

**Circuit Service, Sunday 24th January 2021
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



Call to Worship and Opening Prayer:

Let us come from our everyday and our routine
and meet with God – the one who made us,
and who gave us our daily bread
through the week just gone.

Loving Lord,
thank you that you meet us where we are,
in the middle and muddle of our daily tasks.
Help us to hear your call,
to recognise your voice,
and to respond to your invitation
to be with you now.

Amen.

Hymn:

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
how great thou art, how great thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
how great thou art, how great thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
how great thou art, how great thou art!*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
how great thou art, how great thou art!*

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home — what joy shall fill my heart;
then shall I bow in humble adoration,
and there proclaim: my God, how great thou art:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee

Stuart K. Hine (1899–1989)

Prayer of Praise:

Creator God

We praise you for the immensity of your love:
The love that brought the universe to birth;
The love that designed and ordered our world;
The love that breathed life into humankind.

Creator God

We praise you for the immensity of your love.

Saving God

We praise you for the endurance of your love:
The love that came to share our human life;
The love that dies for us upon the cross;
The love that triumphed over hatred and death.

Saving God

We praise you for the endurance of your love.

Strengthening God

We praise you for the power of your love:
The love that brought your Church to life;
The love that transforms hearts and minds;
The love that dares and cares and unites.
Strengthening God
We praise you for the power of your love.

Shining, surprising, grace-filled God
For avoiding the searchlight of your gaze,
And running away from your love:
Forgive us

For preferring the safe, familiar and certain
To the risky, unknown and mysterious:
Forgive us.

For fearing those different from ourselves,
And projecting onto them that which we cannot accept in ourselves:
Forgive us

For not noticing your presence in darkness as in light,
In body as in spirit, in feeling as in intellect,
In pain as in healing, in Good Friday as in Easter Day
Forgive us.

Set us free, we pray, to be whole human beings
And to live our lives graciously and without fear.

God forgives us:
God makes peace within us
We claim this healing in faith and hope.

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:

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
give my praise to the fountain of delights;
for in my helplessness you heard my cry,
and waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails,
of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,
clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
you're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
you're the risen one, heaven's champion,
and you reign, you reign over all!*

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,
yearn to dwell where the glory never fades,
where countless worshippers will share one song,
and cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!

*Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,
clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
you're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
you're the risen one, heaven's champion,
and you reign, you reign over all!*

Stuart Townend (b.1963)

Reading: Jonah 3: 1-5, 10

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, 'Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.' So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, 'Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Reading: Mark 1: 14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you

fish for people.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Hymn:

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

This is our God, the Servant King

Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

This is our God, the Servant King

So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

This is our God, the Servant King,

Graham Kendrick (b.1950)

Reflection: Rev. Sarah Knebel

Well, what a week it has been. A week in which we have seen dramatic scenes of violence in America prior to the peaceful inauguration on Wednesday of the 46th President of the United States – an inauguration that has left the country divided between those who are willing to follow their new leader and those who are struggling to accept the change.

In his inaugural address, Biden did not hide from this sense of disunity, but instead offered hope and called for the nation to be united in facing the challenges ahead. He spoke of the importance of 'togetherness', the following words catching my attention:

“So today in this time and place, let's start afresh. Let's begin to listen to one another again, hear one another, see one another. Show respect to one another. See each other not as adversaries but as neighbours. Treat each other with dignity and respect.”

There was in this address a sense of turning, a sense of change, a sense of doing things differently. A sense of hope. In the words spoken in each one of our readings from today, there is also I believe, this same sense of turning, of change, of doing things differently and of hope.

Take for example the reading from Jonah. We learn little about Nineveh from Jonah, but if we read a little further in the Bible, Nahum describes Nineveh as a proud and powerful place, that was guilty of exploitation, of cruelty in war, of idolatry and witchcraft and plotting against God. Into this city, God sends Jonah with a stark message of warning, which leads to uneasiness in the streets. The king responds with a call to the people to 'turn', to 'change' from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. With the call the king offers hope, “Who knows,” says the king, “perhaps God may turn, may change, may relent, so that we do not perish.” Here

we see another leader, calling for the people to 'change' and whose address offers hope. There is a similar sense of urgency in this address, of immediacy to the call and however hard that change may have been we know from the story that the people of Nineveh changed. Their lives took a different turn and God responded to their radical obedience.

It was not only the city of Nineveh, however, which turned in this story. Jonah himself turned, though he seems to take a much longer route to learning to follow God. Unlike the people of Nineveh, Jonah is somewhat hesitant to respond to God's call. He is hesitant to accept a change of direction. All too often hesitancy can be seen as a less attractive quality in someone. It can be seen as indecisiveness, whereas careful forethought – discernment – assessing and evaluating possible outcomes before making a decision – are seen as good qualities. Could it just be that Jonah was going through a period of discernment, testing a call that was contrary to his human understanding of what was a right course of action? The people of Nineveh were staunch enemies of the Israelites. For Jonah, offering Nineveh the opportunity to be forgiven of its wrongdoing was the last thing he wanted. Jonah needed to work through his own prejudices. Yet, God works through Jonah's hesitancy in the same way that God worked through the king's sense of urgency. Eventually we know Jonah turns and follows God's call, God's leadership, God's will. There is in this story a sense of the importance of listening to God, of hearing what is being said, of seeing people with the eyes of God, of respecting people, not as enemies but as neighbours and of doing God's will not ours.

In the passage from Mark's gospel for today, there continues this theme of turning, of the need to change and of hope. Jesus' proclamation of the good news of God is full of hope and immediacy, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near, repent and believe.” Similarly, in Simon, Andrew, James and John's response to Jesus' call to follow him is that same sense of urgency with which

the people of Nineveh responded to God's call. Immediately they turn away from their boats, their livelihoods and their family and they follow. There is no sense of hesitation here. For the disciples in this week's passage, it would appear that following a new leader was an easy change to make. Or was it? Had they heard Jesus speaking before? Were they already interested? Had they already spoken of it with their families? Is this a record of the moment that they unhesitatingly said, 'Yes' after much forethought and discernment? Or was it truly as immediate, as momentous a turning point, as Mark reports? Jesus is after all, himself, a leader who turns our understanding of leadership upside down. In our hymn before this reflection we sung of Jesus as being one who came 'not to be served, but to serve', who put the needs of others before his own, who gave his life that all might live. Jesus offered a different kind of leadership, one of compassion and mercy and abounding in love, qualities that Jonah also recognised in God. Who would not want to turn and follow a leader who they can see will make such a difference not only to their lives but the lives of others?

This week we have marked the 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity'. Like many of our ways of worship we have had to find creative ways to do this this year as a result of the Pandemic. In many ways the pandemic has been a time of change for us all. Each one of us will have experienced it differently. There has been and is a huge disparity of experience: some have had more time, others have had less, some have lost their jobs, others are working in the most stressful of circumstances; some are lonely, others are overwhelmed by having young children at home all day every day; for some Covid19 is a short, mild illness, for others it is life-threatening. Some will have been drawn closer to God through the pandemic, others may have lost their sense of calling. Yet, in the midst of this disparity, I have been encouraged by the response of the Church in finding ways in which to bring people together and to unite them. Across the circuit we have had the opportunity to worship together as one people. Across the Connexion we have had the opportunity to learn

and to pray together in ways we have never done before, and at times when our church buildings have been closed for worship, some have worshipped ecumenically. There has been a new sense of togetherness. In each of these examples some have embraced change, whilst others have been hesitant, but in one way or another we have all responded to change. How might we continue to do so? How might we use this experience of lock-down to change, to continue to grow together, to become more united?

As Christians we are called to live in a state of readiness to respond to new ways in which God is at work in our lives, open to change, ready to turn and to follow where God calls us and leads us. The question becomes: What is the will of God for each one of us here and now? Perhaps God's call may involve being kinder to ourselves, or maybe we sense God calling us to new or different ways of caring for those around us. For some the challenge may even be responding to the call to take the next breath. Following a leader and rules can be challenging at the best of times, without having to keep up with the changes which currently surround us. But we still have one constant and that is the compassionate, caring leadership of Jesus. Perhaps now the most important thing we can do is to follow and trust in Jesus Christ our Lord, to prayerfully listen to and hear the words of hope that he offers, to see one another and to inspire our friends to do the same. Simply offering all that we are to God with a readiness and a willingness to respond, to turn, to change.

Let us pray:

We thank you Lord for the changes you have brought about in our lives, and the difference you continue to make as we follow and learn from you. Thank you that, in all you call us to be, you never ask us to go beyond our capabilities. As you call us now to new ways of being and doing, may we be a blessing to others in and through your name, bringing hope and spreading the good news to all. Amen

Hymn:

Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart — it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836–1879)

Prayers for others and for the world:

Lord God as we meet together even though we are physically apart we are truly united in faith. Remind us of the wider fellowship to which we belong and in this special week of Christian Unity, of the common faith, hope, love and purpose we all share in the Name of Christ with Christians across the world. Let us celebrate this.

Give us a wider understanding of the many ways you work and the different experiences you give of your Grace. We pray for the diversity of people you choose to call and work through. Save us from insular judgmental or intolerant attitudes and open our hearts instead to all we can give and receive.

As we bring you our prayers for others draw us closer to you and each other in Christian Unity.

Loving God hear our prayers for all who seek to further your will here on Earth. Those who work for peace, who campaign for justice, who strive to relieve poverty. For those who fight for the hungry both home and abroad. For the oppressed, under-privileged and those denied their rights. Prosper their efforts Lord and grant them inspiration so that they may challenge people everywhere to give of themselves in the service of others.

Light of the World shine where there is darkness today. We bring you this world of pain Our own and those around us. We pray for those troubled or disturbed in mind, whose confidence has been crushed and who are no longer able to cope with the pressures of life. For the sick and those suffering with Covid and the families in their concern.

We pray with hope that the vaccine will eventually eradicate the virus that has destroyed so many lives.

We bring you our hurts, troubles, anxieties and fears, placing them in your hands.

God of comfort we remember today those who mourn the loss of loved ones, their hearts broken by tragedy. Reach out to them Father and share their sorrow. Give them strength to face the future. Finally Father in a short time of silence we pray for ourselves in the sure knowledge you hear us.

Lord in your mercy Hear our Prayers

Amen.

Offering:

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

All that we have and all that we are belong to God. As we offer ourselves again, we do so as a united people, one in Christ Jesus. Lord, make us one that the world may say, 'See how these Christians love one another!' Make us one that the world may see its hope of salvation in Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn:

Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take:
Proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,
That all the world His worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
He will in grace respond to all who call:
How shall they call if they have never heard
The gracious invitation of His word?

Go forth and tell! Some still in darkness lie,
In wealth or want, in sin they live and die;
Give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
A love like yours, compassionate and kind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:
Share God's good gifts – let no one be denied;
Live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
Your ransomed powers for His sole glory use.

Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
Go till all nations His great name adore
And serve Him, Lord and King forever more.

James Seddon (1915-83)

Blessing:

Loving Lord,
thank you that you meet us where we are,
in the middle and muddle of our daily lives.
Help us to hear your call,
to recognise your voice,
and to respond to your invitation
to follow you whatever we might be doing.

Amen.

**After Service Telephone Chat:
Sunday 24th 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 24th January from 11:45 AM**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?
pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1Sll3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1Sll3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09)

Meeting ID: 217 268 7931
Passcode: RevDazzer

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on YouTube, search 'Darren Garfield'
on websites/Facebook pages of all churches in the circuit where available
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