



'Staying Connected'
Worship and Pastoral Resources
For Week Beginning
28th June 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We hope you are all well and have been able to enjoy some of the lovely weather we are enjoying this week after the much needed rain. It has been a pleasure to prayerfully write, the Staying Connected, worship resource again and we are so pleased that we are continuing to worship in this way as a circuit together.

Love, Tom and Chloe Donoghue

Opening Prayer

O God, your Spirit draws us into your presence, and so we come – drawn by love, upheld by grace – to encounter Jesus, our Saviour. We know him as our master. We know him as our friend. In him we see the Father, whose love sent Jesus to us. Spirit, Son and Father, we draw close in faith to offer our praise and worship. Amen.

Our first hymn is Amazing Grace, written by the former slave ship trader and Anglican priest, John Newton. After his conversion to Christianity he gave up alcohol and gambling and avoided profanity. It took many more years before he laid-down his trade and then 34 years after retirement that he spoke out and publicly repented. He was an ally of William Wilberforce, who led the campaign in parliament to abolish the African slave trade.

Hymn: Amazing Grace – How Sweet the Sound – John Newton (1725-1807) Singing the Faith 440

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/21G3JMYwAiA>

Prayer

Father God, would you still our hearts and minds as we prepare to read your word. May the words of scripture today spark intrigue, wonder and passion in our beings. Help us to listen to what you are speaking to us today through your word and the reflections. Give us open ears to hear your truth, and strong minds to understand you call on our lives.

Amen.

Bible Reading: Genesis 22:1-14

Reflection

We feel like we have been waiting a long time to see family and friends, we have worked out that we haven't seen our parents for about six months and we are looking forward to seeing them this summer, as lockdown restrictions begin to lift. Looking back over the last six months it feels like a long wait, but for Abraham and Sarah, they had waited a long time to be parents, that when they hear the news from the three visitors in Genesis 18, Sarah understandably laughs as she knows that she is past the age of child-bearing. The child, Isaac, is born three chapters later when 'the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.'

Today's bible passage includes what is surely one of the most challenging verses in the bible. Verse 2 say's: *God said, 'Take your son, your only son, whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.'* This challenging verse poses the questions: Is God good? Is God able? And am I willing? As we know that God describes this pagan act of a child sacrifice as a detestable thing that the LORD hates (Deuteronomy 12:30-31). So we can be assured that God would never ask this of anybody. God is good and he would not call us to damage or hurt anybody.

However, we also know that burnt offerings were an Old Testament way of seeking atonement so that God's judgement of sin is paid for through the sacrifice offered. Abraham hears this challenging call from God and is willing to be obedient, to what God asks him to do, and straight away (early the next morning) he takes Isaac to the place that he has been told to go to, with enough wood for the burnt offering. And after three days of travelling, they arrive at the mountain.

What we learn, is that God does not look to us to appease him. We can be thankful that God will provide. As they climb the mountain, Isaac points out to his father that they don't have a lamb for the burnt offering! *Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.'* *And the two of them went on together.* (Verse 8). Abraham trusts in the provision of God and when the Ram is provided by God in verse 13, Abraham sacrifices it and names that place, 'The LORD Will Provide.'

God puts forward a sacrifice, in Genesis 22 it is a ram in Isaac's place, at the cross it is God himself in our place. God is good. The work of Jesus on the cross means that the atonement and sacrifice has already been made for all of us. God does not look to us to appease him, God provides!

When in the previous chapter (21) Isaac is born to Abraham (over 100 years old) and Sarah (over 90 years old), God had done what he had promised them – it must have been a great day of celebration. This was more than the promise of child, it was through Isaac that Abraham would be blessed with a place to dwell, a people to span all the nations, and of God's presence. God's promise hangs on Isaac. As we are reminded of the significance, of this promise – it leaves us wondering how Abraham could be so trusting and obedient to God's call.

Hebrews helps us to understand Abraham trusted that God is able to deliver and God provides.

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your

offspring will be reckoned. Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death. (Hebrews 11:17-19)

Abraham was certain that the promise hung on Isaac, he believed that God was able and trusted Him to be good and reasoned that God even has the power to raise a person from the dead. Abraham trusted that God is able to deliver because He is God!

It leaves us with the final question, am I willing? What are we willing to lay-down and trust to God? And believe that he will provide and is able. Particularly as we come out of lockdown. For Abraham, it is what God has provided, it is what he loves and the most precious thing he has, his only son, whom he loves, who was promised and to whom all of Abraham's hope is in.

What do we need to surrender, to be wholeheartedly advancing the gospel? In order to show that God is number one in our lives and we are willing to live in a counter cultural way which draws others into God's presence and blesses them in our generosity.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.' God has already provided, God is good, God is able, Am I willing?

Reflective song: What a Beautiful Name

Tom mentors a Cliff College student called Ben who has been on a one year Placement on the Isle of Man, and of course his year has also been affected by lockdown. The Isle of Man circuit have been creating online resources on YouTube and Ben has taken responsibility for creating a weekly video for the children. The circuit have also created other resources which you might also want to explore. This YouTube link is to a small group who are singing the song, **What a Beautiful Name** and we encourage you to listen to this as a reflection.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOL1z0aNSzE>

Prayers of Intercession

Living Lord, we bring you the needs of your world. The parts of the world that are near to us, and those places and situations that are far away.

Loving God, we bring before you the pain in the world. Places where there is injustice, unrest and seemingly no peace. Would you pour out your healing balm on the aching places of our world. We pray for countries who do not have good medical access to combat Coronavirus in their countries, where the poorest people will undoubtable suffer the most.

We pray for safety in our world, for people to feel safe and free to walk down their street without fear of danger or harm. We pray particularly for black people who have suffered racism and injustice, in this country as well as others. We pray for the Black Lives Matter movement, and ask for protection and peace at the protests and for people's voices to be heard. Would you help us all to see those around us as equal, all loved and created by you, our loving Father.

We pray for your church, for the vehicle of your voice, the role it has in community life as well as in our own lives. Although we can't physically be in the church buildings, we pray that you help us to still feel connected with you in new and creative ways. We pray for those who are reaching out from the churches to their local communities to spread your love and good news, give them new opportunities and strength when they are tired.

We pray particularly for the annual Methodist Conference that is going ahead this week online. As conference meet together from many locations in the connexion, we pray for the main leadership and the technical support of conference who will be leading from Cliff College. We pray for the conference business, that decisions are made with wisdom, and that members of Conference seek your will throughout. We pray particularly for the discussions around the new Evangelism and Growth Strategy, God for All, may it inspire your church to advance the good news.

Father, it's been a long time since we've been able to live our lives normally. Lockdown is starting to take its toll. We pray that you increase each of our patience and compassion. We pray for those who we know and love who have been affected by the Coronavirus, and pray for healing and wholeness. We pray for those who are living in homes which are not safe, may the easing of lockdown help them to access help and support to be able to be safe once more.

We thank you that we are beginning to be able to see our loved ones again, please protects us as we begin to meet with more people and spend more time outside of our homes. Give us wisdom as we each choose how to respond to the changes in lockdown, help us to know what is best to do.

Although it feels like we are far from each other when we pray, help us to keep praying to you and drawing on your love, goodness and trustworthiness in new ways.

We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn: O Lord my God, when I in Awesome Wonder – Stuart K Hine (1899-1989) Singing the Faith 82

YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/PdE_NKyY_o0

Concluding Prayer

Loving and Sustaining God, You call us to obedience, to follow you in all things;
to give up the things we cling to, and to give ourselves wholeheartedly to your purposes.

We confess that we don't always find this easy to do.
We confess that it is often very difficult to let go of the things we love.
But we also know that you never ask more of us than what is possible,
and that you stand ready, at all times, to sustain us, and to provide everything we need.

Give us courage to faithfully follow your leading, even when we cannot see the outcome,
even when the path you call us to seems impossible to comprehend.
Help us to trust you in all things,
to let go of everything that would stand in the way of whole-hearted obedience to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.

Cliff College are sharing Morning Prayers on their Facebook page at 8:45am each morning (a copy of the video is kept on the Facebook page if you want to watch it at a later time).

www.facebook.com/CliffCollege/

