

HOW MC AND KSAT METHODIST CIRCUIT WORSHIP FOR 13TH JUNE 2021 with thanks to Mike Harrison.

Call to worship: Psalm 95 vv 1-7

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

For the Lord is the great God, the great king above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

Amen! Thanks be to God!

Prayer

Lord God, our loving heavenly Father, as we approach you in worship, quieten our minds that we may focus on you. May your Spirit enable our worship to be acceptable in your sight and effective in our lives. Amen.

Hymn 530 SF <https://youtu.be/typ7cueKdT4>

To be in your presence, to sit at your feet,
where your love surround me, and makes me complete;

This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire.

This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire.

To rest in your presence, not rushing away,
to cherish each moment – here I would stay.

This is my desire ... Noel Richards (b. 1955)

Prayer

Lord God, our loving heavenly Father, we worship you. We worship you because you are the source and foundation of all that is: the universe exists because you want it to exist.

You spoke the words: “Let there be...”, and there began an amazing process that finds us here today able to open ourselves to a relationship with you and with others.

From the very beginning, your Spirit has moved in creation, nurturing, persuading, forming.

From the very beginning you have loved your creation and, in the fullness of time, became present with us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your love for all of your creation: your love for your human race: your love for me.

Forgive me, forgive us, for the ways in which we have failed to respond to your love by showing that love in our own lives. In a few moments, I reflect on recent events in my own life, and ask forgiveness for those times I fell short.

Thank you that your forgiveness is assured to all who truly turn to you. I receive again your forgiveness and your love that seeks to make me complete in you.

Amen.

Hymn 471 SF <https://youtu.be/T7DRePFkztA>

Lord, I come to you, let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace that I found in you.

And, Lord, I've come to know the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away by the power of your love.

Hold me close, let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side. And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle, and I will soar with you,
your spirit leads me on in the power of your love.

Lord, unveil my eyes, let me see you face to face,
the knowledge of your love as you live in me.

Lord, renew my mind, as your will unfolds in my life
in living every day by the power of your love.

Hold me close ... Geoff Bullock (b. 1956)

Old Testament reading: 1 Samuel 15 v 34 to 16 v 13

Saul went to his own home at Gibeah, and Samuel went to Ramah; and he never saw Saul again till his dying day, but he grieved for him, because the Lord had repented of having made him king over Israel.

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve because I have rejected Saul as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil and take it with you; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem; for I have chosen myself a king from among his sons." Samuel answered, How can I go? If Saul hears of it he will kill me.

"Take a heifer with you said the Lord; say you have come to offer a sacrifice to the Lord and invite Jesse to the sacrifice; then I shall show you what you must do. You are to anoint for me the man I will indicate to you. Samuel did as the Lord had told him, and went to Bethlehem where the elders came in haste to meet him, saying, 'Why have you come? Is all well? All is well said Samuel; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. He himself purified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came and Samuel saw Eliab, he thought. Surely here, before the Lord, is his anointed king" But the Lord said to him. "Pay no attention to his outward appearance and stature ,for I have rejected him. The Lord does not see as a mortal sees; mortals see only appearances ,but the Lord sees into the heart. Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass before Samuel ,but he said;" No, the Lord has not chosen this one." Next he presented Shammah, of whom Samuel said , "Nor has the Lord chosen him". Seven of his sons were presented to Samuel by Jesse ,but he said;" The Lord has not chosen any of these"

Samuel asked 'Are these all the sons you have? ' There is still the youngest replied Jesse but he is looking after the sheep' Samuel said to Jesse,' Send and fetch him, we will not sit down until he comes'. So he sent and fetched him. He was handsome with ruddy cheeks and bright eyes. The Lord said, 'Rise and

anoint him: this is the man'. Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came upon David and was with him from that day onwards. Then Samuel set out on his way to Ramah.

New Testament reading: Mark 4 vv 26 to 34

Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is like this. A man scatters seed on the ground; he goes to bed at night and gets up in the morning, and meanwhile the seed sprouts and grows-how he does not know. The ground produce a crop by itself, first the blade then the ear, then full grain in the ear; but as soon as the crop is ripe, he starts reaping because harvest has come.'

He said 'How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed; when sown in the ground it is smaller than any other seed, but once sown, it springs up and grows taller than any other plant, and forms branches so large that birds can roost in its shade.'

With many such parables he gave them his message, so far as they were able to receive it. He never spoke to them except in parables; but privately to his disciples he explained everything.

Prayer

God, our Father, we thank you for the words that we have received in our scriptures. We pray that your Spirit, who has guided the bringing of the words into the form in which we now have them, will guide our reflection on them today. Amen.

Reflection

The Old and New Testament readings suggested for today are familiar ones. From the first book of Samuel, the selection and anointing of the future King David by the prophet Samuel. From Mark's gospel two of Jesus' short parables about seeds and growth. A theme that emerges is that of "becoming".

A seed, given the right environment, becomes a plant. A person, given the right environment, becomes a Christlike presence in the world.

Each year my wife sows seeds. Most are for vegetables, some are for flowers. She sows some in pots, some directly into the garden. The results vary from year to year. Whilst it is possible to take great care with the sowing and transplanting, it is impossible to predict what the weather might be like. This Spring season has not been the best for the development of strong plant growth!

In a good season, we benefit from flowers and vegetables that are produced by carefully-nurtured, well-developed plants that have become the best that they can be.

Our human lives are all about becoming the best that we can be: about fulfilling our potential. Some of that potential is determined in the first nine months of our development, before we are born. The writer of Psalm 139 recognised the mysteries of life-before-birth. "you knit me together in my mother's womb ... your eyes saw my unformed body."

More of that potential is developed in the early years of our lives. Once basic needs such as food, warmth, shelter, safety are provided, there is a need for interaction, healthcare and education all within a loving, nurturing relationship. The nurturing of a child is such a huge responsibility!

One of the Bible's most powerful themes is that each individual person has a role to play within God's loving purposes for creation. Part of growing up in a Christian community means each individual discovering God's purposes for their life.

Part of the work of the Holy Spirit, who has been active in creation from the very beginning, is to guide and enable each person to become what God knows they can become. As individuals, we need to be open to the promptings of the Spirit through a variety of means: through prayer, reading, listening, recognising and acting on our own strengths and weaknesses.

For all of us, the work of the Spirit is to help develop the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5 vv 22-26) as our lives become more Christlike. But we all have particular personalities, skills, abilities, that mean we are best suited to some of God's purposes. Paul recognised that when he listed the wide range of gifts that the Spirit has to offer.

I don't imagine for a minute that the young shepherd David was expecting a prophet called Samuel to roll up and anoint him with a view to him becoming King of Israel, but God clearly saw the potential in David's life. Very few of us will have such a startling call to a new and unexpected future. But, day by day, God's Holy Spirit will be prompting us in various ways to become more and more the person that God wants and needs us to be. All we need to ask ourselves is, "Am I becoming that person? If not, why not and what should I be doing about it?"

The purpose of the prayers that we make as we come into worship is to centre ourselves on God and to be honest with God about our thoughts, words and deeds. There is no point trying to hide from God. Even Adam and Eve discovered that! And, as it says in v 7 of our reading from 1 Samuel 16, "the Lord looks at the heart".

Let's take a few moments again to look into our own hearts. To allow God's Spirit to speak into our lives. To be prepared to move further into the fullness of life that God wants for us as we allow ourselves to become the people he knows we can be.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."
(Ephesians 3 vv 20,21)

It may be helpful to read again prayerfully through the words of the hymn "Lord, I come to you," that we used earlier in this service. Otherwise, we turn to another hymn that invites God to move and work in our lives.

Hymn 504 SF <https://youtu.be/gE5fOXSymBc>

May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling all I do or say.

May the word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self forgetting – this is victory.

May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859 – 1928)

Prayers for the world

God our Father, we bring our prayers for the world that so much needs your love
and peace.

We pray for those living in conflict zones. For those people just like us, who
long to live their lives and bring up their children in peace.

We pray for all who try to bring aid, comfort and a peaceful resolution in these
conflict zones.

We pray for those in our own government and other positions of authority as
they seek to tread the path towards relative normality in the context of
continuing Covid-19 infections. Grant them wisdom, compassion and clarity of
thought.

We pray for all those directly involved in our social and healthcare systems
Grant them strength, peace and protection.

We bring to mind those whom we know who need your presence especially in
these days.

And we pray for ourselves that we may, indeed, be the people that you need us
to be right in the midst of our daily lives. If we need to be part of the answer to
one of our own prayers, then help us to hear your voice prompting us.

These and all our prayers we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and
Saviour, who taught us when we pray to say:
“Our Father ...”

We close with a beautiful hymn that expresses God's love, care and nurturing of the world.

Hymn 3 SF (no you-tube link available)

Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory
cascades through life in overflowing grace,
to tell creation's meaning in the story
of love evolving love from time and space.

Eternal Son of God, uniquely precious,
in you, deserted, scorned and crucified,
God's love has fathomed sin and death's deep darkness,
and flawed humanity is glorified.

Eternal Spirit, with us like a mother,
embracing us in love serene and pure :
you nurture strength to follow Christ our brother,
as full-grown children, confident and sure.

Love's trinity, self-perfect, self-sustaining ;
love which commands, enables and obeys :
you give yourself, in boundless joy, creating
one vast increasing harmony of praise.

We ask you now, complete your image in us ;
this love of yours, our source and guide and goal.
May love in us, seek love and serve love's purpose,
till we ascend with Christ and find love whole.

Alan Gaunt (*b.* 1935)

Closing prayer

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us, those whom we love, those for whom we pray, now and for evermore. Amen.