



# The Methodist Church

Nottingham North East Circuit – Home Service, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021

This act of worship has been prepared by Revd Moses Agyam for you 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.

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## *A Service of Healing and Reconciliation*

Welcome to this service of healing and reconciliation which focuses on St. Paul's message of reconciliation and healing of all things in Christ. It drawn on the 'healing and reconciliation services' from the Methodist Worship Book. As the worship book says 'Healing (and reconciliation) was central to the ministry of Jesus. It was a sign of God God's kingdom, bring renewal and wholeness of life to those who turned to God in their need'.

There is an opportunity in this service to anoint yourself with oil, if you feel comfortable, to seek healing for yourself or to pray for someone known to you in need of healing.

### *Gathering*

Jesus said: 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'

Jesus said: 'I have come that you may have life, and may have it in all its fullness.'

Let us worship.

#### **STF 655**

*We sing/Read/Pray the words*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exr0oxZwZKA>

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)*

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Let us pray,

God beyond us,  
forming us in your own likeness,  
delighting in all that you create:  
**we turn to you,  
we are made by you,  
our hearts are restless  
till they find their rest in you.**

God beside us,  
companion on the road,  
who has come to give us life in all its  
fulness:  
**we listen for you,  
we yearn for you,  
we seek your healing touch.**

God within us,  
closer than our breathing,  
present at the heart of all that is:  
**we are waiting for you,  
we are open to you,  
as you waken us with promise of  
new life.**

### *Silence*

Living God,  
always near to those who call on you:  
make us confident in prayer, joyful in  
praise and responsive to your word,  
that we may know your peace in our  
hearts and your healing in our lives.

Loving God,  
in silence we ask you to lift from us all  
that weighs us down or spoils our  
relationships with others or separates  
us from you.

### *Silence confession*

A broken and a contrite heart  
you do not despise.

Jesus says: Your sins are forgiven.

Christ has set us free.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

### **STF 334 (vv. 5 & 6 are omitted here)**

*We sing/Read/Pray the words*  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpHUYwHEstk>)

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
and in the depth be praise;  
in all his words most wonderful,  
most sure in all his ways.

loving wisdom of our God!  
when all was sin and shame,  
a second Adam to the fight  
and to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,  
which did in Adam fail,  
should strive afresh against the foe,  
should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace  
should flesh and blood refine,  
God's presence and his very self,  
and essence all-divine.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,  
and in the depth be praise;  
in all his words most wonderful,  
most sure in all his ways.

*John Henry Newman (1801-1890)  
adapted by Compilers of Hymns for  
Today's Church 1982 (alt.)*

*Word*

### **Reading**

2 Corinthians 5: 6-10 (11-13) 14-17

<sup>6</sup>So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup>Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>So whether we

are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup> For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. <sup>12</sup>We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

<sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Your word, O God, is a lamp to our feet **and a light to our path.**

## Sermon

When the restrictions on care homes were recently eased so that more family members could see loved ones, there were feelings of reunion, and for some, a sense of being reconciled to loved ones. One woman on the Radio 4 Today programme said, 'Today feels like a red letter day. It's been hard for families to be separated. This is the day many have longed for – to be reunited with their families'.

Reconciliation – the ways we commonly use the word all but miss its meaning, do they not?

'I've reconciled myself to the inevitable' he says, throwing up his hands, bitterly lamenting a broken marriage. Reconciled – Resigned.

'We've reconciled the books at last', she says, wiping her face in relief. Reconciled – Balanced, accounts equal on both sides of the ledger – penny for penny.

'After months of discussion, we've reconciled our differences for the good of the country' one newspaper said following the Brexit negotiations. Reconciled – Compromised; cut the best deal we could with opponents bent on doing the same.

Do you sense the underlying message and energy in all of these? The lowest common denominator in 'resigned', 'balanced', 'compromised?' It's a feeling of relief.

'No need to struggle any more (at least no point in trying). We've found a way to stand down, to cease and desist from all the hassle. Lower the volume, will you? Let's have some peace and quiet (the sort of things I find myself saying regularly to my children). Things will even out; let's go with business as usual'.

As Rodney King put it (the black man whose battering by police sparked the Los Angeles riots in 1991), 'Can't we all just get along?'

But is that the message of reconciliation Paul is charged to bring? If so, it isn't good news, and I would say, it isn't even news. Maybe reconciliation – true reconciliation – requires a way of seeing, speaking, acting that is, in fact, radically different from a 'human point of view' (2 Cor. 5:16).

Many of you may remember, among all the other tragedies attending the war in Iraq, the bombing of the United Nations headquarters, and the resulting death of Sergio de Mello, the UN representative in charge. As de Mello lay dying, pinned amid the rubbles of collapsed walls and ceilings, he was heard to say by an associate who was also trapped but later rescued, 'Whatever you do, don't let the UN pull out of Iraq! What we are doing here may well be the only hope for peace'.

This is close to the kind of 'reconciliation Paul has in mind. Forgiveness – feisty forgiveness and mutual commitment towards healing and deep peace. Not 'forgive and forget'. Not 'It's all right; it didn't really hurt'. Not 'I won't hold it against you this time; but don't let it happen again!'

But 'Your hate is hereby countered with my love! Your fear is, at the moment, taken up into my trust'. Not that the past no longer matters or is magically deleted from history. But it *is* responded to with different language and different mode of being. That which is no longer from a human point of view – but which humanity was made for, and can be recreated into'.

Paul is convinced that reconciliation is a journey from hurt to healing. It is what happens beyond feisty forgiveness, namely, the mutual walking together (of

both the abused and abuser) toward healing, wholeness and peace. This, radical path towards healing, Paul believes, had already begun in Jesus. Jesus' death and resurrection has set forgiveness and healing loose upon the world.

The heart of Paul's message of reconciliation, in terms of healing, is powerfully captured by these words found on the prayer cards from Southwell minster. In the prayer section where people are invited to sit quietly to pray, there is a prayer card to aid your prayer focused on the message of reconciliation. It speaks of reconciliation as the heart of our Christian faith and describes it in three parts:

- **Reconciliation - healing the rifts between ourselves and God.** We do not have to earn God's forgiveness. It is a gift for us to turn and received, if we are willing. The self-giving love of God, seen in Jesus, is what changes us and draws us into faith.
- **Reconciliation – healing the division between people.** Reaching out to build bridges (i.e., relationships) between people is also at the heart of Christian life whether the gaps are racial, social, ethnic or religious.
- **Reconciliation – healing our damaged planet.** We acknowledge our shared responsibility to care properly for our fragile and beautiful earth, its creatures and its resources.

Paul says, this vision of healing is now the goal and the commitment of all Christians: 'All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18).

May we truly know ourselves reconciled to God. And may God give to each of us a candle of the Spirit to help us work

toward this vision of healing of all things in Christ. **Amen.**

### *Response*

*Prayers for healing, caring and reconciliation.*

Let us bring before God those who are on our hearts and minds, all who have asked us to remember them in our prayers.

Let us pray:

Loving God, long ago people brought their friends to Jesus, or approached him on behalf of others. So now we bring to you those who need your help.

God of compassion and love, we offer you all our suffering and pain. Give us strength to bear our weakness, healing even when there is no cure, peace in the midst of turmoil and love to fill the spaces in our lives.

Glory to God, from whom all love flows, glory to Jesus, who showed his love through suffering, and glory to the Holy Spirit, who brings light to the darkest places. **Amen.**

*If you wish or comfortable you may anoint your forehead with oil here. Or simply sit in silence holding in prayer either yourself or any known to you in need of healing and light.*

Hear this invitation:

This is God's word, the word of your creator:

'Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you'.

So come to God with your fears and hopes, come with your sadness and regrets, come with your pain and doubt, come with whatever faith you have.

Whether the storm is around you or within,  
the Saviour holds you;  
you are not alone.

### *Silence*

Compassionate God, encircle us as we reach out in love. Wounded Christ, touch us in our weakness and our strength. Life-giving Spirit, breath through us, channels of your peace.

*This prayer is said as you sign yourself with the oil.*

Healing Spirit of God,  
at work in Jesus,  
present here and now,  
fill my whole being,  
free me of all harm,  
heal me of all my diseases,  
and give me peace.

**Amen.**

We say together the Lord's Prayer: Our Father . . .

### **STF 648**

*We sing/Read/Pray the words*  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daGWdbrSGBM>)

Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring  
your love;  
where there is injury, your pardon,  
Lord;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you:

*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me  
bring hope;  
where there is darkness, only light;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy:

### *Refrain*

Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

in giving unto all that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal  
life.

*Sebastian Temple (1928-1997)  
from the Prayer of St Francis*

### *Dismissal and Blessing*

'This life, therefore, is not righteousness  
but growth in righteousness;  
not health but healing;  
not being but becoming;  
not rest but exercise.  
We are not yet what we shall be but we  
are growing towards it.  
The process is not yet finished, but it is  
going on.  
This is not the end, but it is the road.  
All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is  
being purified'.

*(Martin Luther)*

May the Christ of all that has been  
and all that is to come  
stand by our side through daylight and  
darkness,  
heal us of the wounds of the past,  
and welcome us into the future.

Go in peace,  
protected by God,  
befriended by Christ,  
empowered by the Holy Spirit,  
and held by the prayers of the people.  
And the blessing of the sacred Trinity of  
love go with you now and always.

**Amen.**

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**notes** some of the prayer are adapted from  
*The Methodist Worship Book* © TMCP, 1999.  
Other prayers from *Worship from The United  
Reformed Church* © URC, 2003.

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