

Sunday 12th July 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use. 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.

Call to Worship

Rejoice! There is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

Hymn: [In Christ there is no east or west](#) (StF 685)

In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

In him shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close-binding humankind.

Join hands then all the human race,
whate'er your nation be;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christlike souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.

John Oxenham, pseud. (1852-1941)

Let us pray together

When the seeds of new life are sown, let us
praise the Lord.
When crops ripen in the field, let us exalt our
maker.
When the wind blows, or the snow falls, let us
draw close to God.

Lord, for all your gifts in creation, for the gift of
each other and the gift of the Church we offer our
thanks.

Most of all for the gift of Jesus who went about
among us as teacher and friend, who lived, died,
and rose again we offer our deepest gratitude and
amazement. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let us take a time of quiet to bring to mind the
ways in which we feel we have let God or ourselves
down during the last week...

Lord, when we are slow to listen, forgive us.
Lord, when we are hasty in our actions, forgive us.
Lord, for the things we have done, that we should
not have done, forgive us.

Lord, for the things we have not done, that we
should have done, forgive us.

Rejoice, for in Christ we know our sins are forgiven.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Today's Reading: - Acts 28:17-31

Reflection – Revd Mark Houston

The end of Acts has a strange feel to it. Throughout Luke's ongoing account of events to his dear friend Theophilus, he has described the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. He shared stories of the day of Pentecost, the martyrdom of Stephen and the encounter Saul had with Jesus on the Damascus Road. We read of persecution of the early followers and disagreements between the believers. Saul replaces the S with a P and he begins to travel around parts of the Roman Empire sharing the Good News Story that eventually reached our shores and helped introduce our ancestors to the wonderful story that has been shared throughout the generations until now.

But as I said, Luke's account has a strange feel. We have had all of the drama, as I have mentioned. On his final visit to Jerusalem the Jewish authorities bring charges against Paul, calling him a troublemaker. As a Roman citizen Paul is entitled to have his case heard in Rome so the final piece of adventure concerns his journey to the heart of the empire in Rome. But once he is there..... the story kind of fizzles out. For two years Paul lives under house arrest and meets with the Jewish leaders in Rome seeing as it was their counterparts in Jerusalem who insisted Paul was prosecuted. The Roman Jews had no beef with Paul so instead they all spoke about God. Paul made his case, they made theirs. Some agreed with Paul, others didn't. Apart from the house arrest thing it all seems a fairly normal life in which you get on with some people and not with others. Some believe the Good News

message and others don't. Isaiah had stated, 800 years earlier that there would be division between those who believed and the rest. Paul reminds the leaders of this in verses 25-27.

Paul's years in Rome seem ordinary. There is no big ending to the story because the story has continued ever since. There are exceptions but, largely, the events of most Christian believers over the last 2000 years have been found in the mundane, ordinary living of life. We get into situations that lead us to invite our friends to church or Alpha course or a Summer Messy T Break Church event. Some people will come, others won't. Some may become believers of Jesus and others will continue to think we are bonkers. Isaiah prophesied this and neither Jesus, Paul nor anyone else achieved a 100% record in winning souls. Luke does finish his writing by stating Paul boldly proclaimed and taught people about Jesus.

Take courage my friends. Even in the ordinary, we are charged with proclaiming Jesus Christ. This takes many forms. Some of us are more comfortable talking to others about Jesus and some of us would prefer to invite our neighbour to an event. We won't get a 100% score, but we are keeping the story alive.

Take a time to sit quietly

Prayer

Let us pray for our world; for the worldwide effort to create a vaccine for Covid-19. For all the peoples of the world and for cooperation as we continue to live with this virus.

As we pray for our world, we pray especially for those in government and industry whose decisions effect the lives of so many. And we pray for wisdom for those in power.

We pray for our own land. For the NHS and for all those involved in social care and all keyworkers, giving thanks for the work they do for us. We pray for local communities as we continue to move towards what has been called the new normal.

We pray for the whole Church throughout the world, especially churches in countries with unsympathetic regimes. We pray for the Methodist Church, both at the local level and also the Connexional Team.

We take a time of quiet to remember those who have died, especially those who have been important to us on our own journeys of life and faith.

We make all our prayers in Jesus' name. Amen.

We say together - **The Lord's Prayer**

Hymn: [The Church of Christ in every age](#) (StF 415)

The Church of Christ, in every age
beset by change but Spirit-led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead.

Across the world, across the street,
the victims of injustice cry
for shelter and for bread to eat,
and never live until they die.

Then let the servant Church arise,
a caring Church that longs to be
a partner in Christ's sacrifice,
and clothed in Christ's humanity.

For he alone, whose blood was shed,
can cure the fever in our blood,
and teach us how to share our bread
and feed the starving multitude.

We have no mission but to serve
in full obedience to our Lord:
to care for all, without reserve,
and spread his liberating Word.

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

A prayer of blessing

Dear Lord.
When times are hard, walk beside us.
When we are unsure of which way to turn, dwell within us.
When we need to listen to others, encourage us.
When our lives and work bear fruit, rejoice with us.
So may the blessing of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with us all today and forever more.
Amen

Adapted from original Materials by Rev E Adam Wells