

HOW MC AND KSAT CIRCUIT SERVICE FOR 2ND MAY 2021.

THEME WHICH WAY AHEAD?

At the April connexion service Andrew shared some very helpful thoughts on A ROUNDABOUT which it seemed good to share with the wider circuit. So thanks to Andrew for sermon, Avril and Dacre for prayers and Jackie for hymns call to worship and blessing.

Call to worship

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Hymn Lead us heavenly Father Lead us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGsvbqErM2A>

1. Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea.

Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us for we have no help but thee.

Yet possessing, every blessing if our God our Father be.

2. Saviour breathe forgiveness o'er us all our weakness thou dost know.

Thou didst tread this earth before us, thou didst feel its keenest woe.

Tempted, taunted, yet undaunted; through the desert thou didst go.

3. Spirit of our God descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy.

Love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy.

Thus provided, pardoned, guided nothing can our peace destroy.

Opening prayer. Father, we thank you for bringing us safely through this week.

We pray Lord that as we spend this time with you, you would fill our hearts, our minds and souls. We recall your faithfulness and thank you that you promise to be with us every day and that you will be with us always.

We invite you to come and dwell in each of our hearts, equip us, challenge us, comfort and teach us. We pray that you will be with us now and inspire us and lead us as we spend time with you. We ask all this in the beautiful name of Jesus. Amen

Bible reading Philippians 2 vv 1-11 Imitating Christ's humility If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became

obedient unto death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Hymn I do not know what lies ahead.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgxwLtZxvScKbNCDWhzQtdhnXkmQh>

1. I do not know what lies ahead, the way I cannot see

Yet one stands near to be my guide, he'll show the way to me.

I know who holds the future and he guides me with this hand.

With God things don't just happen everything by him is planned.

So as I face tomorrow with its problems large and small;

I'll trust the God of miracles, give to him my all.

2. I do not know how many days of life are mine to spend.

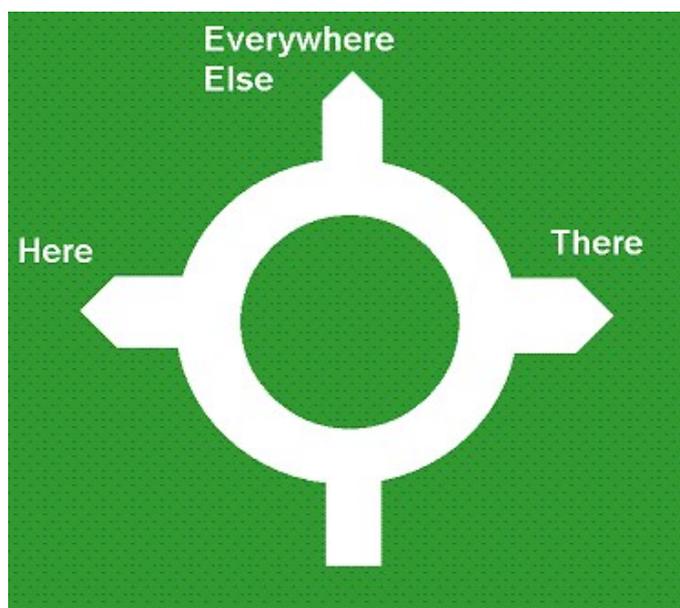
But one who knows and cares for me will keep me to the end.

3. I do not know the course ahead what joys and griefs are there.

But one is near who fully knows I'll trust his loving care.

About 11 years ago I was asked to lead worship on guitar and sing at my friend's wedding. The wedding was taking place down south in Bedford, a place I didn't know so well being a northerner. At that time, I had no satellite navigation, so in order to find the church I had printed off the directions from the computer and set off with me then girlfriend Amy to Bedford. Amy diligently read the directions to me while I obeyed the instructions coming from my real-life Satnav. We got there no problem, a success story for simple technology!

...Well, that's what we thought. The day we went was just for the rehearsal, and the wedding took place the next day. My brother and his wife lived nearby and so we were staying with him, only he lived further south, and it meant we would have to come to Bedford a different way. Again, we printed off the directions to get to the church, but we found ourselves taking the wrong turn at the roundabout and getting lost. I wasn't too worried about this to start with since we left in plenty of time, but the 10 minutes quickly turned to half an hour, and then turned to an hour going round and round the one-way system in Bedford, never seeming to find the right road. Eventually, we realised Amy had a new phone which had GPS on it (nothing compared to what we have on smart phones now). We found out where we were and where the church was and found ourselves back at the



roundabout we started on. This time we realised there was an exit that we hadn't seen on the sign. It was a small, insignificant looking road hidden by all the much larger roads, but it was nevertheless the right road. We were there within 5 minutes, though not before the bride had arrived and I had given the groom a small heart attack!

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. **Matthew 7:13-14**

The last weeks of reflecting on the Resurrection will have brought us to consider many different experiences of the disciples wrestling with what had just happened to Jesus. Throughout the last years they had come to expect Jesus to do certain things and look a certain way, but all these expectations were destroyed on the cross. Come the resurrection their whole lives and ideas were completely thrown onto upside down, and they had to become a people ready to change how they thought about God's kingdom, and what that might look like in their own lives and as a people together.

In our own time, we also have had a period of all our expectations being upended. Coronavirus has brought to an end our ability to meet together as we wish, to sing, to hug and to eat together. We have found our world's completely turned upside down. Yet in it all we have experienced signs of resurrection. People who hadn't looked at the church when it was stuck in the building have suddenly taken an interest as we have worshipped online. Neighbours who had never talked to one another have become vital lifelines to one another, displaying a love which Christians have longed to see across the country. I have been amazed by the service of many in our churches to the communities, with wonderful acts of generosity done for people often in very quiet ways. Like the disciples we are asked to come to terms with what God has done, and what God is doing in the midst of darkness and death, and to see a resurrection light guiding us onward.

It strikes me that like on the roundabout we are presented with a number of options when going onward as Christ's church in this area. When we approach a roundabout, however complicated that may be, we are given a route which can lead us into all sorts of unknown territories. One route is the correct way, another route will very much be the wrong way, and we would have to turn around, or as the bible would put it (repent). Some routes may be the wrong way, but we might find ourselves getting back on to the right road to eventually. Jesus called us to take the narrow path, the difficult path in finding our way to salvation.

Today, I invite you to reflect with me on the routes we like to take. This isn't about which route is the right route, only to see our preferences for the routes we want to take. So imagine yourself approaching a roundabout with 3 exits like the one you see above, and having to decide which way to go.

Straight ahead

The route straight ahead is the one where the roundabout is merely an obstacle to get around, rather than an opportunity to change course. The roundabout is clearly there, but whether it was there or not wouldn't affect the way we are going. No change is necessary, no thought into other alternative routes or even questioning whether we are going in the right direction is required.

For many of us this might be the way we would choose. We can get on with the same things after the roundabout as we had been doing before, the roundabout is simply an inconvenience to navigate rather than an opportunity to change course. This is not to say going straight ahead is necessarily the wrong option, only to say that it is tempting to take it simply because it means we don't have to consider any other options. We can be tempted to go this way in spite of the opportunity to change direction God has presented us, no matter how big the roundabout is.

As we think of our ways of doing church, it might feel the only way to go is straight ahead, to keep doing church the way we have always done it or known it. I invite you to reflect on the ways church may have been done differently over the last year, were there any freedoms given, any worship taken place that looked different but still gave praise to God, still brought you life? How might these things be a sign for the direction we are to travel in the future?

First exit

In my driving test, this was the exit I would like the most. It required the least effort to simply turn left on the roundabout. It may be that this is an option we choose, the easiest option. It may be we recognise a need to change route but we don't want to put too much work into it. Our question might be what is the easiest thing to do to get as many bums on our pews as possible?

Again, just because the first exit, or the first idea is the easiest, doesn't make it the right option. It may be by going down this road we may see immediate benefits, but the further down the road we go, the more we realise just how far off the track we have strayed. How many miles would it be until we realised we were going the wrong way, and then have to do the hard work of turning around and driving all the way back to where we started. Short term gain may be an aim, but it may not take us to our intended destination. Unlike the first exit, the third exit strikes fear into the inexperienced driver.

Third exit

The third exit is more difficult, there are more things to do to get off safely, and it also means we are on the roundabout longer. This again is not a bad thing, but if it is taking us the wrong way, why are we putting in all this extra and unnecessary work? We might feel like we are doing something, achieving something and keeping ourselves busy, without regard to the destination we would end up at.

The hidden exit

There may also be an exit that we haven't yet perceived, just like the one in my story earlier. It may be that we keep going the wrong way but quickly realise that and find ourselves coming back to the same roundabout. It may take some time to discern and see the exit but it may nevertheless be the one that takes us to our destination, however small and humble it may be compared to the larger roads surrounding it.

Time to reflect

As we come out of this time of lockdown, as we begin to worship in our churches, as we reengage with everyday life, I invite you to think of the path which Christ is calling you on, us on in the future. For Jesus he didn't see the road as an obvious one, the one everyone else is going on, but instead a narrow and I imagine a difficult one at times. We are called to follow Christ on the path he trod, which Paul tells us in Philippians is one of humility. Christ humbled himself to be the lowest of us all, yet in doing so brought us all out of the pits into eternal life (Philippians 2). If we are to live like Christ,

then we must also do likewise. We are called to humble ourselves, which means not going on the route we would like to go, but being ready to walk the narrow path that leads to new life.

Hymn Moses I know you're the man the Lord said

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joW2FFSeXM4>

1. Moses I know you're the man the Lord said You're going to work out my plan
the Lord said, Lead all the Israelites out of slavery,
And I shall make them a wandering race called the people of God
So every day, we're on our way, For we're a travelling, wandering race
Called the people of God.

2. Don't get too set in your ways, the Lord said Each step is only a phase the
Lord said I'll go before you and I shall be a sign

To guide my traveling, wandering race; you're the people of God

3. No matter what you may do the Lord said I shall be faithful and true the Lord
said My love will strengthen you as you go along,

For you're my travelling wandering race; you're the people of God.

4. Look at the birds in the air the Lord said They fly unhampered by care the
Lord said. You will move easier if you're travelling light,

For you're a wandering vagabond race, you're the people of God.

5. Foxes have places to go the Lord said But I've no home here below the Lord
said. So if you want to be with me all your days.

Keep up the moving and traveling on, you're the people of God.

Prayers of intercession.

Lord, we bring before you those who are sick and in pain, we pray you will bring them healing and strength. We pray for our nursing homes and hospitals, we pray for all who work in these caring communities that you will give them the ability to cope with stressful situations. Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit and give them courage and hope in their troubles and may they feel your hand on their lives.

Creator God, you are the source of our world. Help us to care for and look after the world you have provided for us. We pray that we may use the resources well and care for the world around us. Help us to act now for the good of future generations and all your creatures.

We pray for our community, for every town and village and for all the people who live within them. We ask for your presence in families in our communities, we pray for strength and understanding in relationships and for a loving and strong bond between all generations.

We pray for teachers and all those who work in our schools. We pray that they will be places of positive influences for the children and we ask for guidance and patience for all those involved in the education of our children.

We pray for all our churches in this Circuit and further afield and in the Heart of Westmorland Mission Community. We pray that as they reopen after the recent lockdown that they will be places of healing, comfort and inspiration. We pray for our ministers and local preachers and ask that you will give them guidance as they nurture those they work alongside.

We bring before you our world leaders, we pray that they may lead and care for their countries in such a way that peace, righteousness and justice is shown. We pray for all countries that are divided and torn apart by war and unrest and we ask that peace may once more reign in these countries. We pray that all our leaders both nationally and locally will be thoughtful in their decisions and listen to the voices in the community.

We pray that you will be with us and speak to us in all that we do, help us to be witnesses to your love to all those we meet.

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers, feeding us with your word and encouraging us in our worship. Take us and use us to love and serve you and all people. In the power of your spirit and in the name of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn O Jesus I have promised <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQFLOCoYaPI>

- 1.O Jesus I have promised to serve you to the end;
Be thou for ever near me my Master and my friend;
I shall not fear the battle if thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway if thou wilt be my guide.
- 2.O let me feel thee near me, the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle the tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me ,around me and within:
but Jesus draw thou nearer and shield my soul from sin.
- 3.O let me hear thee speaking in accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self- will;
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
O speak and make me listen, thou guardian of my soul
- 4.O Jesus, thou hast promised to all who follow thee,
That where thou art in glory there shall thy servant be;
And Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow my master and my friend

Blessing

Now may God bless us and keep us ,may he give us light to guide us ,courage to support us and love to unite us this day and always Amen. **The Grace.**

