



'Staying Connected'
Worship and Pastoral Resources
For Week Beginning
16th August 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I have based a lot of this week's service around some worship material produced by "The Vine", a weekly worship resource produced by twelvebaskets. www.theworshipcloud.com I find this a great resource and provides some very helpful ideas and outlines for worship – whether it be for a Local Arrangement or a service that is being prepared by a local preacher or minister.

The thought for this week has been inspired by the Joint Public Issues Team, who are an ecumenical group who advise the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland on issues of peace and justice.

During lockdown, our horizons may have been drawn ever closer to ourselves, particularly during the time when to venture out from the front door was considered a novelty! Today, I encourage us all to broaden our horizons, and there are two questions for us to consider, not only when you read these resources but also during the coming weeks which may help explore a little more what the Church of Christ emerging from Covid could like.

We have the opportunity to reflect on where God is leading us, in the sure certainty that things will never be the same again.

As you read these notes, or share in the Zoom service on Sunday evening, which my wife Gail and myself will be leading based on the same resources, I pray that we will all be open to the transformational nature of God who calls us all.

Every blessing

Deacon David

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Staying Connected & Zoom Worship for 16th August 2020

Call to worship

We have been called, and we have come.

We have been summoned, and we are here.

We have found the courage to join you in worship, once more, our Lord and our God.

We have come.

Come amongst us, by your Spirit.

Amen.

Hymn StF 37 You're calling us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IO3e72dDiGY>

You're calling us
And so we are gathered here
You're building us
Into a house of prayer

A holy place
Where stories of grace are told
A sacred space
Where miracles unfold
And praises rise
From the offering of our lives
Let's fill this house
Let's fill this house

*Call the seeker
Call the stranger
Call the children
Let's hear their praises
Call the lonely
Call the broken
Young and old
Will sing hosannas
Let's fill this house
Let's fill this house
With praise*

We're living stones
Built together here
With nail-pierced hands -
Oh teach us holy fear

And prayer will rise
For all nations
And open skies

Will pour your glory down
And there'll be praise
For the Lord is in this place
Let's fill this house
Let's fill this house

Graham Kendrick
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Prayers

Thank you for creating all people equal and calling us your children.

Thank you that you called and continue to call people of different backgrounds, personalities and age.

We thank you for the peace that comes when we live together in harmony.

Forgive us for the times when we have caused division and when we have been quick to speak and slow to listen.

Help us to be humble in heart and seekers of reconciliation and peace.

Thank you for uniting us with your Spirit
And making us one in you.
Thank you for choosing us to be your body in the world
To proclaim your good news and act in ways of love.

May you be glorified through us and be made known to the ends of the earth.

Thank you for showing us your heart for all people,
for demonstrating welcome to the marginalised
and hospitality to those who others may deem unworthy.

You do not overlook anyone, but know everyone by name
We thank and praise you for the same concern you have shown each of us.
Truly you are our Good Shepherd, the giver of abundant life.
Amen.

StF 421 Empty, broken here I stand.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72204B7fggU>

NB The words Kyrie Eleison are Greek for Lord have mercy and Christe Eleison is Christ have mercy. These responses have been used in prayers across the centuries.

Empty Broken Here I Stand, Kyrie Eleison.
Touch Me with Your Healing Hand, Kyrie Eleison.
Take My Arrogance and Pride, Kyrie Eleison.
Wash Me in Your Mercy's Tide, Kyrie Eleison.

*Kyrie Eleison.
Christe Eleison,
Kyrie Eleison.*

When My Faith Has All but Gone, Kyrie Eleison,
Give Me Strength to Carry On, Kyrie Eleison.
When My Dreams Have Turned to Dust, Kyrie Eleison.
In You, Oh Lord, I Put My Trust, Kyrie Eleison.

When My Heart Is Cold as Ice, Kyrie Eleison.
Your Love Speaks of Sacrifice, Kyrie Eleison.
Love That Sets the Captive Free, Kyrie Eleison.
Oh Pour Compassion Down on Me. Kyrie Eleison.

You're the Voice That Calms My Fears, Kyrie Eleison.
You're the Laughter, Dries My Tears, Kyrie Eleison.
You're My Music, My Refrain, Kyrie Eleison.
Help Me Sing Your Song Again. Kyrie Eleison.

Humble Heart of Holiness, Kyrie Eleison.
Kiss Me with Your Tenderness, Kyrie Eleison.
Jesus, Faithful Friend and True, Kyrie Eleison.
All I Am I Give to You. Kyrie Eleison.

Today the comments about our three Bible passages have been inspired by JPIT – the Joint Public Issues Team a group who advise the Methodist Church, Baptist Church, United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland on issues of public policy.

Through these readings we are invited to explore a vision of God's kingdom founded on unity.

They paint a picture of what it means to be together as God's people, and in doing so they challenge us to face up to the surprises of who is included in the Kingdom of God, and what this means for us today as followers of Christ.

We will first read Psalm 133

*¹ How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
² It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.
³ It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the LORD ordained his blessing,
life forevermore.*

Psalm 133, is short but these few verses speak volumes about living in the Kingdom of God. The blessing of the Lord is found when God's people are together.

Here, the writer says that the unity of God's people is as precious as holy oils and as sacred as Mount Zion. It is in this unity, the psalm says, that we find the rich variety of life and we can experience the fullness of life that God's kingdom offers. Here we may catch a glimpse of Jesus might be hinting at in John 10:10 when he said "*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*".

So, what does life in this kingdom of unity look like?

Our other readings offer us some illustrations, to see what this is like in practice, and we turn now to Genesis chapter 45 and verses 1-15 when Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers: -

***45** Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So, no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.*

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest.

⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' ¹² And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You must tell my father how greatly I am honoured in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." ¹⁴ Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him

After a long time apart, Joseph and his brothers find themselves together once again. Remarkably, after his life has been turned upside down by their unkindness, Joseph shows his brothers forgiveness. These are people who have treated Joseph unjustly. And yet, just as Joseph has found life by the provision and mercy of God, so he extends this to others – even those who have stood against him.

Instead of turning away, Joseph chooses to stand face to face with those he has been distanced by, and recognise that God's mercy can be shown to them just as it has been to him.

In Matthew 15, we are called to hear this message of acceptance once again from an unlikely voice. Here, we see Jesus finding himself face to face with a Canaanite woman, pleading for him to heal her daughter. It's important to know that as a Jewish teacher, Jesus would have known the way that his people and the Canaanites were distanced from one another. Their history was one of conflict and distrust, rather than unity. Yet this woman finds the courage and faith to declare that in the Kingdom of God everyone is brought in. She knows and declares that in Jesus' kingdom, there is space for everyone – Jew and Gentile. God's kingdom is a calling for unity, and through unity there is transformation.

So, we now read Matthew Chapter 15 verses 21-28

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."

27 She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Together these stories show us a picture of unity which calls for radical inclusion. Those from whom there was once distance are now brought close, through action made possible in God's mercy.

These passages paint a vision of God's kingdom where everyone is seen, heard and offered fullness of life in God's love. For the many who hear this call to inclusion from places of exclusion, this is a call for justice. Justice that sees equality, where all people are offered the life of God's kingdom. That together, our understanding of who we are might change, so that all can be offered space.

In Matthew 15, we hear this message from someone standing in a place of exclusion. Yet, whilst the Canaanite woman might once have been considered excluded from God's kingdom, in her faith she declared that with the coming of Christ, she is welcomed in. Justice is offered, that all might be given life.

The picture these passages paint invites us to consider what radical inclusion would look like for us today.

I would like to encourage you to take a few moments in quiet, before you read on to reflect on two questions: -

Who in my community / village / town/ country do I see see as outsiders?

Who do we, as a church, exclude, possibly unintentionally, from our vision of God's kingdom?

Let us pray.

Merciful God In the kingdom of your son, Jesus Christ, everyone is welcomed in.

Open our ears, that we might listen to those we are distant from.

Open our hearts, that we might bring them near again.

Help us to seek unity with one another, That in our togetherness we might know your love for us more fully.

Amen.

As you listen or read the next Hymn, please use the words to consider a little bit more about what it means to live in the Kingdom of God in our world today.

StF 713 Show me how to stand for justice

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

Show me how to stand for justice;
How to work for what is right,
How to challenge false assumptions,
How to walk within the light.
May I learn to share more freely
In a world so full of greed
Showing your immense compassion
By the life I choose to lead.

Teach my hear to treasure mercy,
Whether given or received-
For my need has not diminished
Since the day I first believed:
Let me seek no satisfaction
Boasting of what I have done,
But rejoice that I am pardoned
And accepted in your Son.

Gladly I embrace a lifestyle
Modelled on your living word,
In humility submitting
To the truth which I have heard.
Make me conscious of your presence
Every day in all I do:
By your Spirits gracious prompting
May I learn to walk with you.

*Martin Leckerbusch (b 1962)
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Prayers of intercession

Loving and gracious God we give you thanks for the gift of our voices.

For those whose voices which express emotions and thoughts too complex for words.

For the parents and carers whose voices are a source of security, encouragement and guidance.

For the voices that offer us words of comfort and encouragement, that build us up and give us the strength to keep moving forwards.

For the voices that bring us new ideas and insights that help us better understand the world we live in.

For strong voices that speak up for justice, and fight for a world where no one is forgotten or left behind.

Today we pray for the voiceless in our world, for those who feel their voice is not being heard.

We pray for those who have been robbed of their voice by an oppressive government or an abusive relationship.

May they feel the warmth of your love, and be reminded of their worth.

May our voices join with theirs to call for justice and peace.

We think of those who use their voices to oppress and intimidate.

May they be shown a new way to live and govern, and learn to do so with humility and compassion.

We think of all the ways in which we can use our own voices.

We pray for the compassion to offer words of comfort to others, the wisdom to offer guidance and encouragement, and the motivation to raise our voices and stand up for what we believe in.

We are sorry for the times when fear has tightened our throats...

Fear of speaking out of turn and saying the wrong thing.

Fear of sticking our heads above the parapet.

Fear of speaking out the ideas and thoughts that could change lives.

God, grant us the courage to raise our voices in your name, in the name of love and justice.

May we be your voice in this world, seeking to bring your kingdom closer,

In Jesus' name, who taught us when we pray to say: -

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your Kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
Now and forever

Hymn: 378 STF – Father of everlasting grace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjkx9LW0nMA>

Father of everlasting grace,
Thy goodness and thy truth we praise,
Thy goodness and thy truth we prove;
Thou hast, in honour of thy Son,
The gift unspeakable sent down,
The Spirit of life, and power, and love.

Send us the Spirit of thy Son,
To make the depths of Godhead known,
To make us share the life divine;
Send him the sprinkled blood to apply,
Send him our souls to sanctify,
And show and seal us ever thine.

So, shall we pray, and never cease;
So shall we thankfully confess
Thy wisdom, truth, and power, and love;
With joy unspeakable adore,
And bless and praise you evermore,
And serve thee as your hosts above:

Till, added to that heavenly choir,
We raise our songs of triumph higher,
And praise you with a bolder voice,
Out-soar the first-born seraph's flight,
And sing, with all our friends in light,
with everlasting love rejoice.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Blessing

Go in grace, and know that you are called,
Go in love, to find that calling and pursue it,
Go in the Spirit of the Living God, to grow and learn and be transformed, Seeking
justice in our world, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.