

**Circuit Service, Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021**  
**Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer:**

Welcome everyone. I hope you are all keeping well, and taking care of yourselves and each other. You will notice that sometimes I say, or sometimes end my emails, with those words. Well, it's more than a cliché! It is so important today more than ever to look after yourselves just as you look after and love others. We're called to, even commanded to do that! In our worship, as we treasure the love that God has for us, so we treasure each other, and treasure ourselves too!

Thank you for being here and sharing in this service. We come for different reasons and with many different concerns. But we all come because of God. Now is the time to give thanks, to unload our hearts, to share our lives, and to hear the Story of God's Love again. So let us worship God.

**Hymn:**

From the breaking of the dawn  
to the setting of the sun,  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
Words of power, strong to save,  
that will never pass away;  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
For your covenant is sure,  
and on this I am secure:  
I can stand on every promise of your word.

When I stumble and I sin,  
condemnation pressing in,  
I will stand on every promise of your word.  
You are faithful to forgive,  
that in freedom I might live,  
so I stand on every promise of your word.  
Guilt to innocence restored;  
you remember sins no more.  
So I'll stand on every promise of your word.

When I'm faced with anguished choice  
I will listen for your voice,  
and I'll stand on every promise of your word.  
Through this dark and troubled land,  
you will guide me with your hand  
as I stand on every promise of your word.  
And you've promised to complete  
every work begun in me,  
so I'll stand on every promise of your word.

Hope that lifts me from despair;  
love that casts out every fear  
as I stand on every promise of your word.  
Not forsaken, not alone,  
for the Comforter has come,  
and I stand on every promise of your word.  
Grace sufficient, grace for me,  
grace for all who will believe.  
We will stand on every promise of your word.

Keith Getty (b.1974) and Stuart Townend (b.1963)

**Prayer of Praise:**

Creator God,  
We praise you for the beautiful world  
that you have given us to share with others,  
for the joy and wonder of the snow this week,  
each snowflake different from all the others,  
and yet together they transform the landscape.

Loving Lord Jesus, we praise you and thank you,  
that you came to live among us,  
to teach us how to live as your disciples,  
and to respect one another,  
sharing the friendship and love you showed us,  
with everyone we meet.

Holy Spirit, we praise you,  
that you guide us and teach us still.  
Draw near to us  
and bless us with your presence,  
that we may worship you  
in spirit and in truth,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
**Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession:**

Loving God,  
We are sorry that we do not look after the world that you have given  
us,  
for all the pollution and litter that harms your world.

We are sorry that we are not always kind to others,  
that we often put our needs before other people's.

Forgive us Lord.

Help us to be more respectful of your world  
and of the people who live in it.

**Amen**

**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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

**Reading:** Psalm 137

By the rivers in Babylon we sat and cried  
when we remembered Jerusalem.  
On the poplar trees nearby  
we hung our harps.  
Those who captured us asked us to sing;  
our enemies wanted happy songs.  
They said, "Sing us a song about Jerusalem!"

But we cannot sing songs about the LORD  
while we are in this foreign country!  
Jerusalem, if I forget you,  
let my right hand lose its skill.

Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not think about Jerusalem  
as my greatest joy.

LORD, remember what the Edomites did  
on the day Jerusalem fell.  
They said, "Tear it down!  
Tear it down to its foundations!"

**Hymn:**

By the Babylonian rivers  
we sat down in grief and wept;  
hung our harps upon a willow,  
mourned for Zion while we slept.

There our captors, in derision,  
did require of us a song;  
so we sat with staring vision  
and the days were hard and long.

Could we ever sing the Lord's song  
in a strange and bitter land?  
Can our voices veil the sorrow?  
Lord God, hear your lonely band.

Psalm 137, vv. 1-4  
Ewald Joseph Bash (1924–1994)

**Reading:** Ezekiel 1: 1-14 & 2: 1- 3: 3

It was the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month of our captivity. I was by the Kebar River among the people who had been carried away as captives. The sky opened, and I saw visions of God.

It was the fifth day of the month of the fifth year that King Jehoiachin had been a prisoner. The LORD spoke his word to Ezekiel son of Buzi in the land of the Babylonians by the Kebar River. There he felt the power of the LORD.

When I looked, I saw a stormy wind coming from the north. There was a great cloud with a bright light around it and fire flashing out of it. Something that looked like glowing metal was in the centre of the fire. Inside the cloud was what looked like four living creatures, who were shaped like humans, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight. Their feet were like a calf's hoofs and sparkled like polished bronze. The living creatures had human hands under their wings on their four sides. All four of them had faces and wings, and their wings touched each other. The living creatures did not turn when they moved, but each went straight ahead.

Their faces looked like this: Each living creature had a human face and the face of a lion on the right side and the face of an ox on the left side. And each one also had the face of an eagle. That was what their faces looked like. Their wings were spread out above. Each had two wings that touched one of the other living creatures and two wings that covered its body.

Then I looked and saw a hand stretched out to me, and a scroll was in it. He opened the scroll in front of me. Funeral songs, sad writings, and words about troubles were written on the front and back.

Then the LORD said to me, "Human, eat what you find; eat this scroll. Then go and speak to the people of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.

He said to me, "Human, eat this scroll which I am giving you, and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth.

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 1: 26 – 2: 5

Brothers and sisters, look at what you were when God called you. Not many of you were wise in the way the world judges wisdom. Not many of you had great influence. Not many of you came from important families. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and he chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose what the world thinks is unimportant and what the world looks down on and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. God did this so that no one can brag in his presence. Because of God you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God. In Christ we are put right with God, and have been made holy, and have been set free from sin. So, as the Scripture says, “If people want to brag, they should brag only about the Lord.”

Dear brothers and sisters, when I came to you, I did not come preaching God’s secret with fancy words or a show of human wisdom. I decided that while I was with you I would forget about everything except Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. So when I came to you, I was weak and fearful and trembling. My teaching and preaching were not with words of human wisdom that persuade people but with proof of the power that the Spirit gives. This was so that your faith would be in God’s power and not in human wisdom.

**Reflection:** Rev. Nev Markham

### **Telling the story**

From earliest times humans have gathered to tell stories. Stories to try and make sense of the world around them, disasters that occur, the seasons, origins of existence and as their thinking became more sophisticated a sense of the supernatural at work, the divine, God. Stories were carefully passed on from generation to generation through oral tradition. Not just spoken, but through play

enactments, song, dance. Overtime as writing developed, stories became written down and as societies developed, forms of government and structures, writings were gathered together and formed scriptures to inform moral codes and practice for worship. But even with scripture, story telling in gathered society, giving a sense of community, belonging, the divine has continued to play a central part to human society and existence.

When that is broken it hurts us individually and corporately. The loss of received tradition, patterns of living, soon put a strain on us and a strong sense of loss and disorientation can set in. We recently had the season of Christmas. It has a sense of something earthed in our past, we don’t just read or tell the story of Jesus’ birth, we act it out, sing and sometimes dance. It gathers community, forms tradition. This year it was lost. It was told but not in a way we expected. Technology helped but we felt the bereavement of not being together. We missed Easter last year and this year has uncertainty. We have and are finding new ways of community but the loss of place and full community still challenges and the telling of story is disrupted.

Psalms 137 shows the trauma of exile for the Jewish nation. Clear anger at the end when you read it in full. I am sure a clinical psychologist could identify many signs of trauma in it. So much has been lost for the Jews, place, community, tradition. I think the Psalm shows a deep sense of depression and bereavement, they can’t even find the energy to share their culture with their captives. They are not in the place they are meant to be, so how can they worship away from the promised land?

If you read the first 4 chapters of Ezekiel, you see something else. The vision that Ezekiel experiences is terrifying, but even more to its Jewish ordinance. God had never appeared to them like this before. Ezekiel experiences 2 extremes, the scroll tastes sweet as honey, yet on both sides were written words of lament, mourning and woe. Would any of us want to deliver such a message, telling a new story

that's not going to be listened too? However, don't forget the people are also prepared for a new future. A few years ago I watched a documentary on Nagasaki. There was a film of the Christian community gathered in a shattered church the 1<sup>st</sup> Christmas after the bomb was dropped. Only just over 4 months. How many people were missing? Injured/, homeless? How did the future look? how did they see God? Yet they seemed to be trying still to tell the story, rescue a shattered community.

Paul in his letter to the Corinthians shows the core story that needs to be told. Christ Crucified. He speaks it in weakness, fear and trembling. Paul's message of Christ Crucified is not just spoken, he lives it, in weakness, fear and trembling. A nomad, imprisoned, persecuted, rejected by his own people who didn't want to hear the story, encouraging new communities to live and tell the story, those communities themselves, often under great pressure and looking fragile. Yet by the end of the book of Acts he is telling the story of Christ crucified to Kings, journeying to Rome, and even that does not go smoothly.

Are we at such a time? When all we have to offer is, Christ Crucified? Spoken and lived in weakness, fear and trembling? I'm not dismissing the gathered community in all its richness, fellowship of the gathered body, liturgy, following the story through the year, but throughout history there is disturbance, change and a new (normal) appears. Or is that what is best for the body of Christ? Can a genuine expression of Christ Crucified be expressed in a static body of people? Too anchored in a place? A safe, settled place? If in 10 years I stepped back in Circuit life as a Minister, I think I would be rather disappointed if it was the same as before, I would be disappointed in myself if I went to try and just go back to the familiar (safe). Think I will make a note to self if that happens.

There does need to be a focal point, and the body of Christ needs to be found, but a new looser expression, something of the church between Roman and Norman times in Britain, that had its

ecclesiastical centers, but not very grand, and strong sense of the nomadic, pilgrim life, being in the suffering of the people, yet able to speak to and influence kings. I think I'm going to blame the Normans for setting things in stone.

Paul often spoke of his sufferings, those sufferings were for others, an expression of the crucified Christ, being a servant, and even when in chains he did not despair because he still saw the gospel advancing. I believe the Gospel is advancing. We may feel things are restrained, hindered, I have felt that as a chaplain not always able to access everyone I feel I need to, but I hear stories of God a work without me, and the church making sure things are orthodox. The story of Christ Crucified, every church building tells it simply by a cross on its wall. We can tell it in our everyday lives, even in the present challenges because that is the story the world always needs.

#### **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.

John L. Bell (b.1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958)

### **Prayers for others and for the world:**

Let us pray.

We give thanks for knowledge of our salvation, seen with the eye  
not of sight but of faith. Enlighten the Church to be a true Temple to  
the glory of Christ and a witness to the world.

We pray for our ministers, for all the churches in our Circuit and for  
those of other denominations.

At a time when we cannot worship one with another in person, we  
embrace joyfully the opportunity to join together in worship using  
modern technology. We pray your blessing on all involved in the  
preparation and delivery of the various forms of online worship,  
reflection and prayer.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Make the divine light to shine on all nations. Through Christ, who  
took our nature fully upon him, deliver your people from all evil.

We pray for our Government, both national and local, and those of  
other nations, thinking especially of the new administration in the  
United States of America in its first weeks in office.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In our families and friendships, make us a light to lighten the lives of  
others. Come with the healing fire of your love to cleanse all that is  
not right in our community, that all may know their true Redeemer.

We think at this time of the schools in our local communities, of  
teachers and parents, as they deal with the challenges of home  
learning and all the forms of disruption to education that have arisen  
during the current situation.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless and protect the vulnerable ones of our common humanity: the  
babies, the parents who have few of the world's goods, the aged and  
infirm. Be their strong defence in times of need and keep them from  
harm.

We pray for those who are sick in mind or body; for those known to us, and those we do not know. We think of those affected in any way by the continuing Coronavirus pandemic and pray your strength upon all those involved in the delivery of the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have departed in peace and come into the glorious light of eternity. Receive them into the salvation that was prepared for them from the beginning.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We end our prayers in the peace of God who has given us his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Adapted from: Leading Intercessions, Raymond Chapman (Canterbury Press, 2006) & Diocese of Ely 2021

**Hymn:**

God to enfold you,  
Christ to uphold you,  
Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight;  
so may God grace you,  
heal and embrace you,  
lead you through darkness  
into the light.

John L. Bell (b.1949)

**Offering:**

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

Loving God,  
All that we have,  
All that we do,  
All that we are.  
We offer to you,  
In Jesus' Name.

**Amen**

**Hymn:**

Now thank we all our God,  
with hearts and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in whom this world rejoices;  
who from our mothers' arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us in his grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given,  
the Son, and him who reigns  
with them in highest heaven,  
the one eternal God,  
whom earth and heaven adore,  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart (1586–1649)  
translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878)

### **Blessing:**

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills; that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us we pray, as you will, but always to your glory, and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

May God's Peace, God's Shalom, be with you, now and tomorrow and always.

**Amen.**

### **After Service Telephone Chat: Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> January from 11:45 AM**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?  
pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2172687931?pwd=aHVOb1VsUnE1SlI3OSTSaFRDQnVaQT09)

Meeting ID: 217 268 7931

Passcode: RevDazzer

### **Online circuit services are available to view:**

on YouTube, search 'Darren Garfield'

on websites/Facebook pages of all churches in the circuit where available

or at [www.walkdenmethodist.org.uk/worship/](http://www.walkdenmethodist.org.uk/worship/)



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