Sunday June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Opening Prayer**

God of the magnificent journey on which I find myself, be with me now as I cast my eye inwards and outwards in search of you, for I am sure that I will find you in both of those places. Be with me as I think about the world of the Biblical people and the world of my own life, for I know that you abide in each. Be with me as I think about how you were the God of Ruth and her journey three millennia in the past and the God of mine here and now. For I ask it in Jesus’ name, Amen.

**Hymn: Singing the Faith 458 Away with our fears**

You can hear the tune at https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/away-with-our-fears-stf-458/

Away with our fears!
The glad morning appears
when an heir of salvation was born!
From Jehovah I came,
for his glory I am,
and to him I with singing return.

I sing of your grace,
from my earliest days
ever near to allure and defend;
hitherto you have been
my preserver from sin,
and I trust you will save to the end.

O the infinite cares,
and temptations, and snares
your hand has conducted me through!
O the blessings bestowed
by a bountiful God,
and the mercies eternally new!

What a mercy is this,
what a heaven of bliss,
how unspeakably happy am I;
gathered into the fold,
with your people enrolled,
with your people to live and to die.

All honour and praise
to the Father of grace,
to the Spirit, and Son, I return;
the business pursue
he has made me to do,
and rejoice that I ever was born.

In a rapture of joy
my life I employ
the God of my life to proclaim;
'tis worth living for, this,
to administer bliss
and salvation in Jesus's name.

My remnant of days
I spend in his praise,
who died the whole world to redeem;
be they many or few,
my days are his due,
and they all are devoted to him.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

**Prayer**

Dear God of time in whom we live and move
and have our being, hear my prayer. Dear God
of space in whose wondrous and dangerous
world we stay indoors in this time of
lockdown, help us to see back into the world
of the Bible and forward into the world of the
tomorrow so that we might be faithful to you.
Amen.
Today’s Reading from the book of Ruth 1:1-18

On May 28th 1983, whoever would have guessed it, I got married to an English girl at St Andrew’s Anglican in Enfield. I stood there beside her, and in front of our two families - mine from Western Canada, hers from England - and happily said, “I do.” I have never regretted it, and I would do it again tomorrow, but there were huge challenges to face and considerable differences to overcome. I was a rural Canadian and Ann was a Cambridge graduate. I said “tomata” and she said “tomato.” I said “potata,” and she said “potato.” Some of our differences were small and harmless, while others were large and painful. Add to this that we didn’t have any money or any real plan as to how were going to face the future. However, despite all of that we were in love, committed, and prepared to let go of what had been, for the sake of what could be together under God’s grace. So, when my very Canadian mother stepped to that English lectern and read the following words, they seemed just right.

“Entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;     where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,  and your God my God.
17 Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,  and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!”  Ruth 1:16 & 17

Of course, when those words were first spoken by Ruth to her Mother-in-law, Naomi, some three thousand years ago, they had nothing to do with a wedding, and the world in which they were spoken was a seemingly strange one to us. And yet, I am often amazed at how much, in spite of the differences, the Biblical world resonates with our world, and how appropriate a Biblical word can be for our time even though it originated in a very different time.

When these two recently widowed women started their journey from one land to another, from the past to the future, they were giving up an old world for the sake of a new one, and that was not going to be easy. Israel’s economy, having suffered its own kind of lockdown, was just beginning to start up again after a famine. “The Lord” says verse 6, “had given his people food,” and that was the sign that normal life was beginning to be “phased back in.” So, there was reason to hope, but they had considerable challenges to face and arguably the new normal, whenever that arrived, would be very different one to the one that they had known in the past. They had no real source of security other than one another and God. Sometimes that is the way it is for young married couples too.
Sometimes that is the way it is for all of us.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Gracious God, be with me on my journey from the past into the future. Be with all people everywhere as we work our way towards a “new normal.” Be with those who suffer most and have no faith to help them. Come to them in Jesus we pray and give them salvation. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer
Our Father ......

Hymn: Listen to On Eagles Wings by Michael and Ellen Cover
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6tvLVmWQug
A prayer of blessing

Bless me O God, but not from six feet away, not from a distance that the experts would think is safe. Come close, I pray, as only you can and bless me right where I am in this season. Bless me so that I might be a blessing to others and to you too. For I ask it in the name of Christ the King, before whom every demon quakes. Amen

Please copy the reading you have listed here from NRSV. You can find these at https://bible.oremus.org/

Ruth 1:1-18
Elimelech’s Family Goes to Moab
In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there for about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons or her husband.

Naomi and Her Moabite Daughters-in-Law
Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had had consideration for his people and given them food. So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ‘Go back each of you to your mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.’ Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. They said to her, ‘No, we will return with you to your people.’ But Naomi said, ‘Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me.’ Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!’ When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.