

SUNDAY 22/03/2020

A Temporary Online Magazine for the United Reformed Church East Cheshire and Derbyshire Borders

[Missional Partnership Website](#)

[Providence Church Website](#)

Remember to use the [111 service](#) if you need any advice on health and contact elders if you need someone to talk to. Use the Missional Partnership Website for links to the church websites.

Sunday Service



How to use this service: If you follow the parts numerically you will find a service structure. However, you can just pick out the parts you want. Remember to hover over the underlined words for hyperlinks to hymns, videos or other resources.

1. Welcome. You may want to light a candle or have a short period of silence.

2. HYMN: [AMAZING GRACE](#) Click on the hyperlink and you can play a video of this tune being sung.

3. Meditation: In Aidan's school were four brothers, the youngest of whom was called Chad. Chad eventually came to have charge of the Abbey at Lavingham, and ruled over the same in love and peace. From him his monks learned gentleness and humility. One brother whose name was Trumhere noticed that if a gale arose while Chad was reading or doing anything else he would at once call upon God for mercy, and pray to Him to have mercy on mankind. And if the wind increased in violence, he would close his book and prostrate himself on the ground praying even more earnestly.

But if there was a violent storm of wind and rain, or the earth shook with thunder or lightning, he would

go to the church, and say prayers and psalms continuously until the tempest had passed. When questioned why he did this, he told his monks, "Do you not know that it is the Lord who moves the air, raises winds, darts lightnings, and thunders from heaven to incite people to fear Him, and to put them in a mind of the future judgement? Wherefore it is indeed time for us to show due fear and love."

4. Meditate over this Aidan Reading and think about how it enlightens us on some of the recent events.

5. [AN UPLIFTING SONG](#) for afterwards: "You're the Voice" by John Farnham.

6. READING: [Psalm 23: 1-6](#)

7. READING: [Ephesians 5:8-14](#)

8. HYMN: [BE STILL, MY SOUL](#)

9. READING: [John 9:1-41](#)

10. Homily for Today:

Life Coming to a Focus - By Richard Rohr

As we grow in the spiritual life, our life will become increasingly centered. Only a few things will really matter. Because of the coronavirus outbreak, I see a lot of people right now thinking this way. There's a sense that we're all in this together—every continent, country, class, religion, race, age, or gender. We're all subject to this crisis. Suffering has an ability to pull you into oneness.

Maybe you've seen such oneness emerge in your family. I went to Kansas last month for my sister's funeral, and all of my family was there. We don't have any big resentments or conflicts, but the suffering—and acceptance of that suffering in her death—brought us together in the most beautiful way. It was such an honor to have the funeral with my own family and for my own sister.

We see an increasing centering take place with Jesus and the disciples in the gospel text from this past Sunday [Matthew 17:1-9]. Jesus is leading the disciples towards the Transfiguration experience. He is preparing them for the cross, and saying, “It’s going to come! Be ready. It’s probably the only thing that will transfigure you.”

As I said in yesterday’s reflection, there are only two major paths by which the human soul comes to God: the path of great love, and the one of great suffering. Both finally come down to great suffering—because if we love anything greatly, we will eventually suffer for it. When we’re young, God hides this from us. We think it won’t have to be true for us. But to love anything in depth and over the long term, we eventually must suffer.

The disciples first respond to the Transfigured Christ with fear. In our global time of crisis, this is where many of us are today. The disciples mirror the itinerary of the spiritual journey: we start out with many concerns, fears, and worries. Our minds and hearts are all over the place. But Jesus comes, touches them, and says, “Get up and do not be afraid.” When the three disciples raise their eyes, they see nothing but one image: Jesus. Their lives have become fully focused and simplified on the one thing that is good, the one thing they desire, and the one thing that is necessary. What a moment of grace and encouragement!

But then Jesus leads them down the mountain, back into the ordinary world to continue his labor of love, healing and nonviolent protest against Empire. We can’t stay on the mountaintop forever. And then Jesus ends with a line that to me was always a disappointment: don’t tell anybody about what just happened. He might be saying, “Don’t tell this story to someone else, because they’ll think they understand it just by hearing about it.” Religious experience has to be experienced firsthand. We can’t believe it because someone else talked about it. Sooner or later, we have to go to our own mountaintop. We have to have our own transfiguration, and we have to walk down the mountaintop into the ordinary world, on the path of suffering, and the path of love—which are, in the end, the same. As we experience a suffering world together, I pray that this community will be drawn to

center itself on the cross and bring Jesus’ teaching to life.

Gateway to Action & Contemplation: What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?

11. Prayer for Our Community: O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, amen.

You can hear Father Richard read the prayer [here](#)

12. Say The Lord’s Prayer

13. MUSIC: [Dr Gordon Stewart playing Noel Rawsthorne’s “Celtic Lament”](#)

14. BLESSING: We end with the parting words of David of Wales to his friends: “My brothers and sisters, be joyful, keep your faith and belief, and perform the small things which you have learned from me”. AMEN.

Please send any ideas, readings or materials for the next service to me at richbritton@hotmail.co.uk

Daffodils are outside Providence for Mothering Sunday – please help yourselves to them.

Remember the URC has compiled [a list](#) of its churches which are live streaming acts of worship, offering sermons as podcasts or audio files, or offering recordings of services. This means there will always be a service you can experience remotely from your home.

Make sure you are signed up to the [URC daily devotions](#) where you can access prayers and reflections on bible readings.