

*This short act of worship has been produced for you
by the Revd Tim Swindell.*

*If you are well enough and able,
why not spend a few moments with God
knowing that others are sharing this act of worship with you.*

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect the world, it is planned that this service will also be shared by Tim and people in Grange Park Methodist Church on Sunday morning, and you are asked to keep the community there, and at other churches beginning to cautiously open their doors across the Enfield Circuit, in your thoughts and prayers.

Call to Worship:

Lord, we are always in your presence,
but we don't always recognise it.
And so, as we come to worship, we take a quiet moment to fully acknowledge your presence with us.
Your existence in our homes, in our churches and in our streets.
Your spirit in our hearts, in our relationships and in our lives.
Help us to truly recognise your reality –
the presence of the Living God.
Still our hearts now,
so that we may truly appreciate who you are.

As we hear words spoken today, or as we read them from the page, may we understand the purpose you have for us and the meaning that you give to us.

Amen.

Hymn: To God be the Glory (Singing the Faith 94)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
www.youtube.com/

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-15v9iworAU>

To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Let the earth hear his voice!

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Let the people rejoice!

O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;

and give him the glory – great things he has done!

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God!
And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory – great things he has done!*

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory – great things he has done!*

Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1820-1915)

Prayer of Confession:

Let us pray together.
**Lord, thank you that you are always ready to forgive me
when I trust you enough to confess my sins to you,
even when I feel I don't deserve it.
Be merciful to me, O God.**

**Forgive me for the times when
just because someone else's story is different from mine
I don't always want to take the time to understand it.
Be merciful to me, O God.**

**Forgive me for the times I only live my story, my life,
not seeing the bigger picture.
Be merciful to me, O God.**

**Forgive me for the times
I see you as less than the Sovereign God,
and my whole outlook on life
needs a more of your love and understanding.
Be merciful to me, O God.**

Let's spend a moment in quiet, reflecting on our lives.

We hear the words of grace

**Our sins are forgiven
Thanks be to God
Amen.**

Today's readings:

Matthew 16: 13-20 New International Version – UK

Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'
¹⁴ They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'
¹⁵ 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'
¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'
¹⁷ Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Romans 12: 1-8 The Message

Place Your Life Before God

¹⁻² So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.

Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

³ I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

⁴⁻⁶ In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvellously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

⁶⁻⁸ If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful

that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

Reflection

Normality, ordinariness. Who would have thought a few months ago that we would all be hoping and praying for the return of normality, for ordinary worship!

For some of you, you will be hearing what I have to say through a recording, played through the miracles of the internet. Some will be reading these words from a page delivered by post, or by a friend. For a few others (at least I expect only a few) you are sitting in a pew in a church (Grange Park). Who would have thought, back in January this year that the online and written text would be the 'ordinary' way and those in church the 'exceptional few'! And yet – here we are.

But I wanted, somehow, to deliver the same, or at least a very similar message to all three sets of people. Why? Because we are all listening to the same God, we are all experiencing similar challenges in our lives, we are all wanting to worship – and that doesn't make any difference whether we are gathered together in church or around our computers or indeed reading this in a liturgy pushed

through our letterbox.

Sometimes it feels as if what we are doing at the moment is not 'proper' worship. It can feel as if it's not 'right'. It can feel second, if not third, best. However, our reading from Paul's Letter to the people of Rome makes it clear that all we are doing through the current times is pleasing to God. It's pleasing to God because what he wants is for us to offer our everyday lives – our lives, every day – to him. That's whatever we are doing right now, however unusual.

Maybe the culture we have been fitting in with, and are comfortable with, is just as much about our culture in the church community as it is the culture of the wider world. This extra-ordinary time has given us not an opportunity, but rather a requirement, to rethink even our basic practices. How do we 'do church' in a way that might encourage us to grow as people of God, and to attract new people in?

Turning to the reading from Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is perhaps here, in his discussion with Peter, identifying that the most important thing we can do in our lives is simply to recognise Jesus as 'the Messiah', the anointed one, the Christ. Recognise Jesus as the 'Son of the living God', the one who is our saviour, the one who can change us and give our lives real meaning. The reading is sometimes interpreted to mean that Peter is the one who will form the foundation of the building of a church, but I don't think Jesus was just referring to Peter, but rather to his

declaration about the nature of Jesus. The rock, the foundational thought, upon which the church is established is the understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, not the personality of the individual disciple Peter.

So, in these 'extraordinary' times, how do we bring these reflections together?

Regardless of the times, our declaration that Jesus is our Messiah, the one anointed to rescue us, is the foundation of our faith in God. If that declaration remains at the heart of what we do, then our worship, however we conduct it is 'normal' and 'ordinary'. But 'normal' and 'ordinary' doesn't necessarily mean dull and uninteresting. We are called by God to offer all we have, as parts of his body. Equally, Christ's body would be diminished by the loss of any one of the parts that we as individuals bring. This is the case whether we are restricted to our homes or gathered together. Perhaps these times have enabled us to develop new talents, or to exercise 'muscles' that haven't previously been obvious. Perhaps we have discovered that we can adapt. Hands that previously were used to cook, to drive a car, or to clean, have maybe been used to carry shopping for others, to garden, or to pray for others. I have personally loved learning and perfecting the art of making sourdough bread and have confirmed that I am definitely NOT a gardener, whilst still producing a decent crop of strawberries. The slugs have really relished my beans, but I

don't classify that as a success! These things, these ordinary, normal, parts of our sleeping, eating, going-to-work and walking-around everyday lives are part of our worship of the God who rescues us and who created us to do these ordinary, normal things. Ordinary and normal, and yet extraordinary and remarkable. Part of God's creation and his plan of evolution. Millions of years in the organic development and individually, for each of us, decades in the practicing.

As we gradually return to something resembling the 'old' ordinary, and the 'new' normal, let's retain, or even continue to develop, that sense that God is in all things, and we recognise that by acknowledging Jesus as our Messiah. Through Jesus our new experiences gained over the last few months will not be lost, but will enhance our knowledge of God, and our fellow human beings. God is in the quiet and in the birdsong newly heard, but also in the noise and in the confusion, in the activity and in the mistakes. Let us continue to fix our attention on God, from wherever we are, at home or in a church building, in the kitchen and in the street. Let each of us be open to Jesus changing us from the inside out, responding to what he wants us to be – his pilgrim people. Amen.

A time of prayer

Let us remember the Methodist Church throughout our own Circuit in Enfield, but also throughout the United Kingdom and in the wider world. Let us hold in our prayers the many communities of faith that are working and sometimes struggling to find an appropriate way forward during the continuing pandemic.

Let us pray:

Response:

We trust you, Lord, to provide comfort and reassurance.

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Your will be done, O Lord.

We pray for your church and its people:

those who feel separated from those they love;

those who struggle with loneliness;

those for whom physical difficulties restrict access;

those for whom technology is confusing;

and those for whom access to basic services has been limited.

We trust you, Lord, to provide comfort and reassurance.

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Your will be done, O Lord.

We pray for people who battle with their faith:

through self-doubt,

through difficult circumstances,

through unpleasant things happening,

through being led astray,

by physical possessions and the desire for power over others.

We trust you, Lord, to provide comfort and reassurance.

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Your will be done, O Lord.

We pray for people who feel in the dark,

locked in a situation where they can find no answer,

that they might come to understand

that you are the key to everything they need.

We trust you, Lord, to provide comfort and reassurance.

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Your will be done, O Lord.

We pray for ourselves:

when we are in difficult situations,

when we try to unlock doors that aren't ours to unlock,

when we don't focus on the kingdom,

when we don't share our story.

We trust you, Lord, to provide comfort and reassurance.

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Your will be done, O Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

**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.**

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.**

Amen.

Hymn: One more step along the world I go (STF 476)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

www.youtube.com/

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6czcGvXQcM>

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go;
from the old things to the new

Keep me travelling along with you:

*and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.*

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn;
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me
*and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.*

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know
*and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.*

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you
*and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.*

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you
*and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.*

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

A sending out prayer

Jesus told his disciples not to tell anyone he was the Messiah, but now the world needs to hear your story. As we tentatively step into a new and sometimes strange world, help us to do that with a sense of joy, wanting to share the good news, but also with a continuing sense of uncertainty. We do not know what the future holds for us, or for our communities, but go with us Lord, encourage us and strengthen us in the coming week, and above all, give us hope, that we might encourage others through the hope that is within us.

A prayer of blessing:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, and those that we love, now and for evermore. Amen.

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