

# Worship in times of isolation

## Our hands



### Call to worship:

Hands are such an essential in all we do, having a broken arm or wrist is a big lesson in how almost everything we do is not able to be done without them. Hands have taken on an importance we might not have ever imagined of late – we need to wash them much more frequently, and are regularly dosing them with hand sanitizer, we need to be careful what we touch, and we are cautioned not to shake hands with or touch another person.

Look at your hands, examine them closely – what story do they hold within them? Do they show your age? Do they reflect your work? Are there scars? Where did the marks and scars come from?

These are the hands that you have been given to do the work of God and the hands you have been given with which to worship God.

### Opening Prayer:

*The University Church in Freiburg in Breisgau in southern Germany is the home of Franz Gutmann's crucifix entitled 'Gekreuzigten' or 'Crucified'. The sculpture has no hands, it is an expression of the prayer from St Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) that says Christ has now no hands on earth but our hands. You can see an image of it here: [https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction\\_Review-g187281-d190964-Reviews-University\\_Church-Freiburg\\_im\\_Breisgau\\_Baden\\_Wuerttemberg.html#photos;aggregationId=101&albumId=101&filter=7&ff=430207060](https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g187281-d190964-Reviews-University_Church-Freiburg_im_Breisgau_Baden_Wuerttemberg.html#photos;aggregationId=101&albumId=101&filter=7&ff=430207060)*

*This prayer is based on St Theresa's prayer, you may like to hold your hands open and look at them as you say it:*

Christ has no body but ours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,  
Ours are the eyes with which Christ looks with compassion on this world,  
Ours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good,  
Ours are the hands, with which Christ blesses all the world.

Ours are the hands, ours are the feet,  
Ours are the eyes, we are Christ's body.  
Christ has no body now but ours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,  
Ours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but ours.

### **Prayer of Confession,**

God, we think of the ways in which we have used our hands that have caused harm to those around us – angry or abusive words we have written, kind acts we have not done, selfish things we have, the objects and people we have handled carelessly.

God, we confess the hand we have had in harming the earth – the way we have taken more than we need, the rubbish we have produced, the way we have poured poison on the soil and in the water and the air.

Forgive us our wrongs.

### **Assurance**

God's merciful love shows us a way in which we can have a hand in making wrongs right and undoing harm. Let this be our guiding light and our way toward reconciliation and making things new.

**Song:** 'Hands' by Jewel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rGlqV79xFA>

### **Thanksgiving**

Our hands are capable of amazing things. Think of all the things you love to do with your hands –  
knitting, woodturning,  
playing cricket, footy, an instrument or mah-jong,  
baking, painting, fishing,  
writing, gardening.

Say 'thank you' to God for all these things and the gift of hands.

You might like to write a list or draw yourself doing some of these things and hang it somewhere you can see it every day as a reminder to be grateful for all this.

### **The word:**

John 20:19-31 (NRSV)

<sup>19</sup> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then

the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

### **Consider:**

We are often dismissive of Thomas, fancy hearing the news that Jesus had risen and not believing it, surely, he should have believed without a doubt.

Our dismissiveness may come from us having the whole story at our fingertips, knowing how things play out. What's happening for Thomas is that he's just experienced the worst day of his life, he has been blindsided by terrible events that have changed him forever.

He was not there when the others experienced the risen Christ and when hearing of their encounter he dared speak of his loss, his hurt and abandonment, to say out loud that his journey to recovery and belief was not going to be based on the hearsay of others. He was perhaps a truth teller rather than a doubter

Christ comes to Thomas knowing what Thomas needs - displaying his scars - unashamed of them, 'See my hands' he says, as he holds them out for inspection. The risen Jesus is not denying the trauma of the past days - his scars have not disappeared,

As he connects with his friends, the risen Christ he doesn't say, 'Buck up, get over it, there's nothing to see here', he acknowledges that they have been through the worst of days. He stays with them, offers them

peace and comfort, and when the time is right, he leaves them the Spirit, the bringer of hope, faith and love, to stay with them, reassure them and lead them into what comes next – into the days after the worst day. He offers them resurrection.

We all have days that become the worst day of our lives, these days cause us pain and they scar us.

When what comes after the worst day of our lives comes, we are not the same as we were before - we won't be unscarred, the hurt and harm will still have happened. What we do have is a God that knows the depths of human pain. We are given the reassurance that God sees our scars and does not consider them shameful, God reaches out and says 'See my hands, I bear scars too'

Scars are part of life, they are not signs of defeat, they are markers of having lived a life, and they place us in the journey of Easter, a journey that takes us from brokenness into the powerful realm of God's resurrection in which love continues to live within us and recreate us and make something new in the what comes next.

- What have you found difficult in these last weeks? How do you think it has changed you?
- We are all being challenged by something we cannot see, something that might exist on our hands, something that might scar us in ways we don't yet understand. What ways have you found to manage this uncertainty?
- Jesus was always a hands on savior, he came to Thomas and showed him a way through his uncertainty. How is God turning up in your life?

**Song:** 'Scars' by Malcolm Gordon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYbqBATVn6I>

### **Prayers of the people**

*This is a hand and finger prayer:*

- Hold up your little finger – think of all the small kindnesses that you have received and pray for the people who have offered these kindnesses to you.
- Can you hold up your ring finger? This is the most difficult finger to hold up – think of the things that have been difficult this week for you and those around you. Pray for those you know are doing life hard.
- Hold up your middle finger – okay, this is a rude gesture, but use it to think of the injustices and inequities you would like to see end, the harmful things you would like to see society put aside and the just and good things you would like them to be replaced with.

- Hold up your pointer – think of all the ways in which you have been directed to safety and security. Pray for those who are having to make decisions for the wellbeing of us all.
- Hold up your thumb – this is to remind you of all the people and things in the world that make you feel okay. Pray for them.
- Open up your hand – offer all the talents and skill you have for the work of God in the world.

*You may like to end with Theresa of Avila's prayer once again.*

Christ has no body but ours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,  
Ours are the eyes with which Christ looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Ours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good,  
Ours are the hands, with which Christ blesses all the world.  
Ours are the hands, ours are the feet,  
Ours are the eyes, we are Christ's body.  
Christ has no body now but ours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but ours,  
Ours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but ours.

**Song:** 'May the feet of God walk with you'  
Words: Aub Podlich; Music: Robin Mann

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0X5FHNGM2HA>

**Blessing:**  
May the work of your hands reflect the law of love that is written in your heart by the risen Christ.

Centre for  
**Music, Liturgy & the Arts**

