

Trinity United Reformed Church Wimbledon

Sunday 9 May 2021

Order of Service for 'Worship from Home'



Led by the Revd David Skitt

(Retired Minister of the United Reformed Church)

Theme: Go and Bear Fruit – Whatever!

Gathering in God's presence

Call to worship

"If the Lord guides us, He will satisfy our needs and the needs of others in parched lands." (Based on Isaiah 58:11)

Hymn 77 - Sing to the Lord a joyful song

Sing to the Lord a joyful song,
lift up your hearts, your voices raise;
to us his gracious gifts belong,
to Him our songs of love and praise.

For life and love, for rest and food,
for daily help and nightly care,
sing to the Lord, for he is good,
and praise his Name, for it is fair.

For strength to those who on him wait,
his truth to prove, his will to do,
praise ye our God, for he is great,
trust in his Name, for it is true.

For joys untold, that from above
cheer those who love his sweet employ,
sing to our God, for he is love,
exalt his Name, for it is joy.

Sing to the Lord of heaven and earth,
whom angels serve and saints adore,
the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
to whom be praise forevermore.

John S. B. Monsell (1811–1875)

Prayer of approach and confession

The Lord's Prayer

Use either of these forms, or a different version/language if you prefer:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be
done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive
those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

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,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Listening to God's Word

Introduction to the theme

Bible reading: Psalm 98

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things.
His right hand and his holy arm have gained him victory.
The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in
the sight of the nations.
He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of
Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.
Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song
and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of
melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the
King, the Lord.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.
Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy at the
presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Hymn 576 - God's Spirit is deep in my heart

God's Spirit is deep in my heart,
he has called me and set me apart;
and this is what I have to do -
what I have to do.

*He sent me to give the good news to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
tell blind people that they can see,
and set the down-trodden free
and go tell everyone
the news that the Kingdom of God has come,
and go tell everyone
the news that the Kingdom of God has come.*

And just as the Father sent me,
so I'm sending you out to be
my witness throughout the world -
the whole of the world:

Don't carry a load in your pack;
you don't need two shirts on your back;
a workman can earn his own keep -
can earn his own keep:

Don't worry what you have to say;
don't worry because on that day
God's spirit will speak in your heart -
will speak in your heart.

Alan Dale (1902-79)

Bible reading: John 15: 9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.
If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have
kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.
I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your
joy may be complete.
"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.

I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

Sermon

My grandson Oscar on his 8th birthday on VE Day 2020 initially ignored presents to hug family. Instinctively he realises that the context of the bounty is LOVE.

LOVE is one half of the context of this call of Jesus "to go and bear fruit" that He issues to his disciples and to us.

The other half is that He has APPOINTED us. The force of the word "appointed" here is that of being chosen for a job/task.

In Elizabeth Gaskell's "Cranford" an interviewee for the post of a domestic servant proudly announces that she can read and write – an accomplishment that disqualifies her in the eyes of a mistress who wants no over-qualified members of staff.

So the Lord sees us as we are, loves us for who we are and, based on what He sees and loves, sends us to show who and whose we are. Nothing disqualifies us nor over-qualifies us for His service. Whatever we have done and whatever we are experiencing, He loves and believes in us enough to ask us to bear fruit.

The context of John 15 is that the disciples are about to encounter the most harrowing of circumstances but still, like Jesus Himself whose they are, they are to produce the fruit of love, mercy and hope.

Whether we are 1st century disciples facing the final conflict of Christ's ministry or 21st century disciples facing a pandemic or its aftermath, the Lord wants us to know that we are loved and appointed. From this context, our text assures us that we have a future.

An elder interviewing me interjected when I was asked how I would build up the church: "It does not matter what you say. We've tried it all and none of it works".

Thankfully the Lord has more faith in us and in the future. So the main message to us wherever we are is that loved and appointed we have a future role – to go and bear fruit: to show who we are.

We have been assured of the Lord's love and call giving each one of us a future. Ours is to employ that assurance to help others have a future as well. Loved and appointed, we need to live the Christ-like life thereby giving hope to others in adversity.

Among those mentioned in the Christian Aid literature this year is Rose, who lives near the Itukisya dam in Kenya, where surviving and raising crops are incredibly difficult as the land oscillates between a state of being parched and a condition of flooding. It is to the likes of Rose and of nearer neighbours we need to demonstrate that as followers of Jesus, our very identity lies in sharing hope for the future.

In a non-fiction work a writer introduces us to Dan Davin. Who is he? Roman Catholic but lapsed. A Kiwi but left New Zealand long ago. A soldier but the war is over. The writer is suggesting that our identity is not just about where we are from or what we have been but also about who or what we will become. Let us show we are Christ's not just by evidencing our background or past but also, even if scarred, by what we do as we emerge from the pandemic and by how we confront Climate Change.

This came home to me when I listened to an interview with Grace Spence Green, paralysed by a freak event in October 2018, in the middle of her medical training, spoke of how, "This is me now. This is the path I am on. This is my reality", expressing no bitterness to the person who caused her disability and continuing her training, culminating in becoming a fully-qualified doctor and appointed to her first post last August.

Shirley Williams on a train with a colleague could not find her ticket for the guard. He assured her that none was required but still she turned out her bags. "Honestly, Shirley, you don't need it", said her colleague. "I do", she replied, "I need it to know where I am going!".

In these tumultuous days who knows where we are going as followers of Jesus, but one of the main things is to heed the call and demonstrate our identity for the future even if the way we reveal that we are Christ's has to adapt to ever-changing realities.

So for us as individuals and as a church Christ still says, "Go and Bear Fruit". In other words, "show me and show the world who we really are". It may have different features and hallmarks of identity, it may demonstrate kindness in different ways, care for the planet in different ways, and draw to the fore different qualities in our make-up but the love is still there, and the appointment is still there.

From a Tree in Blossom

Opposite our front door
A tree in blossom
Blooming not only with petals
But also with gloves
As passers-by drop and lose them
Only for those in their wake
To come, pick up and place on branches.

A blackbird perches
Staying comfortably there for some time.
He seems familiar with the tree
As though he belongs
As though he is safe at home
Here he loves and is loved
He was made surely to remain thus
In his own environment
Inhabiting some such
As raised and nurtured him.

But no !....
His gaze is outward from this arboreal place
To the world around
Surveying that for which he was in fact crafted and appointed....
To go and build
To raise and nurture future futures
Specifics unseen....
There is movement
He rocks from foot to foot
As, from a tree of blossom and gloves,
To bear fruit,
To become what he can become,
To be the best that he can be,
HE FLIES!!

Responding to God's grace

Commissioning of those delivering Christian Aid envelopes

Prayers of Intercession

This morning's theme is 'Go and Bear Fruit – Whatever!' The hymns, readings and David's sermon have all been about joy, love, service and looking forward. And in our intercessions, we look forward, not back, asking for God's help in an often uncertain future.

Please respond to each prayer with **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray

Let us pray for your Church – all Christians throughout the world.

Lord, help your Church respond to the love you have already shown us and what you call us to do in the future. Help us all to bear fruit in both words and deeds; in both what we say to others about our faith, and by what practical things we do for others. And help us know that what we do, even if it seems unimportant at the time, may bear more fruit than we will ever know.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Let us pray for ourselves here at Trinity.

Lord, help us learn from recent experiences: our ministerial vacancy, lack of human contacts, virtual meetings, worship and fellowship, and we thank you for all the work that has been done. Help us to see all these things as challenges, not threats. Help us look forward to serving you in ever-changing ways.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Let us pray for all who lead and serve in the fight against Covid.

Lord, we thank you for the incredible work done by NHS staff and others over this past year of Covid. Be with all those still working so hard in hospitals and vaccination centres – staff and volunteers alike.

And give us the imagination to get our heads around the devastating, overwhelming horror unfolding in India. May we pray in solidarity with those unknown to us that we might be tempted to ignore. May our prayer involve a willingness to stay in their darkness; to mourn with those who mourn.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Let us pray for the practical work of Christian Aid.

Help us to imagine what life is like for Rose in Kenya where alternating drought and flood make raising crops so difficult. May our giving, and her work, build the dam that provides irrigation – that gives her the security we take for granted, but which she had never known.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Let us pray for those who take selfless action for others.

Lord, we thank you for the two young men who dived into the Thames to save a woman from drowning – for Jimi Adewole who gave his life, not for a friend, but for someone he didn't even know – and for the woman who cried "why isn't anyone helping him?" before trying to save a schoolboy from the river. Help us always be aware of the immediate needs of others – no matter how large or small – and give practical help without stopping

to count the cost or assuming someone else will do it. And may our actions bear fruit.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

And, finally, we ask you to comfort and help all those who, in this passing life, are in any trouble, unhappiness, need, sickness or other dark place.

Lord, in your mercy, accept all our prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Offertory prayer

Hymn 274 – God is love, his the care

God is love, his the care
tending each, everywhere.
God is love - all is there!
Jesus came to show him,
that we all might know him:

*Sing aloud, loud, loud,
sing aloud, loud, loud,
God is good, God is truth,
God is beauty: praise him!*

Jesus came, lived and died
for our sake, crucified,
rose again, glorified:
he was born to save us
by the truth he gave us:

None can see God above;
Jesus shows how to love;
thus may we Godward move,
joined as sisters, brothers,
finding him in others:

To our Lord praise we sing -
light and life, friend and King
coming down love to bring,
pattern for our duty,
showing God in beauty:

Percy Dearmer (1867-1936)

Closing Prayer & Blessing