

A Service written by Rev David Speed

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**Nottingham North East
Methodist Circuit**

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We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing in this act of worship with you. We hope that you find this service helpful.

Call to Worship

Blessed be the Lord our God for He has come to his people to set them free

Hymn – We have a gospel to proclaim

We have a gospel to proclaim
Good news for men in all the earth;
The gospel of a Saviour's name:
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

Tell of His birth at Bethlehem,
Not in a royal house or hall
But in a stable dark and dim:
The Word made flesh, a light for all.

Tell of His death at Calvary,
Hated by those He came to save;
In lonely suffering on the cross
For all He loved, His life He gave.

Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
Empty the tomb, for He was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
That we might share His victory.

Tell of His reign at God's right hand,
By all creation glorified;
He sends His Spirit on His Church
To live for Him, the Lamb who died.

Now we rejoice to name Him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel message we proclaim:
We sing His glory, tell His worth.

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Prayer

Let us pray, Lord, your wonder streams from sun and star, you are at the heart of everything in all creation, and yet near to each loving heart. We praise you for your graciousness, and your love. We are only sorry for the many times we have failed to live up to them and you. Your love and your ways are so much greater than ours. Please, forgive us our failings. Help us to start again, and believe that you are with us, and in us, to make it possible that we can become more like you.

We pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Reading - Psalm 51: 10-17 Our Bible Readings are from the New International Version

- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- ¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is^[b] a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

Reading - John 4:19-24 The Samaritan Woman and Jesus

¹⁹ "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹ "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

Hymn – I will sing the wondrous story

1. I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ Who died for me;
How He left His home in glory
For the cross of Calvary.

Refrain:

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ Who died for me,
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

2. I was lost, but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray,
Threw His loving arms around me,
Drew me back into His way.
3. I was bruised, but Jesus healed me,
Faint was I from many a fall,
Sight was gone, and fears possessed me,
But He freed me from them all.
4. Days of darkness still come o'er me,
Sorrow's path I often tread,
But His presence still is with me;
By His guiding hand I'm led.
5. He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then He'll bear me safely over,
Where the loved ones I shall meet.

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Sermon – Worship: Offering of the heart

What makes up the Methodist Way of Life? Worship, Evangelism, Learning and Caring, and Service. The Circuit has asked preachers to speak on these themes expressed in the Methodist Church 's paper on "The Methodist Way of Life". The theme for today is worship. **Someone once wrote a book describing Methodism as 'The Music of the Heart'. I would like to suggest that worship is the Offering of the Heart.** The Offering of the Heart.

Worship! We asked what makes up the Methodist Way of Life, so what makes up a human being? Here is my answer. Hands, feet, ears, heart, mind, imagination, love. You'll have your own ideas. Some of us are thinkers, some of us are doers, some of us tend to feel with the heart. Others of us tend to think with the mind. Whichever it is, we can bring it to our worship.

How do you feel about worship? 'I'm always glad to be here with my friends'. Or you might say, 'It depends on who's preaching. It depends how I feel'. Or you may feel that you're not very good at worshipping. I could never get out in the front and lead worship. You don't have to. Whatever you have, you can bring to your worship, so long as we use it not to show off but to show God off.

In the days before the National Health Service, the only place where you could be treated if you were severely ill was the monastery. Do you remember the story of the juggler, who fell seriously ill, and the only place and who was treated at the monastery? The monks, after some time, nursed him back to health. He had no money and did not know what to do to say, 'thank you'. Eventually, he went to the Chapel, and began juggling with his series of juggling balls. A monk happened to be passing by and was shocked. He ran to the Abbot and explained what was happening. The Abbot went to the Chapel, saw what was going on and made up his own mind. "Leave him alone", he said, "He has done what he could".

If hands used to juggle can be used to worship, what else can they be used for? Praying, playing, painting, presenting the offering, giving and receiving from God. How can the feet be used, with the hands in dance? How can the ears be used? Well, God bless you if you listening to me. How can the mind be used, by coming to love the truth God gives? What about the imagination, in poetry and writing offered to God? All you and I have can be offered to God in worship. All that matters is that it comes from the heart. **The first British Christians used to talk about the 'seven stringed harp'. All our skills can be used to worship God.** Sometimes, the thing that we're not good at can be offered too. You may feel that your voice is not that of Katharine Jenkins or Bryn Terfel. Does that mean it should not be used in worship?

An invading Army burnt down a monastery. Three old monks escaped and lived in the forest. They found a beautiful glade, which they called their cathedral. Each day they worshipped God. Their voices were old and cracked and the only song they sang was the Magnificat. They sang this each evening until one day a stranger with a beautiful voice joined them, and they stopped singing.

After a while, an angel appeared and said, "The Lord wishes to know why there is no praise now sent up to Him".

"But there is. Has the Lord not heard this man's beautiful singing – far finer than ours could ever be?"

The angel said, "Yes, it is beautiful, but that man does not sing to praise the Lord but for the pleasure of hearing his own voice. The Lord wishes you to start singing again".

A very young child gives you a picture that she has painted. It's not very good, though it might raise £50,000 in the Tate Gallery. She is giving you the best she has as a gift of love. So, we offer worship to God in the usual way. There may be things we do better than others but whichever, the Lord receives them gladly because it is our gift and comes from the heart.

Henry Olonga was a Zimbabwean cricketer who fell foul of Robert Mugabe's regime. He was almost too talented. He was not only a cricketer, he was also a singer who could write his own songs. One of them talked of how as a little boy, he brought weeds from his own garden to give to his mother, and how she received them as if they were the best gift ever. So, does our Heavenly Parent receive our gifts of love.

An offering from the heart will mean giving God the best we have to offer. It will reflect a generosity of spirit. **As someone has said, "Only the best is good enough for God".** Yet, if the best isn't really very good, I believe He still receives it as a delighted parent.

So, we think of how we can offer worship, both personally, and in Church, to God. We pray to God to show us. Sometimes, the answers will surprise us. To the praise of God and the benefit of each other, where worship comes from the heart, all have a part to play.#

Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Let us pray

Please offer one item on the news that you would want to bring before God.

Please offer one person who is on your mind before God

Please offer one member of your family

Please remember one person in the Church

Please offer one concern in your own life.

Remember all those who are praying at this time

The Lord hears our prayer

Thanks be to God.

Amen

Hymn - Jesus calls us o'er the tumult

1. Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild, restless, sea;
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, "Christian, follow Me!"
2. Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying, "Christian, love Me more!"
3. In our joys and in our sorrows,
Days of toil and hours of ease,
Still He calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love Me more than these!"
4. Jesus calls us! By Thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,
Serve and love Thee best of all.

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The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

The Love of God

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,

Be with us all, evermore.

Amen