

**Circuit Service, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
Farnworth and Worsley Circuit**



**Welcome and Call to Worship:**

Be still, for the presence of the Lord is here. God is here. God is with us. Welcome, everyone.

Thank you to all taking part in our worship, to Rev Joe Wilson, Jessica and Emily, Dorothy and Gill who is preaching today.

We have come into this place to worship God.  
We have come ready to grow.  
We have come willing to change.  
we have come prepared to put our faith into action,  
to worship God in all we do.

Let us pray.

Holy God, as we meet together today,  
we ask that you renew our love for you.  
Open our eyes to see fresh things,  
open our ears to hear with more clarity,  
open our minds to recognise new ideas –  
that we may be willing to grow and change  
and to become more like your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Hymn:**

Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found —  
we stand on holy ground.  
Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here.

Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned:  
how awesome is the sight —  
our radiant King of light!  
Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.

Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place;  
he comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace:  
no work too hard for him —  
in faith receive from him.  
Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.

### **Prayer of Praise and Confession:**

Eternal God,  
we thank you that it's possible to come together on this your day,  
to worship you, to give our praise to you.  
And even though we are separated bodily,  
we thank you that you've given wisdom to others to make this  
worship, this morning, here, absolutely possible.  
We sometimes forget just how great your wisdom is, Father,  
but we thank you for those who have made it possible for us to  
come together on this, your day, to worship you.  
So, accept then what we offer in our worship this morning.  
We give you thanks for the minds of others, who have contributed  
in their own way to this act of worship.  
We thank you for this wonderful world.  
We thank you for sunshine.  
We thank you too, Heavenly Father,  
for the message of Jesus, in whose name we come.

This time of the year we remember how he was tempted by  
attractive things there in the wilderness.  
Sometimes we are tempted as well.  
But in our worship this morning we just pray that you will enable us  
to find the strength to cast-off the alluring promises that temptation  
sometimes brings to our lives.  
We confess to you almighty God  
the things that we've thought or even done which have been wrong.  
In so many ways we perhaps have unholy thoughts.  
Perhaps in these difficult times we begin to question many things.  
We can't find the answers, but you have the answer, Lord.  
Grant us then the wisdom to be able to choose between that which  
is right and that which is wrong at this time.  
So accept what we offer in our worship.  
Hear us as we pray for your world in all its struggle at this time of  
Covid.

Grant that, though separated in many ways bodily, we can never be  
separated from your love, because your very nature is love itself.  
Accept then what we offer in the name of Jesus, and for his sake.

**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.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

**Reading:** Verses from Exodus 20

### **The Ten Commandments**

Then God spoke all these words:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,  
out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of  
anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or  
that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God,  
for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy

Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

### Hymn:

Help us, O Lord, to learn  
the truths your word imparts,  
to study that your laws may be  
inscribed upon our hearts.

Help us, O Lord, to live  
the faith which we proclaim,  
that all our thoughts and words and deeds  
may glorify your name.

Help us, O Lord, to teach  
the beauty of your ways,  
that all who seek may find the Christ,  
and make a life of praise.

William Watkins Reid (b.1923)

**Reading:** John 2 verses 13-22

### Jesus Cleanses the Temple

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

**Reflection:** Gill Dascombe

The ancient temple in Jerusalem was built by King Solomon in the year 957 BC. He wanted to create a suitable space to house Israel's greatest treasure: the tablets of stone on which Moses had inscribed the words of the 10 commandments which had received from God on Mount Sinai. This was the actual word of God, the nearest one could come to the actual presence of God on this earth. And so the tablets of stone were placed in a wooden chest, faced with gold, the Ark of the Covenant, and this in turn was placed in the very heart of

the magnificent Temple, in an enclosed room called the Holy of Holies.

After standing for 400 years, Solomon's temple was destroyed by the invading Babylonian Empire, and somewhere along the line the Ark itself disappeared, but when the Temple was rebuilt 50 years later, it still had a Holy of Holies, with a raised platform to hallow the place where God's word had once dwelt among them.

In 20 BC, King Herod began a renovation of the Temple building, and it was to this place that the people of Jesus' time came to make their sacrifices and offer their prayers. And now, 1000 years after King Solomon had first brought in the Ark, the word of God re-entered the temple, only this time the word was not contained in wood, metal and stone, but in a human life; the word made flesh. Jesus Christ.

And this time, the word was not to be hidden away behind closed doors, but burst right into in the busyness of the Temple court, for all to see. And so, in a frenzy of stampeding lambs and goats, a flurry of feathers, a clanking of coins, a clattering of broken chairs and tables, and some hard-hitting words, he made his presence known to everyone there.

I wonder how they felt.

Imagine how you would feel if Jesus suddenly burst into the busyness of our church activities; into a coffee morning or a Christmas fair (if you can still remember what they were) or even a church council - and suddenly started turning over the tables, throwing chairs about, smashing crockery, and shouting: 'Take these things out of here! This is my Father's house! But you have made it.....'

What have we made it?

The whole city of Jerusalem, including the Temple, was demolished by the Romans in 70AD; the Jewish people were dispersed, and became disconnected from the rituals of the Temple, so they had to find different ways of worshipping. But some still longed for the old days, the old ways....

Over the last year our communities of faith have become dispersed, and we too have become disconnected from our places of worship. Apart from a few brief openings, our church buildings have remained closed during the pandemic. And we too have had to find different ways of worshipping. We've been very blessed by beautiful, creative acts of worship by way of new technologies, on the likes of Youtube, Zoom, email, and phone calls. Many of us have had to learn a lot in a short time to keep up!

There've been pros and cons to these changes; computer technology is not for everyone, and sadly some have felt excluded. But there have been unanticipated pluses. I ran an e-quiet day in January, and was delighted to be contacted separately by two disabled ladies who wouldn't have been able to travel anywhere to attend a quiet day in person but could now join in with us on Zoom.

Some people have said that this is the time when we should re-think our whole attitude to church buildings. There are some who say we don't need them anymore; property matters, and the whole keeping-the-Methodist-show-on-the-road thing, can take up so much time, energy and money; it can even squeeze out time for prayer, and that surely is getting things the wrong way round! And what's more, they may say, we've had many more people joining us on YouTube and the like than would ever darken a church door; so if the faith is about people not buildings let's close them all, sell them all, and use all that money for mission! What, they might ask, would the Jesus who turns over tables and breaks chairs have to say about quinquennial inspections, property committees and the like?

Many people feel that worshipping via computer technology, in our own homes, has been a huge blessing! It's brought us closer to God! God has come amongst us in a new and more intimate way. Some delight in the informality of being able to join worship in their pyjamas, with a cup of coffee in hand. It's user-friendly, undaunting to the unchurched. A great opportunity to spread the message to many more people, from all around the world!

But..... others may disagree. As physical beings, they may say, we must have physical places to meet, in order to be participants in worship rather than merely spectators. Surely, they may say, God requires more from us in worship, than the ability to view a screen, whenever we feel like it, with the ability to fast-forward through the boring sermon, if we like, and only watch the good bits. Surely part of worship is doing God the honour of making the effort to get out of bed, and going to his house meet him there, within the worshipping community.

And, as God's people, they may say, don't we have a responsibility to ensure there are holy places visible in our towns and cities, as a message to our neighbours, as bases for our mission, places from which to raise the cross in the marketplace, and to bear witness to the God of love. And some long for the old days and the old ways, to ground us again, to reconnect with who we are and where we've come from.

So what do you think?

I sometimes feel quite sorry for those moneychangers in the Temple, after all, they were only doing their job; keeping the Temple show on the road.

And I wonder what happened the day after Jesus' visit. Did they just show up for work, business as usual, or had Jesus' actions changed them in some way?

Now, as we start to consider re-opening our chapels for worship once more, we need to ask: Who are we now, we who have gone through coronavirus and lockdown together but separately in the past year? How have our lives changed? How has our faith changed? And how will the Christ, who has lived in our hearts all this time, now take his place in our communities? And what kind of space will we create for him?

What will it be?

Business as usual? Or something else?

Are we going back, or moving on?

#### **Hymn:**

Let us build a house where love can dwell  
and all can safely live,  
a place where saints and children tell  
how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
rock of faith and vault of grace;  
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:  
*All are welcome,  
all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,  
and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek  
to dream God's reign anew.  
Here the cross shall stand as witness  
and as symbol of God's grace;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:  
*All are welcome, ...*

Let us build a house where love is found  
in water, wine and wheat:  
a banquet hall on holy ground  
where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus,  
is revealed in time and space;  
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

*All are welcome,  
all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where hands will reach  
beyond the wood and stone  
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,  
and live the Word they've known.  
Here the outcast and the stranger  
bear the image of God's face;  
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

*All are welcome, ...*

Let us build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed  
as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

*All are welcome, ...*

Marty Haugen (b.1950)

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

Faithful God,

Your promise is to all generations:

**We believe that all things are possible with you.**

as a cautious route out of lockdown is planned,  
may we hold on to the hope it offers .

We pray for the work of Covax as they ensure fair access to vaccine.

**May** we find new and creative ways to reconnect  
with friends, family members and our church community.

May we be ready to play a part in the healing and restoration  
of our relationships and of your world,  
and be ready to heal the hurt that separation has brought.

Faithful God,

Surround all schools and colleges with your protection:

we pray that schoolchildren and students studying for exams would  
not have their futures jeopardised,  
that decisions would be wise and timely,  
and that classrooms will be made as safe as possible.

We pray today for all teachers wearied by long hours and changing  
rules,

for students who have been lonely and confused,  
and for parents stressed by home schooling.

We pray for all children worldwide  
whose schooling has been disrupted by the pandemic.

Faithful God,

you promise that the poor shall eat and be satisfied,  
but in the UK, rates of deprivation have risen in the pandemic –  
We pray for help for the thousands of households having fallen into  
destitution, and for funding to support the homeless.

**We** pray also for starving children in the ongoing conflict in Yemen,  
and for all those people, displaced and without hope, across the  
world.

**As** we begin to think about the future,  
may we focus on your priorities  
and be ready to work for change,  
so that no one goes hungry and all find a place to live.

Faithful God,  
you promise peace in our cities as a sign of your blessing.  
We pray for local councils,  
struggling to balance budgets. May wise decision- making prevail,  
essential services be preserved,  
and care be provided for those most in need.

Faithful God,  
Give us fresh energy to face the future,  
and may we be ready to respond to your call to follow you,  
though the pathway is challenging and the way ahead may require  
sacrifices.

Faithful God,  
as signs of spring appear, we thank you that you have placed us in  
community,  
and we remember today all the people who fill our lives with hope.  
We remember with gratitude the NHS, emergency services and  
frontline workers, volunteers who have stepped forward.  
We remember all we know who are struggling :  
the sick and hospitalised,  
those who are waiting for treatment or test results.

**And** we remember those mourning the loss of a loved one. Thinking  
especially of the family of Brian Lee. ***Silence***

May your healing love surround them all .

**Your** power is seen when love is poured out  
in the broken body of your Son  
and by your Spirit we are made whole.

So, in your healing and your hope we stand today.

Your promise is to all generations:

**We believe that all things are possible with you.**

May your faithfulness give us hope in believing.

**Amen.**

**Offering:**

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

A moment of quiet, a moment to pray, a moment to be still in the  
presence of God. We bring our gifts. We offer, when and where we  
can, our gifts of money to the church to which we belong. And we  
offer, always and every day, ourselves to God. Take, oh take me as I  
am. Summon out what I shall be. Set your seal upon my heart and  
live in me.

**Amen**

**Hymn:**

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the Word of life which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,  
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our land, in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;  
past put behind us, for the future take us,  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926)

**Blessing:**

We came together to worship God.  
We have read God's Word.  
We have prayed and sung songs.  
Now we go into God's world:  
to be God's people wherever we are called to go.  
Let us go in Christ's name.

**Amen.**

**After Service Telephone Chat:**

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 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> March 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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