

## OPENING WORDS

Welcome to this time and place. We have come in order to help each other renew our relationship with that which is "Something More" about the Spirit of Life than mere existence. In doing so the very fact of meeting deeply with each other, and opening our lives to each other ushers us into that experience. Together we find that "something more" as we pursue justice equity and compassion in the face of injustice, inequality and indifference in ourselves and in the world. Together we find it as we commit ourselves to the search for truth, wherever and from whomsoever it may be found. Together we find it as we stand united in the cause of reconciliation, peace and freedom. Together we find it as we share our joys and satisfactions, and as we bear one another's burdens of pain, disappointment and loss.

The shape of the Spirit of Life is beyond words to describe; but it can be experienced, and its influence can be felt. It remains open to as many interpretations as there are human minds to explain it; and it invites to worship all those who are prepared to surrender to its mystery.

In this service we will worship by celebrating our togetherness, and by attributing worth to whatever our mutual search enables us to reassert as worthy about life. To-day we will focus our exploration on the life of someone who was probably an illiterate Jewish peasant with an oral brilliance surpassing the most highly educated of his day, a person with supreme compassion and an extraordinary sense of social justice which was matched by his sacrificial courage in taking a stand for it; but a heroic figure who was at the same time a revolutionary with a subtly subversive approach to religious reformation and cultural change.