



'Staying Connected'
Worship and Pastoral Resources
For Week Beginning
5th July 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As I prepare this material I have the Methodist Conference running in the background so I can keep up to date with the conversations and decisions which are being made this week. Unusually this year Conference is taking place in a virtual way, but the Conference team and technical support are all based at Cliff College, which means that the Methodist Conference is taking place in our Circuit, which I think may be the first time this has happened in the history of the Methodist Church.

This Sunday also marks another significant day in the life of our circuit. For numerous years, possibly dating back to the 17th century, a Love Feast has taken place at Alport Farm, on the first Sunday in July, and while this year we will not be able to meet physically to celebrate a Love Feast, this will be the focus of our Zoom service on Sunday evening, and details of how to join will be sent out separately. For those of you who will be joining us on Sunday, there is a service sheet attached which includes the words of the Hymns which will be sung and also a recipe to bake a cake – so please make sure you read it in good time, so you can bake your cake and then eat it as part of the evening Zoom service.

If you would like to read further details about the history of the Love Feast please click on the following links:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/16538/fando-historical-notes-on-the-love-feast.pdf>

<https://woodlandschapel.wordpress.com/category/love-feast/>

This week has also seen the publishing of HM Governments official document about re-opening of places of worship. The 13 page document is full of guidance and instructions about what needs to be done before we can re-open, and this has been supplemented by detailed advice from the Methodist Church. It is clear that any re-opening needs to be well planned, and that we will not be able to return immediately do the things we were doing earlier this year. It is also reassuring to know that there is no compulsion to re-open, and we should only do so when the managing trustees and Circuit Leadership Team feel it is safe to do so. The staff team met with representatives of the District on Tuesday for a lengthy Zoom meeting to help us to begin to understand the complexities of what we need to deal with over the coming months. It is abundantly clear that a headline about the re-opening of places of worship is underscored by major responsibilities and planning. A few weeks ago Adrian wrote about the earliest we could envisage holding worship in some of our churches would be September, and the detailed planning and preparation which we now understand needs to be undertaken does not shorten that expectation.

We live in times of great uncertainty, and we can draw on a heritage of Love Feasts, we can be part of history in the making through Conference, and we know we can trust God in the future, whatever lies ahead in the knowledge that “the best of all, God is with us” (which has been the theme of this year’s Methodist Conference).

I am pleased to share with you this week’s worship resources which have been adapted from “The Vine” worship material for this Sunday and have been compiled and produced by “twelve baskets”.

Every blessing

Deacon David

WORSHIP MATERIAL FOR WEEK COMMENCING SUNDAY JULY 5th 2020

Call to worship

I bring myself to worship,
I am connected to people everywhere,
Who are bringing themselves to worship.
We are joined together, by the Spirit.
Amen.

161 STF – Speak, O Lord, as we come to you

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmrBlgtDhww_Y8RavikumCIVjHKuxUeoR&app=desktop

*Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of your holy word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
All Your purposes, for Your glory.*

*Teach us Lord full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, Cause our eyes to see,
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.*

*Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time,
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises;
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, 'til your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.*

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Prayer

God of Grace

We come before you today with good intentions, longing to please you.
We come before you today leaving the messiness of our weeks behind, Setting aside the things we often prioritise over you.

We come before you today with thankful hearts;
Grateful for your grace that is poured out not just for the best bits of ourselves, but also for the bits we feel ashamed of.

We come before you today knowing that you change us,
Even if it is scary and unknown and beyond our comprehension,
We open ourselves up for transformation.

We come before you today together, as a community of people bringing different pasts and presents
and futures,
Grateful that in our diversity, we learn more about your nature.

We come before you today offering all of this;
Take our good intentions,
Take the messiness of our lives,
Take our best bits take our worst bits,
Take our willingness to be changed,
Take us as individuals
Take us as a community
And weave it all into the fabric of your kingdom.

Take us, use us, change us, Lord.
Speak to us today.
Open our hearts in worship,
So that we might see more of You.

Introduction to Bible Reading

Imagine trying to hold a very heavy object for the whole day - It would be so difficult. For a few minutes it might be ok, but if you literally had to carry that weight everywhere I think we can all imagine it would be really tricky.

That same thing is true of the burdens we carry around with us. Something we are all dealing with is the burden of Covid 19. Maybe that's brought extra burdens and worries for many because some want to go back to school or others want to stop home-schooling! Maybe it's the burden of work or loved ones, ensuring they are safe. Maybe it's the burden of self isolation. We all have burdens that can be like that heavy thing. However, if we hold onto them the truth is we are going to find it hard to do anything else.

The good news is we don't have to carry it alone. In our Bible verse for today, Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Then he went on to say, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Jesus is our helper. Sometimes we hold on to our burdens and try to carry them ourselves, but Jesus will help us, if we will let him.

Readings:

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

¹⁶ "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷ 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; ¹⁹ the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

(Additional readings: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67; Romans 7:15-25a)

Reflections on the Gospel reading

This passage comes just after Jesus is teaching the crowd about the important and prophetic role that John played as the messenger coming before Jesus. In this passage he scolds the generation, comparing them to children wanting their own way. He highlights the differences in the ways John and Jesus have lived out their faith, their calling, their role.

John fasting from food and drink and living a very simple life mostly away from large cities and towns, Jesus on the other hand was always eating and drinking with so called sinners. Both were dealt with harshly – one called a demon and one a glutton and a drunk.

Both of these men were working tirelessly for the Kingdom but the way their roles looked was very different. Each of us will live out our discipleship in a different way, but each of us has an important part to play.

Of course we must not forget the other side of Jesus’ message where he is calling out those who have spoken harshly of himself and John, he is highlighting the judgements that we all pour out on others unfairly and thoughtlessly. Later in Matthew 11, Jesus reminds us to be like him ‘gentle and lowly in heart’. If we are gentle and lowly in heart we will not be pouring judgements on those who live in a way that we find difficult to understand.

Jesus says that his Father has hidden things from the wise and revealed them to little children and seems to be suggesting that while we should not be like children constantly wanting their own way we have much to learn from them in other ways. Children are honest and open when dealing with new people and new situations. Their immediate reaction is not dismissal of others’ behaviour as strange or sinful but an intrigue and a desire for understanding. They have not been hardened by inherited prejudice or by previous situations that have left them hurt and angry.

As adults we all carry these things with us but the challenge is to be able to see past them and remember we are ultimately called to love. I wonder what prejudices we may carry and what judgements we make of other people.

Jesus then goes on to say his yoke is easy and his burden is light, a beautiful and often quoted section of Matthew 11. Looking at it in this context perhaps Jesus is saying that we should worry less about the way the world views our lives and our achievements but focus on whether they are Kingdom-shaped.

Also, it is an easier yoke to carry to be open and honest than twisted with prejudice and judging others. Viewing ourselves and others through a Christ-like lens of love may not appear simple but if we do it is easy and light. How do you ‘view ourselves’? Are we able to see Christ’s love for us?

Let us pray.

Lord, we bring ourselves today, just as we are.
Help us to see your love, shining through us.
Help us to have a child-like eagerness to know you more, and share your love in the world.
May we live as your children: gentle, and lowly in heart.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Hymn: 556 STF – Just as I am, without one plea

<https://youtu.be/zucUa13ciOM>

*Just as I am, without one plea
But that you died and set me free,
And at your bidding, "Come to me!"
O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt
Fightings within and fears without
O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am, you will receive
Will welcome, pardon, cleanse, and relieve:
Because your promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am – your love unknown
Has broken every barrier down-
Now to be yours, yes yours alone.
O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
Here for a time and then above,
O Lamb of God, I come!*

*Charlotte Elliott 91789-1871)
Adapted by Jubilate Hymns (alt.)
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Prayer

We come before you in this time of prayer.
We do not always understand the power of prayer, and feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task – the desire to speak to you openly and honestly about ourselves, our world, our faith.

As we pray Lord, we ask you to move beyond our doubts and our uncertainties.

You move by your Spirit.
Lord, we believe.
Help our unbelief.

In this time of prayer, O God, we bring you a world in need,
a world in pain, a world seeking for hope, for joy, for peace.
We hold up all those affected by the Coronavirus:

All who are working on the front-line to support those most in need;
all those enabling our lives to continue to function;
all those working in hospitals and health centres around the world;
all those seeking a vaccine and at the fore-front of research.

We bring to you all those whose lives have been made worse by this virus:
Those who have lost loved ones;
Those who are living with symptoms;
Those living in fear;
Those in situations, countries or environments that make it impossible to self-isolate or feel safe.

We pray for all those seeking a better world.
May we work together, in Jesus' name, to bring about a better world.

May I find my place, my calling, and know the Spirit moving through me. By the power of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

<https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=love+divine&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en-gb&client=safari>

*Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;
All thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation;
Enter every trembling heart.*

*Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.*

*Finish, then, Thy new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
'Til in heaven we take our place,
'Til we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!*

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Blessing

Present and holy God,
Come and meet with us today.
Transform us into tools for your grace, your peace, your love.
Build your kingdom here, we pray. Amen.

Additional Hymns to look at.

60 STF – My soul rejoices in God my Saviour
610 STF – Best of all is God is with us
239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I
443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

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/

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