

**Circuit Service, Sunday 7th February 2021  
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer:**

I hope that you are all well, and that you are now beginning to spot the signs of spring and the hope that brings, that's all around us, popping up in our gardens and when we go on our walks. I would like to start today with some words I first heard several years ago at a Christian conference. My hope is that, through these words, you will know that no matter how you're feeling, you are indeed welcome just as you are.

Welcomed. Welcomed, however I feel. Welcomed, however I dress. Welcomed, however I speak. Welcomed, however I think. Welcomed, however I look. Welcomed, however I listen. Welcomed. I bring my whole self. Here I am, Lord. I bring my joy, I bring my doubt, I bring my anger, I bring my peace, I bring my despair, I bring my hopes, I bring my tears, I bring my smiles, I bring my darkness, I bring my light, I bring my fear of being humiliated, I bring my fear of being despised. I bring my fear of suffering, I bring my fear of death, I bring my fear of being forgotten, I bring my desire to be approved, I bring my desire of being preferred to others, I bring my desire to be praised, I bring my desire of being esteemed, I bring my whole self. Here I am Lord.

Let us now have a time of prayer as we bring our call to worship.

Creator God, we come into this space just as we are. For you would have us no other way. Open our hearts and our minds to hear your voice afresh, that we may be renewed in body, mind, and spirit as we share together in this time of online worship. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

**Hymn:**

O worship the King, all-glorious above;  
O gratefully sing his power and his love:  
our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,  
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;  
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,  
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,  
Almighty, your power has founded of old;  
established it fast by a changeless decree,  
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Your bountiful care what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;  
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,  
and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail;  
your mercies how tender, how firm to the end,  
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.

O measureless Might, ineffable Love,  
while angels delight to hymn you above,  
your ransomed creation, though feeble our praise,  
in true adoration our voices we raise.

Robert Grant (1779–1838)

### **Prayer of Praise:**

Heavenly Father  
My heart is filled with Adoration  
When I lift my eyes to you  
For you are Lord of all creation  
You make all things new.

My soul is filled with lasting peace  
When I close my eyes to sleep  
For you are Lord, you're right beside me  
I'm safe within your keep.

My mind is filled with inspiration  
When I open my eyes anew  
For you are hope and love outspoken  
Your words are full of truth

My life is full of aspiration  
When I see through eyes that weep  
For you are Lord of the grand and broken  
May I be your hands and feet. **Amen.**

### **Prayer of Confession:**

Heavenly Father, we are sorry when we turn away from you, too busy with our own lives, too busy with this pandemic that engulfs us, sometimes fear makes us small and afraid.  
We are sorry that we have not loved you with all our hearts.  
We are sorry that we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

Heavenly Father we ask your forgiveness and, we also for your strength  
remind us to be who you would have us to be, regardless of what we are doing, or who we are with,  
Free us from shame and self-doubt. **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 them that 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.**

### **Reading:** Isaiah 40:21-31 (New International Version)

Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?  
He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.  
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.  
He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.  
No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.  
"To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?  
He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.  
Why do you complain, Jacob?  
Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?  
Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.  
He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.  
Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

**Reading:** Mark 1:29-39 (New Revised Standard Version)

#### *Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House*

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons

#### **Hymn:**

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,  
we will wait upon the Lord,  
we will wait upon the Lord.  
Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord,  
we will wait upon the Lord,  
we will wait upon the Lord.

Our God, you reign forever.  
Our hope, our strong deliverer.

*You are the everlasting God,  
the everlasting God.  
You do not faint, you won't grow weary.  
You're the defender of the weak,  
you comfort those in need;  
you lift us up on wings like eagles.*

Brenton Brown and Ken Riley

**Reflection:** Rev. Darren Garfield

One of the things I was fascinated by as a child was astronomy – studying the stars and the planets, and gazing into space. I remember when I was very young saving up, week after week, for a telescope; there was this tiny telescope and camera shop up the road, and I was all ready for buying the nicest one they had in their window, so I could gaze at the stars. But I never got that telescope; either I gave up trying to save or to be honest, I probably just didn't have enough pocket money! But I'll never forget those feelings of being captivated by what's out there – the hugeness, the enormity, the sheer size of space, going on and on and on, never ending. That sense of the vastness of space has never really left me and, for me, it expresses something of the very nature of God. God is greater than our imagining; God is far beyond our understanding.

This reminds me of the inspiring words of Stephen Hawking, who said,

*“Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up.”*

Inspiring and encouraging words! There's been a lot of looking down at our feet lately, or at least staring at the 4 walls of our homes! Not for everyone, I know. I'm aware that loads of people are still going out and working so hard to keep everyone safe. They are to be hugely applauded. But still, just possibly, we've been doing a little less star gazing than we did before. That curiosity and sense of awe that Stephen Hawking talks about has been to some extent frustrated by the restrictions we live in right now. But then those words keep coming back to me – “...it matters that you don't just give up...” and just maybe they offer us some motivation to keep on going, to put that one foot in front of the other and keep on keeping

on! But I know there are times, I'm sure there are, when we feel dispirited, disillusioned, even lost.

We're in good company today! What about that poor, dispirited, disillusioned nation, Israel? Did they grasp for themselves this vision of God in all God's greatness and majesty? Or were they just too depressed to even know where to turn? Probably the second...they were in exile, far from home, desperate to get back to normality. I'm sure we could relate to that to some extent. And the language - the language of the reading, describing people like tiny grasshoppers, little insects, and the rulers of the earth like seeds, scarcely sown, scarcely taking root in the ground, withering and fading. That just sums up how they felt. There was no hope. There was no future.

Then Isaiah comes and says, take hold of this telescope! Have a look through it. What can you see? Look upwards, not down. Gaze through it and marvel at the grandeur, greatness and wonder of God. And look, says, God...look at those stars in the sky. I made those! They're mine; I can name every one of them.

That's the vision we need to take hold of. Yes, it's a tough world we live in. Yes, sometimes getting out of bed in the morning can be a challenge! But God is creator, God is eternal, God is faithful, God is everywhere, God never gets tired or runs out of energy. Picture God, looking down on us, as it were, as if we're tiny insects – but you know, he doesn't trample over us with his divine foot. No, he gives us strength, so much so that we will soar on eagle's wings! What a powerful image! It's been our circuit motto for a long time, and a great encouragement.

The key in the passage has to be the words, “...those who look to the Lord...” Looking to the Lord.

So for the Israelites, so for us.

Look to the Lord – that is our calling. Lift up your eyes to the heavens. That is our challenge. There lies the key, the hope, the answer.

Jesus knew what it was to look to the Lord. Jesus knew the importance of waiting, of praying, of just 'being' with God.

Now I'm whisking you off, from the dry deserts of Israel to the house of Peter's mother-in-law. She's sick. It's a bad situation. There isn't time to draw breath - Jesus arrives, they tell him immediately that she is ill, he goes into the room, takes her by the hand and, without a word, lifts her to her feet – healed! Only then do they all sit down to a meal, with the mother-in-law serving. Peter doesn't say, "You've not been well - come and put your feet up!" It's straight to the kitchen for her. Poor woman. You can tell this was a man's world! And a man writing this gospel!

There's an urgency to Jesus' ministry – he moves from one place to another quickly, healing, preaching, teaching. It's only the end of his first full day of ministry, and it's the Sabbath, and still he's not resting. And through it all we sense that something new has arrived. That here is more than someone who heals, preaches and teaches – but here is God's son, in fact the essence of God, God in action, doing something new. Here, in the real world, is the kingdom of God.

Jesus declares his identity, his mission, his purpose, through his actions. Actions, for him, speak louder than words. Is there a message for us in that? The importance of doing something, not just saying it, or thinking it, but doing it...? Hold that thought. Pick up the phone, send that card, have that conversation, be a friend to others. Don't hug though, whatever you do, unless you happen to live with that person! But be active, in the context we live in at the moment, be active; find ways of actively sharing God's love.

But hold your horses, hang on a second. There's another message. And this might seem to contradict what I've just said. But in a way it doesn't. It's the importance of not doing – of waiting, of looking to the Lord, of finding some time just to be with God in a quiet place. Jesus did it; in his busy life, he found time to be with God. He discovered that little secluded spot and stayed there for a while praying. Where's he gone? the others were asking. What's happened

to him? Eventually they found him, doing what he did best – finding space for God.

And this isn't just me encouraging you, as if it's an option. It is our calling, it is our responsibility, a necessity, to find space for God.

Henri Nouwen, the Dutch Catholic priest said this, "The discipline of solitude . . . is one of the most powerful disciplines in developing a prayer life. It is a simple, though not easy, way to free us from the slavery of our occupations and preoccupations and to begin to hear the voice that makes all things new."

So make space to be active, to be and do the mission that God calls you to, but find time as well, to look up at the stars, and see and hear the voice of God that makes all things new!

Amen.

#### **Hymn:**

We cannot measure how you heal  
or answer every sufferer's prayer,  
yet we believe your grace responds  
where faith and doubt unite to care.  
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,  
survive to hold and heal and warn,  
to carry all through death to life  
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,  
the guilt that clings from things long past,  
the fear of what the future holds,  
are present as if meant to last.  
But present too is love which tends  
the hurt we never hoped to find,  
the private agonies inside,  
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help  
and some have come to make amends  
as hands which shaped and saved the world  
are present in the touch of friends.  
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here  
to mend the body, mind, and soul,  
to disentangle peace from pain  
and make your broken people whole.

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

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

Heavenly Father you have promised to hear all we ask in the Name of your Son and we pray that you accept and answer our prayers. Not as we ask in our sinfulness but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ. From deep within our being we call upon you God for through you all can be made whole.

Hear us as we raise to Heaven our concerns for the people of this Earth.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, for our Circuit and all its members that in faith and unity we may be constantly renewed by your Holy Spirit for mission and service.

We bring before you the leaders of the nations that they may seek justice, freedom, and peace for all. For our country and all who have authority and influence, that all may serve one another in wisdom, honesty and compassion.

We pray for communities in which people deal with disaster, terror, hunger or poverty, not knowing how or when their misery will end and ask for your healing Peace.

We pray for those among whom we live and work, for our neighbours, that we may so use your gifts and together find joy in your creation.

We remember those who suffer physical and mental anguish in these difficult times with the Covid virus.

We ask your blessings on our National Health service staff as they work so hard to heal those who are hospitalized with the virus and Father, we have Hope too with the vaccine which will eventually eradicate the virus. For the laboratory staff who have made and distributed the vaccine and the staff who have vaccinated so many of your people.

In you Father we are one family on Earth and in Heaven and we pray for all those in sorrow, need or anxiety, that in their weakness they may know your strength.

We remember those who are near to death or fear death and those who have made the final journey to be with you in Heaven. For those who mourn the loss of a loved one and can see no way forward. Lord give them Hope for the future.

Remembering others in our hearts and minds, whose deepest needs may be known to God alone. We commend them to the affirming and restoring Grace of God.

Loving Jesus your hands are strong to hold and heal, to wipe away tears and protect in danger.  
So hear our Prayers. **Amen.**

**Offering:**

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

God of abundance,  
You give us so much.  
We take this moment to remember  
That at the core of our being,  
Everything we are is down to you.

And so, loving God,  
We offer ourselves to you.  
Please use us  
To show others that the Kingdom of God  
Is not in lockdown  
But is in openup.  
In our daily lives, our work, our tasks,  
Your recreation daily,  
We offer it all to you.  
Similar with our monetary gifts;  
Please bless what we give so that  
it may be used for your purposes.

For, as Jesus taught us:  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done.

**Amen.**

**Hymn:**

O thou who camest from above  
the pure celestial fire to impart,  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
on the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn  
with inextinguishable blaze,  
and trembling to its source return,  
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
to work, and speak, and think for thee;  
still let me guard the holy fire,  
and still stir up thy gift in me —

Ready for all thy perfect will,  
my acts of faith and love repeat,  
till death thy endless mercies seal,  
and make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

**Blessing:**

Lord Jesus,  
go with us into the world this week.  
Help us to remain focused upon you  
and to make your priorities our priorities in  
all the places you are sending us.

**Amen.**

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all now and forever more.

**Amen.**

**After Service Telephone Chat:  
Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 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 7<sup>th</sup> February 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

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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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Content is updated weekly on Thursday afternoon

**CCLI: 648837**