

Sunday 9th May 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

Christian Aid Week 10-16 May

Today's worship for the Fifth Sunday of Easter is focussed on Christian Aid Week and the order of service produced for this year. This year Christian Aid focuses on climate change and how earth wells have relieved drought in Northern Kenya. You can access all information re this Appeal and Christian Aid Week via this link - [Christian Aid Week 2021 - Christian Aid](#) You can also bring your Christian Aid envelopes to church by 16th May.

Call to worship

O sing to the Lord a new song
sing to the Lord, all the Earth.
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.

Amen.



Prayer of Lament

O God, the heavens are not glad, the Earth does not rejoice warming gases fill the atmosphere pollution turns clean air foul climate breakdown wreaks havoc.

The sea roars with the grief of all the plastic that fills it of the destruction of coral reef. The fields exclaim despair for delayed rains and prolonged drought for species extinction on a daily basis.

No song of joy rings out from the trees of the forest decimated by forest fires.

How long O God, how long until your justice comes for all your creatures and the Earth? In you we put our trust. **Amen**

Our Father

Song: Beautiful One (Wonderful, so wonderful is you're und failing love) - Tim Hughes

[\(503\) Beautiful One - Tim Hughes - YouTube](#)

John 15: 9-17

⁹ 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business.

Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

¹⁷ This is my command: love each other. (NIVUK)

Florence's story and Sermon for Christian Aid Sunday



Florence - She is full of life, love and laughter. The women in her farming group look up to her.

She's courageous, kind and a survivor. A few years ago, her husband died, leaving her a widow. At that time, she had no water to grow crops. Her children were hungry. She had to walk for hours on a dangerous journey to collect water. 'Life was miserable,' she told us.

Florence could easily have been defeated. But Florence is a fighter, and she shows the women in her farming group that they can be fighters too. Next to her farm, Florence is proud to show us something remarkable – a dam, full of fresh water. It's thanks to Christian Aid Week donations like yours that Florence and her community have built this water dam, with the help of our partner ADSE, just a short walk away from her village.

"I have been sustained by the earth dam. My life has changed. I am very happy. You can see it in my face: my face is shining. I have strength and power."

With this dam, Florence can grow tomatoes, onions, papayas and chillies on her farm. Her children can eat healthy, nutritious vegetables. It's her source of life and joy.

Florence also uses the water from the dam to keep honey bees. She sells the rich, golden honey for cash at the market. Now, Florence is reaping a good life for herself and her family.

The dam gives Florence strength to withstand even the most unpredictable weather. It's a reliable water source, whether she faces long drought or relentless rainstorms.

"I am thankful to people who have donated to build this earth dam. I am praying God will increase their giving." - Florence Muthiani.

Florence is generous, and she knows other people are struggling to cope without a reliable water source. 'There is a village nearby – they don't have an earth dam. They travel for a long way to come to this water point. They are suffering.'

Give today and help more people like Florence stop this climate crisis.

Your generosity this Christian Aid Week could help another community build a dam. Many more people will have the water they need to sustain their families.

You can watch the DVD of Florence's story on Youtube via this link - [\(503\) Florence's story - YouTube](#)

Sermon Christian Aid Week 2021 - John 15: 9-17

'I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.' John 15:11

This verse is the purpose statement of this long parting speech from Jesus to his disciples. To speak of joy when he himself is on the threshold of deep trial and suffering is an indication of what joy is.

It was for the joy set before him he endured the cross. Despite the suffering of Good Friday and the silence of Holy Saturday, this is a joy that believes that Sunday is coming. This joy does not deny sorrow or suffering but co-exists with them.

Jesus' parting words to his disciples are an encouragement to abide in the love of God and dig deep into consistent, uncircumstantial joy. And he knows that they are going to need each other to get through. Their love for one another and their sacrificial giving for their friends will strengthen them to endure. It is not duty, obligation or command that will enable them to remain faithful and bear lasting fruit. It is love, friendship and joy.

Love, friendship and joy is what we hope lies at the heart of our experience of Christian Aid Week. We hope that it is our love for one another that inspires our generous giving. That it is our friendship with communities we get to know through the stories of Rose and Florence that motivates us to sacrificial acts of solidarity. And it through our generous giving and sacrificial actions that we bear lasting fruit and know complete joy.

The joy that we participate in and experience in and through Christian Aid Week does not lead us away from suffering and struggle, but towards it. We choose to look towards the pain and see the possibilities for transformation. Jesus goes on to explain to the disciples that even pain will turn to a joy that no one can remove (John 16:20-22). Alice Walker wrote 'resistance is the secret of our joy'. This Christian Aid Week, as we choose to enter into the struggle with Rose and celebrate transformed communities with Florence, may our joy be complete.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

God of abundant life, we see your goodness all around us and we thank you for every part of it; from the plants and animals which play their part in complex ecosystems, to the dry deserts and stormy seas which test the limits of life.

We pray that in this time of climate crisis and ecological emergency, you may help us to rediscover your love of creation and to reflect that in our own lives. **God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

God of second chances, we recognise the damage we have done to the Earth and the injustice we see in society every day, all of it fuelled by worship of profit and possessions.

We pray for the coming of a better world with justice, kindness and humility at its heart. We ask that you guide us to be co-creators of this new world. Give us confidence to follow the prophetic voices to stand against injustice to people and to planet. So that together, in your strength, we stop this climate crisis. **God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Please add your prayers for others you wish to pray for today . . .

Song All I once held dear – Robin Mark

[\(503\) Robin Mark - All I Once Held Dear \[with lyrics\] - YouTube](#)



Holy Communion – Christian Aid Sunday

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me’.

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine, and when he had given thanks, he 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 all the human family for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.’

God of unending love and justice, send your Holy Spirit among us and bless these gifts, so that as we come to your table to receive your body and blood, we are empowered to overcome human divisions, and freely share your banquet of life with our sisters and brothers around the world. All this we ask in the name of your Son, our ultimate redeemer and reconciler.

The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit.

We bless you for Christ, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and this wine, that the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that shall last.

Eat this bread. It is the bread of life.

Drink this wine. It is the cup of blessing.

Prayer after communion

Loving God, you have fed us generously at this table, as we have remembered Jesus and rejoiced that he is with us today. We are ready now to follow him, and to be your people in the world. May your Holy Spirit show us the way, make us holy and fill us with love.

Blessing

May God bless us with wonder at creation’s glory. May God bless us with fury at creation’s spoiling. May God bless us with courage at this critical hour. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest upon us and on all creation, this day and for the future to come. **Amen.**

