



**Church at Home 24
for Abridge
Sunday 23rd August 2020**

**God has shown you his mercy:
so, offer up yourselves
as a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God
*Romans 12:1***



It's hard to believe that this is our 24th edition of church-at-home. That's almost half a year's worth of Sundays! Thanks to all who have been involved in producing this so faithfully as a churches together initiative. It has given us all the opportunity to stay in touch and in fellowship during these testing times. Next Sunday we are planning a joint open-air church service (see the flyer opposite) and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there to celebrate our partnership in the Gospel on behalf of Abridge.

This Sunday's Bible readings include:

Exodus 1:8 – 2:10 : the story of Moses being rescued as a baby, to be the one chosen to rescue Israel from slavery.

Psalms 124: a song of exuberant thanksgiving for a miracle rescue by God in answer to prayer

Romans 12:1–8: Paul's great 'therefore' in his letter to the Christians in Rome calling on them to give themselves completely to God and live out their faith as the body of Christ to continue God's rescue mission on earth

Matthew 16:13–20: the story of Peter's great confession of faith in Jesus as the rescuer of the world

On today's focus table you might like to add a small rock or stone and a bunch of keys.

Before we sing, read or pray, pause to remember, name and pray for those who are sitting nearby in church this morning or who you know are at home but who are part of our church family. Some of us may be separated physically but nevertheless we are all united by our love and prayers through the Holy Spirit given to each one of us.

Suggested hymns:

[Jesus is Lord \(Stuart Townend\)](#) ; [Jesus is Lord creation's voice proclaims it](#) ; [You are the King of the glory](#)

[The Church's one foundation](#)

Saying sorry: Bring the past week before God, remembering the good and the bad things that have happened; naming those moments that let God and other people down; asking forgiveness for the good we failed to do and the blessings we failed to pass on. Turn to Jesus who is the rescuer of the world, the one sent to deliver us from slavery and to break down the gates of hell.

Pause

Receive God's forgiveness afresh through Jesus Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to pour out God's love into our hearts.

[Be still and know that I am God](#) ; [Jesus name above all names](#)



United Church Picnic and Outdoor Service

Sunday 30th August

3.00 - 4.30 pm

In the grounds of Lambourne Church

Church Lane RM4 1AH

Bring your own picnic and seating

We will provide outdoor activities

which will lead into a short service

with two hymns, a Bible story and prayers

If wet, we will re-arrange the event.

First thoughts on today's Gospel

As last week, we are once again in the far north of Galilee but this time on the slopes of Mount Hermon. This was a no-go area for devout Jews because it was littered with many temples to Roman and Greek gods. They were carved into the rocks near to the great city of Caesarea Philippi. And yet Jesus takes his disciples into this 'enemy territory' and standing by those very idols asks them the most important question of all: **who do you say I am?** It's Peter who names him as God – the promised Messiah. The Holy Spirit had opened his eyes to this amazing truth. The place of this great confession was also carefully chosen, because nearby here there was a deep cave, known locally as 'the gate of hell'. Jesus goes on to say that the Christian church that Peter will help build will be able to defeat hell/death itself. But Jesus's question to his disciples is for us too. Who is Jesus for you? Christians believe he's not just a good man, a great storyteller, a gifted preacher or even a godly prophet but that he is God on earth. When we come to recognise this, everything changes.

I wonder what new aspect of this reading has struck you afresh today?

I wonder how you will answer Jesus's question to you - who do you say that I am?

I wonder what difference your answer will make to how you live this coming week?

I wonder what 'gates of hell' Jesus may be asking you to unlock with the keys of the Kingdom?

Read the opening verses of Romans 12 again. Can you turn this into your own personal prayer to God?

To help you explore the Gospel story further, there is a **reflection sheet** and also **all-age activities** that you might like to use, if you have access to the internet. You can find these resources on the websites of the two churches and here are the links: www.lambournechurch.com www.abridgeevangelicalchurch.org

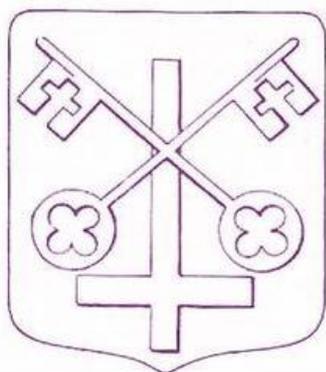
For our prayers, let us remember:

- The families and businesses of the village as they try and work out how to get back to a new normal after the past disrupted months
- Our leaders as they work out how best to handle spikes and fresh outbreaks of the virus here and abroad, and all those on the quest for an affordable vaccine for all.
- For those we know who are holidaying this month
- For those we know who are sick, at home or in hospital and those whose lives have been shattered during this crisis.
- For the migrants, who are longing for safety for their families; for GCSE and A level students, whose plans have had to change; and for those seeking to help the people of Lebanon

Add any particular people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

[At the name of Jesus](#)

End your time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village and beyond



The traditional symbol for St Peter with the keys of the Kingdom mentioned in today's reading and the upside-down cross on which he is said to have been martyred

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