

**Circuit Service, Sunday 17th January 2021
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



Welcome and Call to Worship:

We have come together into the presence of our Lord.
So, let us quieten our hearts and minds,
put aside our concerns and distractions.
Let us open ourselves to listen for God's voice,
for the word God has for his people. (a moment of silence)
Almighty God, you speak to us in so many ways.
Help us, in our worship today, to hear your voice and know it is you.
Speak to us in the silence, through Scripture and by the Spirit.
Speak through others and through your creation,
through images, experiences, music and encounters.
Speak in ways that we can understand.
So, speak, Lord – and help us to listen.

Amen.

Hymns:

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise,
the city of our God, the holy place,
the joy of the whole earth.
Great is the Lord in whom we have the victory,
he aids us against the enemy,
we bow down on our knees.

*And Lord, we want to lift your name on high,
and Lord, we want to thank you,
for the works you've done in our lives;
and Lord, we trust in your unfailing love,
for you alone are God eternal,
throughout earth and heaven above.*

Steve McEwan

Faithful God, faithful God,
all sufficient One, I worship you.
Shalom my peace, my strong Deliverer,
I lift you up, faithful God.

Christopher Alan Bowater (b.1947)

Prayers of Praise and Confession:

Lord although we are distant from one another we thank you that
we can still be united in this prayer of praise

How can we praise you
in life's ordinary moments

when they are so full of concern
for the world, for others and ourselves.
At home, play, study and employment,
with all those distractions.
How can we praise you?

How can we praise you
when time is so precious

and yet stretches on,
appointments and targets or nothing to do
all distracting our focus,
muddying waters,

made clean for your purpose.
How can we praise you?

How can we praise you?
Through all of our actions,
a smile and a greeting,
a shoulder to lean on,
a word in due season,
love and compassion,
in all situations. **Amen**

Lord although we are distant from one another we thank you for hearing our prayer of confession,

God of healing,
God of wholeness,

particularly in this time of pandemic
we bring our brokenness,
our sinfulness,
our fears
and despair,
and lay them at your feet.

God of healing,
God of wholeness,

particularly in this time of pandemic
we hold out hearts and hands,
minds and souls
to feel your touch,
and know the peace
that only you can bring.

God of healing,
God of wholeness,

particularly in this time of pandemic
this precious moment
in your presence and power
grant us faith and confidence
that here broken lives
are made whole.

Lord we thank you for hearing our prayers of confession and for forgiving us. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name;
Thy Kingdom come;
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Hymn:

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar,
and with love everlasting you besiege me:
in every moment of life and death, you are.

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
you have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.

Although your Spirit is upon me,
still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you:
even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)
based on Psalm 139

Reading: Psalm 139: 1-6

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Reading: John 1: 43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael

asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Reflection: Deacon Debbie Harkness

Come, see and hear.

On New Years day, I was transported back to my childhood years and the hope that our imagination can bring us as I watched Chitty flies again with David Walliams. You might have watched it also! Whilst pondering on the readings for today I was drawn back to watching Chitty flies again possible for a variety of reasons, you see in the programme there was hope, belief, imagination, as well as doubt, uncertainty and last minute changes as they took on the task of remaking something familiar from our childhood imaginations into something that could potentially be an adult reality! Something I feel we will also uncover through our readings this morning too.

Well I'm sure there are a few of you, who like me thoroughly enjoyed watching Chitty, Chitty bang, bang as a child and for me I guess I never really thought about whether or not the car actually did fly or not, because in my imagination it did and as children the power of imagination was vital to many a good story. I guess deep down we knew it didn't actually fly and that it was the art of cinematography combined with a child's desire to believe that it could, that made the magic happen. The true value of childhood was the capacity of our imagination and belief.

Fast forward to New Years day 2021 and the task of actually trying to make the original car from the film fly! The first stumbling block was the actual weight of the original car. The car was far too heavy to fly!

So the designer tried many different options, cutting off various bits of the original car but still it was too heavy. In the end they made a fiberglass copy of the original and that also was too heavy to fly as they had hoped. So time to bring in some more professionals, those involved in designing drones and so after more tense moments and even as the school children arrived there was still uncertainty as to whether they could actually get the car to fly!! Well as I sat on my seat watching I could feel my childhood enthusiasm and belief bubbling up within me, I soooo wanted that car to fly for real this time. Well the good news is, that Chitty did fly, however it was not the original car and no real person sat in the car just a manikin.

The school children were overwhelmed when they saw the car fly, some actually thought it was David Walliams in the driving seat. When they were told it was just a manikin they were not really disappointed. They like many of us just wanted to see the car fly, even though it wasn't the original. They wanted to believe! There was a belief that something impossible could actually happen and it did. The true value of all of this was that deep desire of believing that something could happen, daring to believe that against all odds that wonderful things can happen. Faith in something you couldn't be sure of but knew in your heart it could be.

The difference between then and now was that technology has indeed progressed, the car was a different one, made of more modern materials and gadgets, the belief and enthusiasm I would say was the same, well especially for the children. (myself included) It is wonderful when children are so full of excitement, when they can not wait to share something with you. Perhaps Phillip approached Nathanael in this way, bursting with excitement at the good news that he had found the Messiah. So I wonder was there an element of disappointment when Nathanael brushed off Phillips announcement, but then I also can not help but wonder if the excitement came back to Philip when Nathanael met Jesus himself!

It is often so discouraging when others don't see what we see, or don't share the same excitement we have. I realise that this is something that happens a lot in our lives. Maybe it is something that starts in the playground? And if were not careful we can begin to lose our enthusiasm, we can even lose our belief in things that are just out of reach, we can begin to change our aspirations and our dreams.

I wonder how many of you have hoped that members of your family will come to faith in Jesus? how many times have you prayed for your friends to know of God's life changing love?

In our reading from Johns gospel, John introduces his hearers to Jesus mission a day at a time. On the previous day, Andrew and another disciple found Jesus, along with Simon Peter. Now Jesus takes the initiative and finds Philip. This could be considered a pattern of ' finding' as the group of disciples begins to take shape; some find each other, others are found by Jesus. Back then the disciples also express their new relationship by declaring "We have found the Messiah" The word finding implies a profound recognition of their ability to connect deeply with Jesus mission. However, when Philip finds Nathanael there is a hitch in the process. Nathanael does not accept the invitation, but rather he challenges Philip to prove that anything good, let alone the Messiah can come from somewhere so downmarket as Nazareth! Philips reply recalls Jesus' invitation to the two disciples the previous day come and see. The Greek word see implies far more than take a look, to see is to understand.

So I wonder do we see to look, or do we see to understand the bigger picture? A similar emphasis is when we say we hear, do we hear to respond, or do we hear to listen? For Nathanael it is what he hears that changes the situation dramatically. Nathanael discovers that Jesus knows far more about him than he expected. Jesus acknowledges Nathanael as a true Israelite who lives in Gods peace. I wonder was it the particular words that Jesus used that caught

Nathanael's attention or could it be something in the way Jesus spoke, maybe even his mannerisms, or perhaps a combination of these that changed the way Nathanael saw things?

In the readings today psalm 139 The psalmist reminds us that one of God's defining characteristics is a detailed, all embracing, knowledge of us, stretching back before we were even born and embracing everything we are. Perhaps this connection is why Jesus words brought an epiphany to Nathanael?

I know that over advent we spoke a lot about how we would react if an angel suddenly appeared and spoke to us!! As they did to the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah. Quite a frightening thought really.

So I wonder then how would we react if Jesus himself appeared in front of us, what if Jesus joined our zoom meetings or our online worship!! What would our reaction be? Or maybe if we like Philip had been talking to a friend about Jesus, and the friend just didn't want to know!! And then Jesus turns up and talks to them, tells them things about them about themselves. Wouldn't that encounter change things??? Wouldn't it make them curious, just a little. Well it did Nathanael, because his response was " How do you know me?"

I realise there will have been many times that we have shared our story of faith/ our enthusiasm of Jesus with others and its just fallen on deaf ears, just as it appeared to do so at first with the conversation between Philip and Nathanael. The thing that changed the situation was Nathanael's encounter with Jesus. So then what can we learn from this? Jesus as we know knows all about us, so maybe the key is for us to draw alongside other people and get to know them. Maybe our mission is to listen, listen to their story, to see, to see beyond the person in front of us and to see someone made in the image of God. Maybe, our mission is to be God's reflection in the situation. Maybe we should just accept people just as they are and perhaps, we should preach the gospel and if

necessary, use words. Let me repeat that, Maybe, we should just accept people just as they are and perhaps, we should preach the gospel and only if necessary, use words. When we look deeper at the conversation between Nathanael and Jesus, there is no condemnation for what Nathanael said about Jesus to Philip, there is only an acceptance of who Nathanael was and from that exchange Nathanael went from mocking Jesus to glorifying him.

Come and see said Jesus and they spent the day with him in conversation, sharing food, and enjoying each other's company. Simply being together with someone creates opportunities for strangers to become friends, sharing our stories with strangers brings down barriers and opens new doors.

We are indeed living in strange times right now and for the foreseeable future too. So let me ask you, how might we use this time to show Jesus to others? How can we preach the gospel and only if necessary use words! Or put it another way, how might our actions show our community that the church is very much open!! It is only our building that is closed.

Maybe now is the time to say hello to our neighbours (from a safe distance) Maybe now is the time to telephone old friends, or those who use to come to church on a regular basis years ago. Ring them and take a genuine interest in how they are doing in general, only talk about faith if they bring it up, or maybe just pop a note through your neighbours door saying your thinking of them?

Maybe now is the time to spend more time in prayer discerning what God has in store for us. Maybe not being able to meet together in our building brings the time for thinking outside the box. As I said earlier the building might be closed but church is very much open.

At the beginning I shared with you about Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and that the original was too heavy to really fly, they had to change

the way it was, and they way it worked in-order for it to really fly.

Maybe, just maybe now is the time for the “Church to change the way it works and thinks, so that it can fly, I mean really fly!!

We are living in challenging and changing times, many people have been saying can anything good come from going to church? Maybe not! But I am pretty sure that something amazing can come from the church itself though ! I am certain that God still has a plan for His church here on earth, maybe now is the time for changing the original model into something more relevant to today's culture? Maybe it's time to be bold, to be a little more creative?

Let us use this time to go deeper with God, to seek the Messiah afresh that we like Nathanael might have an epiphany through a fresh encounter with the living God. Amen

Hymn:

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let My love be shown,
Will you let My name be known,
Will you let My life be grown in you,
And you in Me?

Will you leave yourself behind
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare,
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let Me answer prayer
In you and you in Me?

Will you let the blinded see
If I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
And never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
And do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean
In you and you in Me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
If I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
And never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through My sight and touch and sound
In you and you in Me?

Lord, Your summons echoes true
When You but call my name.
Let me turn and follow You
And never be the same.
In Your company I'll go
Where Your love and footsteps show;
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In You and You in me.

*Graham Maule & John L. Bell.
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Prayers for others and for the world:

The three figures represent people in our circle of friends, our families, communities, churches, country, across the world – whatever age, sex, colour, culture, nationality, faith and none – and ourselves - so many in need of prayer and hope.



We share together in prayer.
Great and awesome God,
You know each of us by name and welcome us in your love - tender,
undeserved.
God of surprises, with us in our life's journeying and experiences;
Calling, challenging and changing us.
Compassionate God, you understand and share our tears, pain, and
uncertainties.
You are there in the midst of today's stresses, struggles, tensions,
anxieties;
In the race against time – the mammoth task of vaccinating,
And striving to care for those affected by the rapid spreading of this
destructive virus,
Sadly resulting in many deaths.
God of miracles help us to keep faith and hope,
Assured that your peace can calm the stormiest situation.

You called Samuel, and your disciples by name.
You call us to work in partnership with you for the growth of your
kingdom –
Difficult to visualise at the moment Lord, but help us to put our trust
in your unfailing love.
We pray for your church and ministers of all denominations.
Show us what it means to be church in today's complex, troubled
and suffering world.

We pray wisdom and guidance for local, National and world leaders
with great responsibilities, making difficult decisions.
We think of all involved with the NHS, all key workers and our
heroes.
We bring to you those in need of prayer and situations on our
hearts,
Remembering those who have died and those who are grieving the
loss of loved ones.....

Still in prayer, for a moment Lord, we look at look at the three figures
and think which one is me, or am I all?

In a roller coaster of emotions,
With all our concerns, fears, despairs, hopes, joy, love we come to
you Lord - just as we are.
Whatever the need, however daunting the task, difficult the
decision, struggle with illness,
Be close to us Lord and all going through difficult times.
Remind us that you will never leave us.
You are a God who never sleeps; never tires; a God on whom we can
depend in any situation;
A God who walks alongside us, sustains and strengthens us in our
weakness;
Calms all anxious fears and holds us close, wherever we go,
whatever we do, however we feel.
Thank you Lord God for your grace and unfailing love.

Amen

Offering:

*(For those who are setting aside their offering each week this prayer
may be said:)*

Take, Lord, bless and use the offering we bring:
our treasure and time, our talents and ourselves -
for Christ's sake, in the Kingdom's cause. **Amen**

Hymn:

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom; your service is song;
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find;
what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart ;
I praise and adore you for all you impart,
your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
your presence to shield me, whatever betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
if I should disown you, I stumble and fall;
but, led in your service your word to obey,
I'll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Jack Copley Winslow (1882–1974)

Blessing:

Lord, what we have learned this day – help us remember.
Teach us to recognise your voice.
Teach us how to see you in our lives and encounters.
Help us to give others space so that they may hear you too.
And the Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make his face to shine upon you,
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
And give you peace. **Amen.**

After Service Telephone Chat: Sunday 17th January 11:45 AM

Telephone Number: 0333 011 0616
Access code: 623 5908

Please note the call asks you to press the '£' key after entering the access code. You can either press the '#' key, or just wait, and you will be connected to the telephone chat.

After Service Zoom Chat: Sunday 17th January from 11:45 AM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09>

Meeting ID: 217 268 7931
Passcode: RevDazzer

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on YouTube, search 'Darren Garfield'
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