

**Sunday September 25<sup>th</sup> 2022**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
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Nottingham North East  
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This week, we're going to think a little bit about the All We Can Harvest 2022 partnership and look at the work there are doing in the Binga region of Zimbabwe. Let's begin with some words from scripture.

**Opening Psalm 139:1-15**

- 1 You have searched me, Lord,  
and you know me.
  - 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
  - 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.
  - 4 Before a word is on my tongue  
you, Lord, know it completely.
  - 5 You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.
  - 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.
  
  - 7 Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?
  - 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
  - 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
10 even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.
  - 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me  
and the light become night around me,"  
12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.
  
  - 13 For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
  - 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.
  - 15 My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of  
the earth.
- Amen.

**All We Can**

All We Can is the relief and development charity of the Methodist Church which seeks to see every person's potential fulfilled. It does that by partnering with local organisations rooted in communities facing poverty and inequality, and putting them, and putting them in the driving seat. All We Can believes in coming alongside these communities in long-term partnerships, not telling them what needs to be done, but assisting them in implementing their own vision of flourishing.

**StF 728 - O God, You Search Me and You Know Me**

O', God, you search me, and you know me  
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze  
When I walk or lie down, you are before me  
'Ever the maker and keeper of my days

You know my resting and my rising  
You discern my purpose from afar  
And with love everlasting, you besiege me  
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord  
You have known its meaning through and through  
You are with me beyond my understanding  
God of my present, my past and future, too

Although your Spirit is upon me  
Still I search for shelter from your light  
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you  
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight

For you created me and shaped me  
Gave me life within my mother's womb  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you  
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new

*Bernadette Mary Farrell*

## **Prayers of Adoration, Confession and Thanksgiving**

By the word of our Lord the heavens were made.  
By the spirit of our Lord was life begun.  
By the wisdom of our Lord his laws were laid.  
By the love of our Lord was born his Son.  
By the grace of our Lord mankind was saved.  
By the power of our Lord the victory was won.

God of harvest,  
gardener supreme,  
you place us at the centre, feed us, equip us and,  
having provided for us,  
look to a different harvest,  
a fruitfulness of lives in service to you, and  
others.  
God of harvest,  
feed us, prune us, harvest us, that our lives  
might bring glory to you.

Creator God, forgive our moments of ingratitude,  
the spiritual blindness that prevents us  
from appreciating the wonder that is this world,  
the endless cycle of nature,  
of life and death and rebirth.  
Forgive us for taking without giving  
reaping without sowing.  
Open our eyes to see  
our lips to praise  
our hands to share  
May our feet tread lightly on the path we tread  
and our footsteps be worthy of following  
for they lead to you.

Christ came to save us, and he knows what's in  
our hearts. When we are truly sorry, Christ says  
'Your sins are forgiven.' Thanks be to God.  
Amen.

### **Bible Readings: Acts 8:14-24**

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard  
that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they  
sent Peter and John to them. 15 The two went  
down and prayed for them that they might  
receive the Holy Spirit 16 (for as yet the Spirit had  
not come upon any of them; they had only been  
baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). 17 Then  
Peter and John laid their hands on them, and  
they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when  
Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the  
laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them  
money, 19 saying, 'Give me also this power so

that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive  
the Holy Spirit.' 20 But Peter said to him, 'May  
your silver perish with you, because you thought  
you could obtain God's gift with money! 21 You  
have no part or share in this, for your heart is not  
right before God. 22 Repent therefore of this  
wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if  
possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven  
you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of  
bitterness and the chains of wickedness.' 24  
Simon answered, 'Pray for me to the Lord, that  
nothing of what you have said may happen to  
me.'

### **Luke 13:10-17**

10 Now he was teaching in one of the  
synagogues on the sabbath. 11 And just then  
there appeared a woman with a spirit that had  
crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent  
over and was quite unable to stand up straight.  
12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and  
said, 'Woman, you are set free from your  
ailment.' 13 When he laid his hands on her,  
immediately she stood up straight and began  
praising God. 14 But the leader of the synagogue,  
indignant because Jesus had cured on the  
sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, 'There are six  
days on which work ought to be done; come on  
those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath  
day.' 15 But the Lord answered him and said,  
'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the  
sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the  
manger, and lead it away to give it water? 16 And  
ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham  
whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be  
set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?'  
17 When he said this, all his opponents were put  
to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at  
all the wonderful things that he was doing.

## Hymn StF 696 - For the Healing of the Nations

For the healing of the nations,  
Lord, we pray with one accord;  
For a just and equal sharing  
Of the things that earth affords.  
To a life of love in action  
Help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us, forward, into freedom,  
From despair the world release;  
That, redeemed from war and hatred,  
all may come and go in peace.  
Show us how through care and goodness  
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,  
Let it from the earth be banned;  
Pride of status, race or schooling,  
Dogmas keeping man from man.  
In our common quest for justice  
May we hallow life's brief span.

You Creator-God have written  
Your great Name on all mankind;  
For our growing in Your likeness  
Bring the life of Christ to mind;  
That, by our response and service  
Earth its destiny may find.

*Fred Kaan (1929-2009)*

### Reflection

Throughout the New Testament, we see hands are often the instrument used to convey God's will. Hands are used by Jesus to heal people, Peter and John lay hands on people to help them receive the Holy Spirit.

Jesus uses his hands as he humbles himself when he washes the disciples' feet, and later to show Thomas his wounds to prove he's alive. Hands can also be used for ill, Pilate washes his hands in a symbolic act of distancing himself from Jesus' death, and the guards grab Jesus with rough hands as they arrest him.

It's easy to look at our hands and assume we don't have much to work with, but often if we operate from an assumption of abundance rather than scarcity, we can do much more than we imagine. Our hands may be things we take for granted, but think how much work they do. They clean and tidy, they pack and unpack, lift and place, they write and turn pages as we read, the

comfort and show empathy with touch, they type and cook, sew and play musical instruments. The list is endless.

It's not just our hands that are important it's also the resources we use. The Zubo Trust in Zimbabwe (partners with All We Can in the Binga region) started by asking "what resources do we have in our community, how can we use them to help people?" They recognised that the ilala palm trees were a resource they had in abundance, and they used their hands to turn that resource into something that empowered women in the area. The women of the area began to weave baskets, which they could sell on and use, thereby making them their own heroes, making them the people with the power over their own destinies. All We Can partnered with The Zubo Trust in order to work with the people of Binga region, to empower them, and give them agency over their own lives. They pride themselves on using the resources they have available to them and using their hands to transform that into something as beautiful as the baskets.

As well as talking about what we do with our hands, these Bible passages also have something to say about power – how we use it, and how we perceive it. When Simon the magician sees the Apostles enabling people to receive the Holy Spirit he says "give me this power" Simon hasn't understood the need he feels for the power, he thinks it's a simple gift that Peter can bestow on him, but he hasn't considered where the power comes from, what it means to have it, or what he'll do with it if he gets it. What would you do with such power as this? The power to give people the Holy Spirit, the power to heal, but also the power to make a name for yourself, to get fame and glory.

All We Can tries to heed this in its approach to international development. It would be so easy to go to a struggling community in a low-income country, and impose an initiative or some equipment on that community which helps with their material situation in some way. But that does nothing to empower that community, and it does everything to reiterate their dependence on Western help.

In the Luke passage, we hear of the synagogue leader using the situation as an excuse to

reassert his own power, rather than to celebrate the woman regaining her autonomy and freedom. Instead of glorifying in the fact the woman is healed, he sees an opportunity to condemn Jesus, and exert his own power, by showing the people Jesus has done the wrong thing, and he himself knows scripture and the law better. He has no concern for the woman or the fact she has been healed from all her suffering.

The purpose of international development, and indeed the church's work with all marginalised people, needs to be to reduce power imbalances between countries and communities, not uphold them. The way All We Can tries to do this is to be totally led by the local partners they work with. All We Can did not tell Zubo to make baskets, it supported them in their vision of tackling poverty. Coming alongside them, not standing over them. Helping communities use the power and autonomy they already have.

This is not just about organisations, it is also about us. Simon wanted to be the hero in other people's stories – he wanted to be the one who was bestowing the Spirit on people, he wanted credit for the transformation of others. This can be a temptation in our charitable giving – to think that we are the heroes in other people's stories. When we give, whether its monetary gifts, time or the gifts we have from God such as musical gifts, singing, or cooking or making banners or helping others – whatever we give we can't do it in order to gain praise, or to be noticed, or to get power. It should only be done for the glory of God and to help, not for self-promotion.

If we were to archetype the synagogue leader perhaps he would be like the person who insists he knows best about what people in poverty need, or worse dismisses the problem entirely. Simon would be like the person who is smug about their giving and thinks they are the hero in the story.

When it comes to global poverty, and how we tackle injustice in our communities, these stories invite us to find a middle ground – neither indifference nor overbearance, neither insisting something should be done our way nor that it should not be done at all, neither reluctance nor arrogance. The middle ground is partnership –

taking the next steps hand in hand alongside a community.

This is a journey All We Can has been on with the women of Binga, and it's one we are invited to join in with.

All We Can has a website, where you can donate, or better yet, sign up for regular giving. Please do to [allwecan.org.uk](http://allwecan.org.uk), to find further information. Taken and adapted from All We Can, Harvest 2022.

### **Hymn – StF 489 - All I Once Held Dear**

All I once held dear, built my life upon  
All this world reveres, and wars to own  
All I once thought gain I have counted loss  
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,  
There is no greater thing  
You're my all, you're the best  
You're my joy, my righteousness  
And I love you, Lord

Now my heart's desire is to know you more  
To be found in you and known as yours  
To possess by faith what I could not earn  
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,  
There is no greater thing  
You're my all, you're the best  
You're my joy, my righteousness  
And I love you, Lord

Oh, to know the power of your risen life  
And to know You in Your sufferings  
To become like you in your death, my Lord  
So with you to live and never die

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,  
There is no greater thing  
You're my all, you're the best  
You're my joy, my righteousness  
And I love you, Lord.

*Graham Kendrick*

### **Prayers of intercession**

Pray for the war in Ukraine, for the people of both Ukraine and Russia, that they will seek peace. For the leaders to have compassion, and consider only the best for their people.

Pray for those worried and struggling due to the cost of living situation, for those worried about their jobs, or how they will provide for their children.

Pray for the charity and aid workers, and those giving their time to be of help to others.

Pray for the new government, that they will act with wisdom and compassion.

Continue to pray for everyone affected by the floods in Pakistan.

Pray for the Royal Family, as they continue to mourn the loss of the Queen, their Mum, grandmother, great grandmother.

And we pray for our own families and friends, those grieving the loss of loved ones, those who are ill or lonely. We pray for those who need God the most, and those who think they need God the least.

### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. 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?

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 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 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?

We will walk the path that will cost us much  
and embrace God's love and sorrow?

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

### **Blessing**

Go in peace, as we take the next steps hand in  
hand with each

other, our communities, and our global  
neighbours this Harvest.

Amen.