are part of and commend them to your grace.

Jesus Christ, we know and believe that you are truly the Saviour of the World.

Grant to the peoples of the world justice and peace. Give wisdom to those with power and freedom to those who are oppressed. We remember those nations and situations which are on our hearts at this time and we ask for your restoration and grace.

Tender-hearted God, we know and believe the love that you have for us and all people. Grant us to draw close and find grace to help us in our time of need. Touch those who we know are struggling with your compassion and comfort, your healing and strength. We remember those who are sick, sorrowful, bereaved or troubled and place them in your loving hands.

Merciful God, who knows our needs and our fears, steady us for all that lies ahead, strengthen our hearts, lead us into your truth, until we see you face to face. **Amen**

**The Lord's Prayer:** *Our Father .....*

**Listen to the worship song: *You are the King of Glory***

<https://youtu.be/2fhxKGallI4>

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

**A prayer of blessing**

May the words we have heard and prayed and shared echo in our minds, stay in our hearts and re-shape our lives. May we know the Living Word of God with us now and always. **Amen**

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