

HOW MC and KSAT WORSHIP SERVICE FOR MAY 9TH 2021 THEME GOD'S CALL

This service was the May Circuit Service, but it seemed right to share it this week with the wider Circuit and Mission Community. The first Sunday in May is a day particularly when we as a circuit, have given thanks for and celebrated the work of Local Preachers within the Methodist church; and it is also Vocations Sunday within the wider Methodist Church. One of the joys of Local preacher's meetings is when preachers just coming on to full plan share their call to preach. This service gives both the Local preachers and the wider circuit, opportunity to hear the call to preach that God gave to Douglas Birkbeck and to myself. However as the covenant service says, Christ has many services to be done Not all of us are called to be Local preachers, but all of us are called by God to serve him in particular ways, in particular places, at particular times. Are you willing not only to listen to, but to respond to God's call?

Call to worship God of all grace, you call your church to be a holy people, to the praise of your name. In the power of your Spirit ,fill our hearts with your love and our lives with your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

Hymn Fill thou my life O lord my God (CMP146 vv1.3.4 &5)

https://youtu.be/_2mpY0NahNQ

- 1.Fill thou my life ,O Lord my God ,in every part with praise,
That my whole being may proclaim Thy being and Thy ways.
- 2.Praise in the common things of life, its goings out and in;
Praise in each duty and each deed, however small and mean.
- 3.Fill every part of me with praise: let all my being speak
Of Thee and of Thy love O Lord, poor though I be and weak
- 4.So shalt thou Lord from me ,e'en me, receive the glory due;
And so shall I begin on earth the song for ever new.

Opening prayer. Glory to the Father, the God of love, who created us ;who continually preserves and sustains us ;who has loved us with an everlasting love, and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Glory to Jesus Christ our Saviour ,who though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor, and was tested in every way as we are yet without sin; who proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross ;who was raised from the dead and is alive for ever, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in Him.

Glory to the Holy Spirit ,the Lord the giver of life by whom we are born into the family of God ,and made members of the body of Christ; whose witness confirms us ;whose wisdom teaches us ;whose power enables us, who will do for us more than we can ask or think. To the one God ,Father ,Son and Holy Spirit be praise and glory for ever.

Holy God, we confess that often we have failed to be your faithful people. We have not always listened to your word, responded to your call, or loved our

neighbours. Forgive us we pray and free us for joyful obedience. Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

Bible reading 1 Samuel 3 vv 1-10 The Lord calls Samuel

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered Here I am And he ran to Eli and said Here I am ,you called me. But Eli said I didn't call you ,go back and lie down. So he went and lay down. Again the Lord called Samuel and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said Here I am you called me. My son Eli said I did not call, go back and lie down. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord .The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said Here I am you called me. Then Eli realised that the Lord was calling the boy .So Eli told Samuel. Go and lie down ,and if he calls you ,say ,Speak Lord for your servant is listening. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there calling as at other times. Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel said Speak for your servant is listening.

MY CALL TO PREACH DOUGLAS BIRKBECK

I suppose my first faint hearings of that call came in the days of my childhood and youth, though at that stage in my life I was quite unaware of them. Never for a moment did I consider being a preacher in the years ahead. I was born into a staunchly Methodist family whose devotion to Christ and His Gospel was clearly evident to their children. In fact my father and my grandfather were both Methodist Local preachers. From my earliest days 'the Chapel' was made to be a significant part of my life-morning and afternoon sessions of Sunday-school, afternoon and evening Sunday services in the Chapel. There was, at times ,a reluctance in my attendance at these gatherings, but I and other youngsters were expected to be present and not to question the reason why.(Sunday-school parties at Christmas and summertime trips to the seaside did, to some extent ,offset the more serious routine of our weekly classes!)

At Soulby Chapel I saw and heard many local preachers in those early days. In my childhood I was not particularly moved by what they had to say, but as I grew older I used to be more impressed by their coming to lead us in worship. They came from varied backgrounds, many of them had had no lengthy education, and some of them would admit that reaching made great demands on them. But their devotion to the work of the Lord was unmistakable, the time and energy they spent in His service were clearly considerable. In our widespread Circuit with travel much more time-consuming than it is today, and

with many Chapels having two services each Sunday so that 'double' appointments for preachers were quite common, a local preacher might well find that almost the whole of his or her Sunday time had to be devoted to preaching.

I was sixteen years old when, at a challenging service in Soulby Chapel, I felt Christ calling me but certainly not as a Local preacher! I felt that I had to give a positive answer to that call, and thus I became a member of the Methodist Church. Two years later I began my studies at Oxford University. I regularly attended the Wesley Memorial Church in Oxford and associated with some of the other Methodist students. My studies were not completed when I was called up for Army service during the second World War. When the war ended I returned to university to complete my course. It was during that second spell at the University that I became a member of a group of Methodist students who met regularly to encourage each other in their Christian experience. The years that I spent with that group were a great help to me in my spiritual life, strengthening my faith and commitment to the service of Christ. But still I had never felt a call to be a local preacher.

On leaving university by then a married man, I obtained a teaching post at a Grammar school in Lincolnshire. My wife and I were given a very helpful welcome by the Methodist congregation there. Before long the Methodist superintendent asked me if I had ever considered local preaching. Here was my 'Call'. I obviously had to give the matter some thought, but I had reached a stage in my Christian development which led me to feel I had no option but to agree to undertake the work. So began my training as a Local preacher.

As I look back now, I can see that my decision was based on my awareness over a good many years of the Lord's presence with me. In particular I felt the need to express my thanks to Him for so many blessings received and for my survival in a war which had ended the lives of some of the friends I had known in my school days. And so there began for me that great privilege of offering the Christian Gospel to all who would listen. I am often reminded of the service which marked my reception as a Local preacher 'On Full Plan'. In his address to the preachers who were present our Chairman of the District encouraged us to present the Gospel with such enthusiasm and conviction that our listeners might approach us after the service and say 'God has spoken to me through you.' What a responsibility and privilege is ours!

Hymn CMP 857 I the Lord of sea and sky <https://youtu.be/2zr9SMm1gll>

1. I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry;

All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.

I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright,

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Here I am ,Lord, Is it I ,Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me; I will hold your people in my heart.

2.I ,the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain;

I have wept for love of them-they turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone;

I will speak my word to them, Whom shall I send?

3.I,the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame,

I will set a feast for them-my hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide till their hearts are satisfied;

I will give my life to them ,Whom shall I send?

MY CALL TO PREACH JACKIE BETTS

I can still remember as an 18 year old in September 1970 walking up towards the Queensmere Site of Southlands Methodist Teacher Training College in Wimbledon. I was carrying heavy cases having travelled by coach and tube from my home in Norfolk but I was met by the college chaplain who gave me a lovely welcome knowing my name and where I had come from. That welcome was one of the things which encouraged me to join the Student Preacher's group which meant that for the three years I was in college I enjoyed planning services with the chaplain and others and then going on Sundays to lead worship in the different circuits where the college had contacts. Usually they were quite close to college but once a term we went to the Silchester circuit near Reading and preached in some of the rural chapels there. Before our services we were provided with a lovely tea at the home of one of the ladies from the Silchester congregation, particularly welcome when at the time college tea was the contents of an unlabelled tin plus bread and marge. I enjoyed the time together planning services and apart from the nerves beforehand, sharing in leading worship and attempting mini-sermons; but it was still unexpected when sitting in the chapel at Silchester just before Easter of 1972 I felt a strong call to preach. Quite unexpected, though I have always been grateful that whereas my becoming a Christian was a very gradual process both my call to preach and call to ministry were both unexpected, making it easier to understand other people's different experiences of God's call.

I waited until I finished my college course that summer, and then the first time our new probationer minister came to preach at our chapel .I put the hymns up then nervously returning to the vestry told him about my call to preach. My training then began, in those days including three written exams in Old Testament New testament and Christian Doctrine and I was recognised as a Local Preacher in Briston my home Chapel on Jan 9th 1975.

BIBLE READING Matt 28 vv 18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make

disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ,and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

OUR CALLING

Not all of us are called to preach but we are all called to serve God in different ways. Douglas reminded us how Local Preachers come from very different backgrounds part of the value of our Methodist Plan system. The congregation who welcomed him and his wife to church in Lincolnshire, the chaplain who welcomed me, the lady in Silchester who gave the students a treat of home baking were all answering God's call to service, to work in his kingdom in different ways.

Christ has many services to be done are we willing to respond to his call?. Novette Headly superintendent in the Leicester West circuit writes in the current Connexion magazine.' Among the many tasks of the church is to help every person to hear their unique call from God and then to enable them to fulfil that calling. Sometimes doing that is easy sometimes more difficult but even when our limitations may be exposed as we answer God's call, in our weakness we discover God's strength. Every person is needed ,every person is a gift of God to the whole community.'

As a child I loved singing the hymn about Samuel's call which we heard in our Old Testament reading ; asking for Samuel's ear to be ready to listen to God's call, Samuel's heart willing to wait on God and Samuel's mind trying to look at people, look at different situations from God's point of view.

The covenant service reminds us Christ has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests ,others are contrary to both; in some we may please others and please ourselves ,in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves ,Yet the power to do all these things is given us in Christ who strengthens us.

While these words from SF 660 remind us

Richly varied are our pathways, many callings we pursue;

May we use our gifts and talents always Lord to honour you.

So in government or commerce, college ,hospice ,farm or home,

Whether volunteers or earning, may we see your kingdom come

As you sing /read the words of the next hymn or pause to reflect after this service. As we hopefully continue to emerge from the covid pandemic are you ready to listen to God's call –listen to how you can best continue to use the many gifts he has given to each one of us. Amen.

Hymn CMP 624 Take my life <https://youtu.be/Gf11rReeWIs>

1. Take my life, and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee;
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.
2. Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.
3. Take my voice, and let me sing always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee.
4. Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt choose.
5. Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.
6. Take my love; my Lord I pour at Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.

Prayers for others

One of the things which we are called to do for others is to pray.

There is great value in praying together but each of us will have different things on our minds as we meet together. So take a few minutes now to pray about those people and situations which are particularly on your mind.

It's also important to pray for ourselves.

Lord Jesus you call me to become more like you. Transform me into your likeness by helping me to recognise ways in which I can reflect your love. Send me out to live and work for you, for your kingdom's sake Amen.

Hymn CMP 359 Jesus calls us <https://youtu.be/Y5IxbPK8Ow4>

1. Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult of our life's wild restless sea,
Day by day His voice is sounding, saying, Christian, follow me.
2. As of old, apostles heard it by the Galilean lake,
Turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving all for His dear sake.
3. Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us, saying Christian, love me more.
4. In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease,
Still He calls, in cares and pleasures, Christian love me more than these.
5. Jesus calls us! By thy mercies, Saviour may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience, serve and love Thee best of all.

Blessing Give to us Lord, the peace of those who have learnt to serve you, the joy of those who are glad to obey you and the delight of those who rejoice in your praise, through Christ our Lord Amen. **The Grace**

