

## HOME WORSHIP FOR 21 MARCH THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

### OPENING PRAYER

You will be our God, and we will be your people. In times of weakness, in moments of temptation, the covenant holds.

You will be our God, and we will be your people. When the journey is rough, when friends let us down, the covenant holds.

You will be our God, and we will be your people. In our struggle to be a faithful community, in the uncertainty of faithful endeavours, the covenant still holds.

You will be our God, and we will be your people. In our work for justice, in our response of worship, the covenant is proved. You will be our God, and we will be your people.

You welcome us, O God, as travellers along the highway of faith. We have set out in hope and we believe you are with us on the way.

The end of the Lenten season brings home the challenge of the journey. But you, O God, have given us the person of Jesus Christ, to trust and to follow.

Jesus says "The hour has come," the cross stands menacingly at the end of the road. We will not look back; we will confront the self-serving powers of darkness.

Love Crucified reveals a wonderful new prospect. Death is not the end; the Way goes beyond the cross; Love is eternal. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE – try to memorise these verses from today's readings.

*Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12: 24&25)*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (from Philippians 2)

Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God, but made himself nothing. Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness. He humbled himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God has raised him on high, and given him the name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of mercy, we pray for all Church leaders, and all who are being called into particular ministries, both lay and ordained. We pray especially for any who are wrestling with the demands of such a calling, that they may be given courage to offer themselves in your service.

Let your name be glorified: let your will be done.

All-seeing God, watch over the nations of the world in all their plans and actions, conflicts and disaster; guard the children, guide the leaders and give us all your peace.

Let your name be glorified: let your will be done.

God of love, be present in every heart and home, to cherish, to challenge, to reassure and to comfort us.

Let your name be glorified: let your will be done.

God of wholeness, we bring to your love those who are weighed down with suffering, or imprisoned by their fears. Ease their burdens and give them the strength to bear what cannot be avoided.

Let your name be glorified: let your will be done.

Gracious God, you are always so much more ready to give than we are to receive; open our hearts and minds to live the costly way of love.

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

### CLOSING PRAYER

The coming sacrifice of Christ calls us to wonder about the effectiveness of our gifts.

Will our worship speak to the needs of the coming generation? Will reconciliation arise out of conflict? Will we move from self-interest to concern for others? Will we see the faith community as a priority for ourselves and for our villages? Will we move out to address the needs of a troubled world?

Time will tell, but we are committed to keeping the cross before us – a symbol and a measure of what we can achieve in Christ. Amen.

We stand as the Church joyfully! We stand with the crowd and feel the excitement of Jesus coming into the city.

We stand as the Church in solidarity with our friends! We mingle with the disciples and sense the significance of the occasion, the foretaste of a testing time ahead.

We stand as the Church determined. We look towards the cross-hill and know that God's love is more than a match for all that lies ahead. Amen.