



The **Methodist** Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 6th Sept 2020



This act of worship, celebrates the merger of our two circuits to form the Nottingham North East Circuit. It is being used at all our churches today, either in written form or via social media platforms. It has been prepared for you by the staff of the NNE circuit

If you are well enough, why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. I have included some links to allow you to access versions of the hymns / songs / music via Youtube

Let's begin by singing together
Come now is the time to worship

Come, now is the time to worship
Come, now is the time
To give your heart
Come, just as you are to worship
Come, just as you are
Before your God
Come

One day every
Tongue will confess
You are God
One day every knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure
Remains for those
Who gladly choose You now

Come, now is the time to worship
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Come....

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPWq8eM4lu8

Opening prayer by Cath Smith

As we come to worship together for the first time as the Nottingham North East Circuit, we remember, give thanks and celebrate the constancy of God's faithfulness and love which has brought us as individuals, as worshipping communities and as two circuits to this point.

Living God,
We thank you for the way you have led us as individuals on our journeys of faith.

For the times when we have been able to see you clearly,
For the times when we have heard your voice,
For the times when we have felt you close.

For the people who have guided and disciplined us,
prayed with us and shared with us.

For the times when it was difficult to trust or
believe and yet we knew that you were carrying us
through.

For the experiences we have shared as people of
faith.

For the constancy of your love, faithful across the
years

Receive our grateful praise.

We thank you for the way you have led us as
churches in the Nottingham East and Nottingham
North Circuits.

For fun and fellowship, worship and prayer.

For the many ministers down the years.

For the many people seeking to serve you in so
many ways to build your kingdom on earth.

For the ideas and plans which
succeeded and for those which didn't, but which
pointed us to pastures new.

For the many people welcomed into our
congregations and for those who came to know
you as their personal Lord.

For the constancy of your love, faithful across the
years

Receive our grateful praise.

And so as come together as the New Nottingham
North East Circuit, we turn our eyes forward in
confidence, knowing that you will guide us,
empower us and strengthen us in the months and
years ahead as we seek to discover what you want
us to do and where you want us to go.

For the constancy of your love, faithful across the
years

Receive our grateful praise.

Living God,

Accept us in your service

As the people we have been and will be
The churches we have been and will be,
The circuits we have been and will be...

So that we may work together to grow your
kingdom of mercy, love, justice and grace here on
earth.

For the constancy of your love, faithful across the
years

Receive our grateful praise.

Amen

This morning's reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions
and sins,² in which you used to live when you
followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of
the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at
work in those who are disobedient.

³ All of us also lived among them at one time,
gratifying the cravings of our flesh^[a] and following
its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by
nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his
great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made
us alive with Christ even when we were dead in
transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.
⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us
with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in
order that in the coming ages he might show the
incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his
kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through
faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift
of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.
¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ
Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in
advance for us to do.

Let's sing again...

STF 678 Come all who look to Christ today

Come, all who look to Christ today,
Stretch out your hands, enlarge your mind,
Together share his living way
Where all who humbly seek will find.

Come, all who will from every race;
Find here new powers of brotherhood,
Accept the Spirit's strong embrace
Which binds us to the common good.

Come, young and old from every church,
Bring all your treasures of prayer,
Join the dynamic Spirit's search
To press beyond the truths we share.

Bring your traditions' richest store,
Your hymns and rites
and cherished creeds;
Explore our visions, pray for more,
Since God delights to meet fresh needs.

Come, trust in Christ and live in peace,
Anticipate that final light
When strife and bigotry shall cease,
And faith be lost in praise and sight.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mz9Qls5vprl

Today's message from Rev Andrew

The Nottingham (North East) Methodist Circuit is here. We have come together and now we are a single Circuit that aims to equip our Churches to seek, serve and follow Jesus so that God's love is shared in our communities and lives are transformed.

Now it goes without saying that this has not been the launch of our new Circuit that we had envisioned. Like every other aspect of our lives, the coronavirus pandemic has completely turned our plans for this moment upside down. We had hoped that this weekend we would have held a big launch event at Bluecoat School where people would have been able to get together and engage in many different fun activities. We had even arranged a dance workshop and the staff team are desperately disappointed not to be able to gyrate along. Undoubtedly the whole circuit is devastated to not have witnessed such a moment of wonder and beauty.

One of the most crucial things we would have wanted to share during a big launch event is that our coming together is not just about organisational structure or administration. Of course, we believe that our merger means we are better equipped as staff and Circuit Leadership teams to serve our churches in many different ways. However, our coming together has little to

do with desiring to be a more effective and efficient organisation and everything to do with following Jesus so that God's love is shared.

So although we cannot meet and dance or sing together, we can reflect on the future and how as the Methodist people in the North and East of Nottingham we can be the church that God wants us to be even in these extraordinary times. To help us do that, we are going to turn to Ephesians 2: 1-10, which is a very good summary passage of the mercy of God, the saving work of Christ and the mission of the church.

[Ephesians 2: 1-10]

There is one line in this passage that can especially help us reflect on how we can be the church that God wants us to be. Verse 10 says in the NIV "for we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." The matching verse in the NRSV is "for we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

In a way, neither translation fully captures one of the most crucial words in this verse. The Greek word "poiema" can be translated as "handiwork", but in this verse it has a sense of a work of art. A better translation might be that we are God's masterpiece created in Christ Jesus for good works. This is true of us as individuals and it is a wonderful thing to know that each of us when recreated through the mercy and love of God can be a work of art.

However, it is also worth remembering that the verse itself is plural, saying "we are God's masterpiece". In Christ Jesus, the church can be a work of art, a thing of wonder and beauty. In Christ Jesus, the newly formed Nottingham (North East) Methodist Circuit can be a work of art, a thing of wonder and beauty.

We certainly hope this is something you will have experienced in your life already. It has perhaps been seen most readily during the pandemic in the care that people have shared so widely and generously day in, day out. We have reflected on this before, but the way our churches have continued to share with each other, even when our

buildings have been closed, has truly been a work of wonder and beauty.

As we move forward together we know there will be other ways we can collectively fulfil the good works of Jesus and bring wonder and beauty into our communities.

In **prayer and worship** we want to enable our churches, congregations and communities to have meaningful encounters with the love and mercy of God which enable them to know themselves to be God's work of art.

In **discernment and calling** we want each of us to know that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives, whether we are 18 or 87 years old. There are good works for each of us to fulfil which bring wonder and beauty into the lives of those that we encounter.

Where this may take people far outside their comfort zones we will offer **training** and courses that better equip all of us to serve God today.

Capturing the language of Ephesians 2: 10, that says that being God's work of art is a way of life, we want to do everything we can do as a Circuit to help us all our **deepen discipleship**, where our faith is not a fleeting encounter, but a beautiful, meaningful, life-long relationship.

Knowing the wonderful difference that being a follower of Jesus has made to our lives, we will seek to equip each of us for **evangelism**, to encourage our congregations to talk naturally about what God is doing in their lives, building confidence in sharing stories and living out the goodness of a "God for All" both inside and outside of the church's walls.

Along this journey, we will not only strive to **communicate** more effectively with our churches and communities, but of course we will also listen to people, and pay close attention to what wonderful things God will already be doing in our churches and our communities.

Being good stewards of the church as an **organisation and the resources** that God has given to us, we will endeavour to use all we have wisely and in the best way that serves the mission of our local churches.

And we will ensure that the doors and opportunities of the church are open to everyone, regardless of age, colour, sexuality or ability. We are ALL made in the image of God, and we are committed to creating and maintaining safe places of **inclusivity** and belonging, including through challenging injustice and implementing procedures designed to protect the most vulnerable from harm.

This is the church we want to continue to build and cultivate. This is the Circuit we long for Nottingham (North East) to be. Through the mercy of God, the saving work of Jesus and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, our prayer is that we will be God's masterpiece, His work of art, created to do good works as we bring wonder and beauty into our communities and beyond. Amen.

Let's sing yet another familiar favourite that reminds us that the church has no geographical restrictions

STF 685 In Christ there is no east or west

In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

In Christ shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close binding humankind.

Join hands, companions in the faith,
whate'er your race may be!
Who loves and serves the one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.

In Christ now meet both east and west;
in him meet south and north,
all Christly souls are one in him
throughout the whole wide earth.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNRyGGSOQLQ

Prayers of Intercessions by Deacon Helen

God of love, God for all,
your purposes are more beautiful than we can
possibly imagine.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit.
Help us let go of all that holds us back.
Open our lives and our churches to new seasons of
humility and faith, of change and growth.
Shake us up with the Good News of Jesus and
show us the way.
Amen

© Methodist Church

Loving Eternal God

At the beginning of this new connexional year, we
come to you Lord our God, in a world very
different, changed, and uncertain, and we are not
sure what the future may bring. But we are sure of
you, we can be confident of your pure and
ceaseless love for us.

As two circuits join together as one, Loving God we
ask that you help us gather our prayers for others
and worship in your name. We pray for you to
breakthrough into our churches, our
neighbourhoods and our towns and cities.

We each have a calling, help us to discern what
you want from each of us. We are loved by you,
but sometimes we're not sure where we fit, or
what our gifts are. Help us to understand your
purpose for us, guide us to know how best to serve
you.

We pray for a deepening of our discipleship with
Christ, to help others who are learning about Jesus,
and discovering the love of God in their lives. We
ask for guidance, so that we can show others what
it means to be followers of Christ, and those
people who don't know him will see him through
our lives. That they will see being followers of
Christ is not just for Sundays, it is our whole way of
life.

Loving God even though we cannot meet physically
yet, we will soon be able to open our churches, but
there are persecuted Christians around the world
who may never have that blessing. We pray for

peace, for tolerance, that we will be discerning in
our calling for how best to be children of God and
share the good news. Teach us Lord, to speak of
you to others sensitively, to be confident in our
speech, and gentle as we confess our love for you.

We pray that we will be able to welcome and
include anyone who comes to our buildings or
wants to know about our life in Christ. Teach us to
be gracious and kind to those we meet, to be
inclusive and not to judge.

We pray for our world. For those places of war,
like Syria and Yemen, where it seems peace can
never be found. Guide our leaders, give them
wisdom and tolerance, grace and compassion. For
the bombs to stop, the guns to be silenced, the
people to live in peace.
Christ have mercy.

We continue to pray for our NHS workers, as they
fight against COVID 19. For the people isolating
still, for those recovering, grieving, nervous of the
strange new world.
Christ have mercy.

For the circuit, its churches, and congregations, we
ask for peace and grace, to be shown the way
forward as we learn to be church in a different
world.
Christ have mercy.

We bring before God those people who lie
especially on our hearts at the moment, those who
are ill, lonely or grieving. For the people who need
you the most, and those who think they need you
the least.

In the name of Christ our Saviour, we ask these
prayers.
Amen.

**Let's conclude this worship by singing a new song
that picks up on the themes of our new journey
together.**

**It was used when two churches in my former
circuit (Swansea and Gower) came together and is
sung to the 'Battle hymn of the republic tune' that
accompanies H&P 242**

We are people on a journey
moving forward every day
with our friendship growing closer
in our work and in our play
and we learn about each other
and ourselves along the way
God's people journey on

Glory, glory, Hallelujah (x3)
God's people journey on

There'll be sights to see and things to do
And time for having fun
There'll be time to spend and time to stare
with nothing to be done
And we'll organise the journey
so there's time for everyone
As we keep moving on
Glory, glory, Hallelujah....

Now we don't know every detail
That the future has in store
But we're quite prepared 'to boldly go
Where no-one went before'
We believe that God is here for us
And who can ask for more
That's why we journey on
Glory, glory Halleluiah...

So we journey on together
With our God who will not rest
Till the sick are healed, the hungry fed
And all the poor are blessed
And as long as there is anyone
Exploited or oppressed
the journey must go on
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
Glory, glory, Hallelujah!

Glory, glory, Hallelujah!
God's people journey on

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JerNIZu5W0

A blessing...

**Joined together in faith, let us commit ourselves
to serve and witness together, sharing our gifts
and resources in Jesus' name. Amen**