



The **Methodist** Church

Nottingham North East Circuit - Sunday 6th June 2021

This short act of worship, based on the service which would have been held at Church today, has been prepared for you by Rev Yanyan Case, to use at home. 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

Call to worship

Psalm 147 (selected verses)

Praise the Lord.

How good it is to worship our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

The Lord builds up his kingdom;
he gathers the exiles of his people.

He heals the broken-hearted
and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars
and calls them each by name.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

The Lord sustains the humble
but casts the wicked to the ground.

He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;

the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Opening prayer

Merciful Father, the faithful One.

To the faithful you show yourself faithful,
to those with integrity, you show integrity,

to the pure you show yourself pure. In your
love, you rescued us from fear and troubles,
with your strength we stand and live.

Lord Jesus, light up our darkness with your
true light and kindle in us new passion for you
as your way is perfect and your promises are
proven true. You are a shield to all those who
look to you for refuge and protection.

May you be enthroned in our heart and delight
in our worship to you today. May you surround
all those who are worshipping you by reading
this home service with your intimate presence
wherever they are.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

STF 51: Great is Thy faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions,
they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be

Refrain:

*Great is Thy faithfulness, great is Thy
faithfulness*

Morning by morning new mercies I see

*All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me*

Summer and winter, and springtime and
harvest
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to
guide
Strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k1WhFtVp0o>

Bible reading Nehemiah 5:1-13

Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. ² Some were saying, "We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain."

³ Others were saying, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine."

⁴ Still others were saying, "We have had to borrow money to pay the king's tax on our fields and vineyards."⁵ Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others."

⁶ When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. ⁷ I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are charging your own people interest!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them ⁸ and said: "As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.

⁹ So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? ¹⁰ I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! ¹¹ Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them—one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil."

¹² "We will give it back," they said. "And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say."

Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. ¹³ I also shook out the folds of my robe and said, "In this way may God shake out of their house and possessions anyone who does not keep this promise. So may such a person be shaken out and emptied!"

At this the whole assembly said, "Amen," and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised.

STF 443: Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
Out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
Wonderful love,
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour this Gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
Sharing their sorrow and shame:
Seeking the lost,
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
Home, weary wanderers, home!

Wonderful love,
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love!
Come and abide,
Lifting my life till it rises above envy and
falsehood and pride:
Seeking to be,
Lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BZfXTCUbr8>

Reflection- “Strength comes from unity”

I've got two cats. When we just moved to this manse in July last year, I loved everything, but I was a bit concerned about the foxes living next door. Some of you have been here and must know what I mean. There is a piece of wild land next to the house reserved for foxes. I thought, o dear, my cats will be become the fox's dinner! However, surprisingly, the foxes have not been a threat at all. Once I saw a fox having a nap at our back garden and one of my cats came out and scared him away! What has been a problem is our neighbour's cat! When I saw him the first time, I thought, “this is not a cat, this is a lion!” He is such a bully as he comes to scratch on our door all the time. Both of my cats got injured by him, and of course he got some pay back from my cats as well. So, it got me thinking -this is so strange, they are the same species, why don't the cats join together to fight against their common enemy- the foxes, instead they fight against each other!

Sadly, this phenomena does not just happen to cats, but to humans as well. Just read the news if you don't know any! From today's reading we can tell that the Jewish people were experiencing a lot of problems among themselves. The previous chapter is about the external opposition they faced when they were trying to rebuild the city wall at Jerusalem, whereas this chapter is about the internal conflicts among the Jewish community themselves, such as selling their sons and daughters for slavery to their own Jewish

people, and charging interests to their own Jewish people. So instead of fighting against their common enemies, they were mistreating each other. We don't need to look into their problems because it is really just about internal conflicts within a community. We probably don't have those old-fashioned problems today, but we do have modern ones, don't we? You would think that all Christians should work together to build the kingdom of God, but the reality is far from it. The religious conflicts within Christianity in history are beyond my words. I am sure we are not unfamiliar with denominational conflicts, theological conflicts and constitutional conflicts. The internal conflict among Christians does actually resemble the character of God, as it seems so “rich and abundant, and it stands strong yesterday, today and tomorrow, and it is everlasting!

Jesus says in Matthew 12:25 “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand”. Considering all the divisions and conflicts we have, it is really a miracle that the Church is still standing. We know God can use all things to work together for the benefit of his Kingdom, but it is not the way that God intends us to be. He desires unity, reconciliation and forgiveness. In fact, that's very much what Jesus has achieved for us through his sacrifice. He tumbled down the walls between the rich and the poor, between Jews and non-Jews, between the slave and master, between men and women. The veil between heaven and earth has been torn down. Through his salvation, we are reconciled with God and invited in to his heavenly banquet. We should not rebuild the walls that Jesus tumbled down but strive to build a wall of peace and love.

After all we are all human beings. We are the same species, and we should not fight against each other. and if this is too hard to believe, let's not forget that we have been given a new identity in Christ and we are now brothers and sisters in Christ as we have the same Father in heaven. Jesus asked in Matthew 12:48-50

“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” In John 13:35 Jesus also says “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Therefore, by loving one another we become families of Jesus. This is our true and eternal identity, right? Because our earthly life will come to an end. Our relationship on earth is temporal; our relationship in heaven is eternal. We are truly brothers and sisters forever! So let us be alert and not to fight against our own families and hit on the wrong target. As Ephesians 6:12 tells us “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” So we should be joining together in love and fight against our common enemies which are in the unseen world. By uniting together, we can create much bigger strength than being alone.



Do you know what this is? This is a picture of fire ants linking together to create rafts to survive floods.

Apparently, they are poisonous ants and you don't want to disturb the raft. But what a picture of unity! Each of them is a tiny little creature. They probably won't survive on their own. How amazing that they know to join together and create such a huge raft that is thousands of times bigger than themselves so as to survive floods. I think both cats and humans should learn from fire ants!

However, I understand that unity is easy to be said than done because many issues in church can cause conflicts and divisions because we just cannot all agree on everything. But unity does not mean uniformity or compromise, and loving one another does not mean we have to agree with each other on absolutely everything which is impossible. I have not heard any two people agree on every topic, even husband and wife, but we can still love each other.

Jesus bore betrayal, shame, abandonment, accusation, but he did not fight back evil with evil, violence with violence. He remained silent before Pontus Pilot the earthly judge. But it does not mean that Jesus compromised or agreed on all these mistreatments, does it? It does not mean that Jesus surrendered to Pontus Polit, does it? Jesus knew who is in control; he knew who the true Judge is. It is the One who sits on the Judgement seat in heaven. It is to him Jesus was surrendering to, and it is him who lifted up Jesus from the grave to the heavenly throne. Unity can only be achieved by us all surrendering to the one true Judge in heaven and let God be God. Colossians 3:13-14 “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

I came into ministry during a pandemic last year and I have not even had the chance to preach in the beautiful church building yet. I have not been able to fellowship with you all and to know the congregations in our circuit. But I have a dream at the moment, that when we go back to our church building, I will see a congregation that is bound in love; I have a dream that this yearning for fellowship together at the moment will be demonstrated in understanding and support; I have a dream that when we invite the “outsiders” in to come and see, they will see peace, harmony, love, warmth which will make them want to belong; I have a dream that this group of people that God gathered together at this corner of the earth, have made God proud in words and deeds; I have a dream that the people of God at Nottingham North East Circuit are holding hands together building the Kingdom with wall of peace and gate of joy. You are all in my dream, including myself. I have put up the following verse in my kitchen just to remind myself that I won't ruin my own dream. Ephesians 4:2 “Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Yes, love is the answer for unity and strength. Love is bigger than disagreement, love is stronger than conflicts. Because of God's love to us, Jesus conquered death. Our enemy would be powerless when brothers and sisters are bound in love. Finally, let us all be reminded by Apostle Paul's teaching on love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Amen.

STF 611: Brothers and sisters let me serve you

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

-Richard A.M. Gillard (b.1953)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07FBSrx5Oq4>

Intercession

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you have created us all out of love and for your love. Even when in our sin and foolishness we strayed away from you, you are there seeking us out with open arms.

Loving God, we ask forgiveness for the sin and arrogance that divides us and creates barriers between Christ-followers and among all peoples. We pray for equality and understanding for minority groups and all those who are judged by their race or background.

Silence

Loving God, may your Church throughout the world demonstrate your love for all peoples and nations. Bless all who seek to heal divisions and to do away with prejudice. Give courage to all who reach out to those in need and who seek to welcome the outcast. May your Church reflect your saving grace.

Silence

Loving God, we pray for the world you created, especially for those areas that have been devastated by bombing, greed, and exploitation. May you send your help and provide for all those who are simply trying to survive due to illness, trauma, poverty or war. May you bless the work of those who are trying to bring unity and reconciliation for the sake of people's lives.

Silence

Loving God, as you reveal your love to us, help us to show that love towards each person we meet day by day. We ask your blessing upon

all those who seek to live out your grace and to walk in humble obedience to your will.

Silence

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

Hymn STF 662: Have you heard God's voice

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred? Are you still prepared to follow? Have you made a choice to remain and serve, though the way be rough and narrow?

Refrain:

Will you walk the path that will cost you much and embrace God's love and sorrow?

Will you trust in One who entrusts to you the disciples of tomorrow?

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down when the multitudes are silent?

Will you make a choice to stand your ground when the crowds are turning violent?

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith and believe it could be different?

Will you share your views using words of grace?

Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

In your city streets will you be God's heart?

Will you listen to the voiceless?

Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,

will you share your faith with the faithless?

-Jacqueline G. Jones

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtzpZ_2n31Y

Closing Prayer

Father God, lead us with goodness and mercy so that we may embrace obedience towards you;

Christ Jesus, enlighten our darkness with your truth so that we may find ourselves standing on firm ground.

Holy Spirit, bind us in your perfect love so that we can join together as brothers and sisters in unity for your kingdom. Amen.

Blessing

May our love abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Amen.