

## **HOW MC & KSAT CIRCUIT WORSHIP SERVICE FOR MAY 16<sup>TH</sup> 2021**

This year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christian Aid, begun as a response to the refugee crisis following World War 2. In a time of weakness and crisis the Churches in the UK did not retreat into themselves and their own recovery, but saw and responded to a wider need. This week's service uses resources provided by Christian Aid for worship at the end of Christian Aid week.

### **Call to worship**

And what does the Lord require of you-to act justly to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6 v 8

**Hymn CMP 147** Fill your hearts with joy [https://youtu.be/9\\_mJ9G60f6w](https://youtu.be/9_mJ9G60f6w)

1. Fill your hearts with joy and gladness, sing and praise your God and mine!  
Great the Lord in love and wisdom, might and majesty divine!  
He who framed the starry heavens knows and names them as they shine.
2. Praise the Lord, His people, praise Him! Wounded souls His comfort know;  
Those who fear Him find His mercies, peace for pain and joy for woe;  
Humble hearts are high exalted, human pride and power laid low.
3. Praise the Lord for times and seasons, cloud and sunshine, wind and rain;  
Spring to melt the snows of winter till the waters flow again;  
Grass upon the mountain pastures, golden valleys thick with grain.
4. Fill your hearts with joy and gladness, peace and plenty crown your days;  
Love his laws, declare his judgements, walk in all His words and ways;  
He the Lord and we His children-praise the Lord, all people praise.

### **Prayer**

Come and celebrate our common home as we gather with the family of humanity.

With the mountains, islands and deserts we honour the glory of God in creation.

With the lakes rivers and seas we come to the source of living water.

With the land, its soil, its seeds and sustenance we give thanks for God's generous provision.

With the forests of great trees, the lungs of the planet, we will sing with joy and clap our hands.

For the beauty of the earth desecrated by pollution, choked by plastic waste.

For the urgency of this hour wasted by ineffective decisions denied by economic interests.

For the joy of human love fractured by forced migration, crushed by bereavement lost to typhoons, floods, starvation.

Christ our God forgive us for this climate crisis

God you know us, you know we can be loving and kind: and you know that sometimes we get things wrong. We're sorry for the times we hurt other people, forget to listen to you and don't bother to take care of your world. Help us as your people to care for each other; as part of your creation to care for the earth; because we are loved by you to share your love with everyone  
Amen

**Bible reading Acts 10 vv 30-34 44-48a**

Cornelius answered, 'Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me and said, "Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' So I sent for you immediately and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.

Then Peter began to speak; 'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. v 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Hymn CMP 153** For the fruits of His creation <https://youtu.be/zbBUFSOkbdM>

1. For the fruits of His creation, thanks be to God!

For His gifts to every nation, thanks be to God!

For the ploughing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping;

Future needs in earth's safe keeping, thanks be to God!

2. In the just reward of labour, God's will is done;

In the help we give our neighbour, God's will is done;

In our world-wide tasks of caring for the hungry and despairing;

In the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

3. For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God!

For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God!

For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us;

Most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God!

**Sermon by Rev Dr Craig Gardiner Too much, too little and just enough.**

Every Spring we plant a variety of seeds and seedlings in the garden and encourage our kids to nurture their growth all the way through the summer. If

all goes well, then a season of mixed salad awaits us all, and while that may not be the children's favourite meal, like many other parents I assure them it is good for them. And of course it is. But it's not just the eating of greens; there's so much to learn from the discipline of attentive care that monitors growth and harvests the fruit. One lesson from this basic introduction to horticulture is that too much water can be as bad as giving plants too little. You can drown tomatoes as easily as kill them in soil that is parched and dry. Between too much and too little they can discover the joy of just enough. And while none of this cultivation is remotely life threatening for our family, the garden experience reads like a mini-parable of the devastating changes that are happening increasingly around the world. In places like Kenya, cultivating crops amidst extreme and erratic weather patterns is a matter of life and death. Too much water can sweep away crops in torrential floods, while elsewhere too little means the land is cracked in desperate drought.

Communities such as those featured in this year's Christian Aid week depend on reliable and regulated water supplies for their livestock, crops and livelihoods. Rose who lives in Kitui county, where the chaos of climate change has devastated the growth of beans and maize and left her land and her family, thirsty, hungry and very poor. There is sometimes too much or too little, but rarely it seems just enough. For Rose one regular refrain of the Psalms of lament might be her daily prayer. "How long O Lord, how long, how long before what we have is enough and what we have is just. How long until there is justice and enough.

Not far away a contrasting story can be told by Florence. Thanks to donations from Christian Aid and the work of local partners, she has built a small dam beside her farm, enough to gather the rains when they might otherwise overwhelm, retaining sufficient irrigation for the weeks when there isn't a cloud in the sky. With this dependable source of water, Florence can grow tomatoes, onions and chillies on her farm. Her family, children can eat their own healthy vegetables. She can keep bees and sell their golden honey. Florence can join her voice with the Psalmist She can sing a new song to the Lord for God has done great things. With her, the rivers and mountains and indeed that dam of plentiful fresh water can sing before the Lord who judges the world in righteousness. Surely such a God will declare; this is justice, and this is enough, this farm is just and enough, a sign of grace, an echo of God's kin-dom song finding it's home on the earth.

Florence's farm is an echo too of the astounding events we read in the book of Acts. Peter has had an epiphany of God's equality and inclusivity. Heaven has revealed in a dream the mind-blowing truth that Gentiles are as welcome as Jews in the family of God. And just to underline the point, as Peter is

preaching, the gift of the Holy Spirit comes upon the very people he would have discounted but a day before. These Gentiles are speaking in tongues and praising God. As the Gentiles receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit Peter glimpses just how generous and hospitable is the Holy Spirit. In response to these events he asks the crowd; Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? In other words, can anyone deny them the opportunity of the sacrament, to make an outward visible sign of this inward, invisible transforming grace.

For these Gentiles as with people like Rose and Florence the tangible presence of water makes visible the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst. And it reinforces the importance of the physical, the embodied, the earthly life, blessed indeed by the Holy Spirit the Lord and giver of life. Perhaps the astounding thing from this Scripture today is not that the Spirit is poured out upon Gentiles, but that it may be just as holy an act to drench a thirsty land with water from a dam, as it is to sprinkle water on a baby's head or immerse a believer in the waters at their baptism. And here is a challenge for many of us who often confine our understanding of the Holy Spirit to the boundaries of church. For sure, the Holy Spirit is at work with our congregations but as theologian Jurgen Moltmann says

We need to experience that the life-giving spirit in the faith of the heart and in the society of love leads ....beyond the limits of the church to the rediscovery of the same Spirit in nature, in plants, in animals and in the ecosystems of the earth. And if that is so then, echoing Peter, how 'can anyone withhold the water' needed for thirsty animals, crops and people across the world? There should be enough. It ought to be just. And if it is not then Moltmann continues 'People who truly affirm and love life will take up the struggle against violence and injustice because they refuse to get used to it.

Where life isn't just, where there isn't enough, Christians are called to refuse to get used to it. If the water of baptism is symbolic of new life, then so too is the water behind Florence's dam. It too is a sign of the Spirit and the coming of the kingdom. For Florence and those who helped her, defied how things were, they refused to get used to what wasn't enough and what simply wasn't just. They discovered the great truth of what the poet Alice Walker says that 'resistance can be the secret of our joy.'

That secret is something Jesus plainly understood. Even as he stood on the threshold of great suffering, resisting the powers of betrayal and death, he finished his farewell message to his friends saying, I have said these things to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My joy in you and your joy complete. Jesus knew it was for the joy set before him that he despised the shame and endured the cross. Despite the suffering of Good

Friday and the silence of Holy Saturday, this is the joy that believes that Sunday and resurrection is coming. Despite the suffering of climate chaos and the silence of so many in power this is a joy that believes the kin-dom is coming, that trusts in the spirit, and works with God for change, a joy that refuses to get used to all that is not enough and all that is not just. I know that the complexities of issues like these can sound like a flood of impossible tasks. I understand how in these times we might all be experiencing a drought of encouragement. But with God there is always enough and more.

At the end of this Christian Aid week, the challenges both personal and communal, local and global are indeed great. But so too is the joy set before us and so too is the abundance of life that is found in the Spirit. To resist the injustice, to overcome poverty, to nurture creation, to act in these ways, even with small and faltering steps, this is surely a sign of our love for God, our love for God's people and indeed for God's creation. These things are a sign of our obedience to heaven, our faithfulness to Christ, and our fellowship in the Spirit, These things are the secret of joy, and scripture assures us that even in struggle these commands of God will be far from burdensome, resistance is not futile victory will come, that the world will have enough and the nations will finally be just.

We can join in the struggle of communities with Rose, we can celebrate the changes in communities with Florence. If we make that choice, we refuse to get used to the way the world is. We commit to struggle for all it might be. A world that is just and an earth with enough. If we follow Jesus, if we live in the Spirit then the kin-dom will be discovered among us. If we make that choice our joy will be complete in Christ and Christ's joy will be complete in us Amen

**Hymn CMP 456** Make me a channel <https://youtu.be/FnY7t1N1s2U>

Make me a channel of your peace, where there is hatred let me bring your love  
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;

And where there's doubt true faith in you.

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace, where there's despair in life let me bring  
hope. Where there is darkness only light;

And where there's sadness ever joy.

Make me a channel of your peace, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

In giving to all men that we receive; and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

### **Prayers**

We pray that in this time of climate crisis and ecological emergency you may help us to rediscover your love of creation, and reflect that in our own lives.

God in your mercy Hear our prayer

We pray that you will help those in power to hear the voices of indigenous people with their knowledge of the land and sea where they live; and scientists dedicating their career to warning us about changes to our planet; so that those in power may be able to see beyond short-term political priorities and business plans, and have wisdom and courage when they face difficult decisions. God in your mercy Hear our prayer.

We pray for the coming of a better world with justice kindness and humility at its heart. We ask that you guide us to be co-creators of this new world. Give us confidence to follow the prophetic voices to stand against injustice to people and to planet so that together in your strength we stop this climate crisis.

God in your mercy Hear our prayer. We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray together. Our Father.....

**Hymn CMP 806** Beauty for brokenness <https://youtu.be/MO1G-o7Yj-c>

1.Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair, Lord in your suffering world

This is our prayer. Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,  
sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase.

2.Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills, work for the craftsmen,  
Trade for their skills; land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,  
Voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray;

Melt our cold hearts; let tears fall like rain;

Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.

3.Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear, cities for sanctuary,  
Freedoms to share. Peace to the killing fields, scorched earth to green,  
Christ for the bitterness, His cross for the pain.

4.Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams plundered and poisoned –  
Our future our dreams Lord, end our madness, carelessness ,greed,  
Make us content with the things that we need. God of the poor....

5.Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame until your justice

Burns brightly again; Until the nations learn of your ways,

Seek your salvation and bring you their praise God of the poor...

**Blessing** May God bless us with wonder at creation's glory. May God bless us with fury at creation's spoiling. May God bless us with courage at this critical hour. And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon us and all creation this day and always Amen.

