

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

**Lighting the Candle** – We light a candle to remind us of the presence of Christ with us. Jesus Christ light of the world. In you there is no darkness. We have a responsibility to speak and shine light in darkness.

**Call to worship:**

O God our creator,  
Your kindness has brought us the gift of a new morning and a brand-new day. Help us to leave yesterday  
And not to covet tomorrow  
But to accept the uniqueness of today.  
May we be open to your word and to your way.  
Remind us loving God that we are to bring Good news, that we are your servants, heralds of peace, justice, and healing even in a Pandemic. Amen.

(Liturgy adapted from “A wee Worship Book” -1999 WGRG, Iona Community)

**Hymn: STF 706- Longing for light we wait in darkness**

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

[https://youtu.be/\\_8FUPItZ5Xs](https://youtu.be/_8FUPItZ5Xs)

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ be our light! Shine in your church gathered today*

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering us,  
walls made of living stone.

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ be our light! Shine in your church gathered today*

Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your Kingdom come.

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.*  
Bernadette Farrell (b 1957)

### **Prayer of Adoration**

Almighty God  
Strong and powerful, unique, and invincible,  
We live to honour you.  
You are the King of glory,  
you are the one who made heaven and the earth and  
everything in it.

You are our consolation and our saviour. You are our strength  
and our song. Before you, in you and through you, we open  
our hearts and minds.

We are ready to receive the seeds of care and love, to go out  
to sow compassion and healing to our sick and war-weary  
world.

You are so welcome here with us today, our special King of  
glory. **Amen.**

(Light and Hope prayer handbook for Methodists in Britain and Ireland  
Methodist Publishing -2013)

### **Prayer of Confession**

Our prayers of confession today will be private and personal.  
Calling to mind those times when we have sinned in thought  
and word and action.

Let us confess our sins...

### **Absolution**

God, who is faithful and just,  
Assures us of pardon and peace.

**Amen. Thanks be to God**

(The Methodist Worship Book p. 31)

**A reading from the Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11**  
**New Revised Standard Version**

5 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! <sup>4</sup> But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; <sup>5</sup> for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then let us not fall asleep as others do but let us keep awake and be sober; <sup>7</sup> for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

**A reading from the New Testament: Matthew 25:14-30**  
**New Revised Standard version**  
**The Parable of the Talents**

<sup>14</sup> “For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; <sup>15</sup> to one he gave five talents to another two, to another one, to each according

to his ability. Then he went away. <sup>16</sup> The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. <sup>17</sup> In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. <sup>18</sup> But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup> After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ <sup>21</sup> His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>22</sup> And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ <sup>23</sup> His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>24</sup> Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; <sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup> But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? <sup>27</sup> Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return, I would have received what was my

own with interest. <sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup> As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

### Reflection

We are in a season where autumn and winter kind of converge, when the light in the air is different and our bodies are acclimatizing to a different rhythm. It is in these moments that I want to invite you this morning (or whatever time of day or night you are reading this), to enter into something of the boldness of our spirituality. And that word spirituality has become even more powerful in these strange times that we are living in. Statistics show that in this Pandemic, people are praying more, the church is reaching out to millions more people now online than it ever did when we could meet physically to worship. Your spirituality and mine are being lived out in the grittiness of life, but also in the beauty of who we each are. God is attendant in our Isolation and exile from our church buildings and very present in our zoom and postal and online services. He does not have to maintain the social distancing orders or the Lockdown rules.

And so, our Bible readings assigned for today are a great gift to us in these times that we find ourselves in. They call us to accountability and the importance of preparation. These

words, accountability and preparation penetrated sharply in my state of mind as I was preparing for this service today. so, I had to go back to a technique that I learnt from my spiritual Director. Ah yes! that is another one of my disciplines as a member of a religious Order, following a rule of life. If you listened to our superintendent's podcast a couple of weeks ago, you would have heard me talk about belonging to a Religious Order and following a Rule of life and what that means in terms of my prayer life. Well another aspect of having a rule of life, is to have a spiritual Director who I meet with regularly and who helps me on my spiritual journey with God. So, one of the many things I learnt from my spiritual Director is the practice of something called the Lectio Divina, where we would read a passage of scripture several times and then we close our eyes and meditate on the passage and visualize ourselves in the story. In this way, we find in scripture who we are, what we might become and how our lives are shaped and transformed. It was a new learning for me and one that has helped me to grow in my discipleship and in my ministry.

So, I had to adopt this technique in studying our Bible passages for today which I would say are rather tough readings because of the apocalyptic implications.

To the Christians in Thessaloniki (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11), the Apostle Paul says that the date of the second coming of Christ cannot be penned down in a diary. We cannot 'save the date' as we often encourage people to do when there is an

important function coming up simply because, the day of the second coming of the Messiah will come unexpectedly “like a thief in the night” So, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to be alert and awake - their lives should reflect the truth that they are children of light and they should always be ready to meet Jesus when he returns, whenever that happens. The imagery of the “thief in the night” in verse two is not to scare or intimidate but rather to encourage this notion of preparation as things will happen when we least expect it to happen so we always have to be prepared.

In the Gospel passage, Jesus offers us a rich image about what it might mean to live as children of God, which is both joyful and disturbing at the same time. Again, there are echoes of the apocalyptic teaching of being alert and awake and continually preparing for the second coming of the messiah.

It is helpful to remember the context into which Matthew is writing this parable. The parable stands in the middle of three parables of the kingdom that make up Matthew 25. It comes immediately after the parable of the ten virgins where the message is also about staying vigilant and being ready for the return of the son of man. So, Matthew helps us further to chew on this theme today. Next is the parable of the sheep and the goats - yet another accountability story of both turbulence and gladness. Matthew is writing for a very young Jewish Christian community who are facing great uncertainty and danger. The Jewish leaders had kept the people in bondage either with paying taxes or in keeping the law. Jesus

has been challenging the crowds to make choices and to remain alert to the signs of the kingdom of God. At this time, Jerusalem had fallen, and the Temple has been destroyed by the Roman occupiers. Jesus is moving toward a final encounter with the authorities in Jerusalem where he will be crucified so he is teaching his disciples the way of God’s kingdom and for them to stand firm and be ready for the long-awaited return of the Messiah.

In the parable of the Talents, the king goes away and entrusts responsibilities of the Kingdom in the hands of his servants each according to their ability. To one he gave five talents to another he gave two talents and to the third, just one talent (a talent in Jesus day was a humongous amount of money -it was a pile of gold coins- one gold coin was worth thousands of dinaris, the money that was used in that time.) This is more wealth to tend than you and I can probably imagine. So even the servant who gets only one talent is given a lot.

When the king returns, he asks his servants to account for the money he entrusted to them. The servant who was given five talents and the one who was given two talents each did something with their talents and were able to double their investment. The third servant, however, chose not to do anything with his master’s money for fear of losing it and upsetting his master who he described as a ruthless and mercurial ruler. So, he instead went into his backyard and buried the money. And this is what brought his demise. He was

timid and afraid; so instead of finding ways to invest his master's money, he was more concerned that he might lose it. Maybe some of us are like that too. It might be the fear of giving a presentation at work or at school, fear of climbing a ladder, the fear of leaving a familiar place and to go and start a new life elsewhere, Fear that all your efforts are not appreciated or valued. We like to guard ourselves against disappointment and we are afraid of taking risks. But be assured that you are not alone and so I do get the third servant's anxiety and the reason for his action - fear is a common feeling that we all encounter on a daily basis. Covid - 19 does not make confronting our fears any easier. In fact, this year 2020 has been full of fear. The temptation might be to just throw in the towel and pull the blankets over our heads or to go to our backyard and bury all the vision and the plans that we had before March 2020. But could we really afford to do that?

The danger of such a mentality however is that it becomes risk avoiding and God does not want us to be like that. God wants us to be risk takers trusting that he will do the rest. And the key thing here is Trusting in God alone.

The king of course was not happy with the attitude of the third servant and so whilst he gives accreditation to the first two - well done thou good and faithful servant, to the third, he cast judgment and the fearful servant is to experience a place of darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth. And of course,

this comes as a shock to us that the third servant was punished so severely.

So, what can we take away from this parable today: As we know, Jesus often uses parables to convey a strong message, using ordinary, tangible, everyday things that we can relate to. Jesus was speaking about the truth of God's Kingdom, nothing to do with gold coins or money or possession but rather Jesus was talking more about accountability and being faithful in our discipleship. It is about working for God and serving faithfully and bearing fruit in the lives of God's people. There is no place for complacency. We are each accountable for all that has been entrusted in our care. And I am not saying this to make anyone feel guilty but rather to give you courage to press on in the face of difficulties.

The parable makes it clear that God will provide the resources. The God who calls us also equips and sustains us. So, it is important that we make good use of the resources that God provides. God wants us to grow his kingdom and not to shy away from it.

God has called us from our different situations and your spirituality and mine are being lived out in our accountability to one another and to God. God gives us different gifts and graces that he wants us to use to proclaim the gospel. You might say that it is easy for me to live out my calling as an ordained minister and that I have been trained for this sort of thing. Yes, wearing a dog collar or any form of priestly or ministerial attire are outward signs that come with the title but

I want to assure you that we are all called to serve in various capacity as is highlighted in the passage that the king gave each of those three servants according to their ability. It is something like what the apostle Paul says to the Christians in Ephesus.

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-14)*

Proclaiming the gospel does not only happen in a church building. It can happen anywhere. And as this Pandemic is showing us, proclaiming the gospel, happens from the comforts of our bedrooms, in our kitchens, in our living or dining rooms. It happens in the food banks, in the supermarket, in the gym, even in the pub. We might not be casting out demons or performing miracles but each of us has the ability to engage in the life of the church in meaningful ways: Feeding someone who is hungry for example is a way to heal both the body and the spirit. Offering words of comfort to someone who is distressed is a life-giving experience. We will encounter people in need and who are in far worst situations than we could ever imagine and giving support can be a game changer. In the love expressed in being present to someone either remotely or physically, such a gesture does something very important. We need to take time to listen to people’s

stories and see the world around us with the eyes of God. It is part of our discipleship. Maybe you want to help but you are feeling scared. It could be that you are scared to take action, scared to speak up, scared to sign a petition, scared to volunteer in whatever setting. I want to encourage you my dear brothers and sisters, that as scary as it could be, Jesus will not send you out unprepared or unsupported. Know that the church will support you, your fellow Christians will support you, people of other faiths and even those of no faith at all will be there for you. We are called to go out and proclaim the good news. We are being fed by the word through teachings, preaching and Bible studies via different channels.

And so, I invite you this week to pay attention to the ways in which you can be accountable. It is not fair to keep our gifts and graces to ourselves or to bury them in our front or back gardens. Jesus is calling us to use our gifts to spread the good news of the gospel and to grow the Kingdom of God. We need to be waiting for God to shape us into what it is that he is calling us to be and to do. He is calling us to be accountable, to use our gifts so that we can enrich the lives of our brothers and sisters in our neighbourhoods, in our communities, in our country and in the world at large.

St Teresa of Avila, the 15<sup>th</sup> century saint wrote a beautiful prayer that has been used for centuries titled, “Let nothing disturb you” This seems an excellent prayer for this time of Pandemic when we are surrounded by fear of all sorts: fear of the Coronavirus, fear of economic collapse, fear of recession,

fear of the future. It encourages us to trust God who alone suffices. I want to invite you to say this prayer from your home or from wherever you are to somebody else that God places in your heart.

### Let Nothing Disturb You



Let nothing disturb you,  
let nothing frighten you,  
all things will pass away.  
God never changes;  
patience obtains all things,  
whoever has God lacks nothing.  
God alone suffices. Amen.

*(Prayer by Teresa of Avila)*

### Our prayers of Intercessions.

God our Father,  
We pray for your Church and all the consequences that this Pandemic will bring.  
For those whose faith has been greatly tested.  
We remember our various callings and areas of service.  
We call to mind the Micah mandate in Micah 6: 8- What does the lord require of us.....To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

Lord in your mercy

### Hear our prayer

We pray for the peoples of the world,  
for the leaders of the nations,  
for those who seek guidance and feel unsure and anxious of the way ahead.

That they will know themselves upheld in our prayers and strengthened by God.  
we bring before you those elements in our lives that need your transforming power.

Lord in your mercy

### Hear our prayer

We pray for our country.  
For those who have authority and influence.  
For our Prime minister Boris Johnson and members of his cabinet,  
For all the scientists and care givers,  
For all in Education that all may serve one another in wisdom, honesty, and compassion.

Lord in your mercy

### Hear our prayer

We pray for those among whom we live and work  
For our loved ones,  
For all our neighbours,  
For all the beneficiaries of our outreach projects across the circuit.

We pray for the food hub at Edmonton  
The Space project on the Elsinge estate,  
The new food hub initiative at Ponders End.  
Lord accompany us as we continue to discern what you are calling us to be and to do in other areas of this circuit.  
We pray that we may use our gifts and graces for the expansion of your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for those stretched to the limit in providing care and support.  
For those for whom lockdown restrictions heighten their condition of abuse.  
For those who cannot hear God's voice,  
For all who cry to God and feel that God is silent.  
Be with them dear Lord Jesus and may they know your words speaking in their hearts. Words of healing, words of peace, words of love.

Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for all in sorrow, need, anxiety or sickness.  
Those on our prayer lists,  
Those in the quiet of our hearts.  
Those that we do not know.  
We pray for your everlasting arms of compassion and love to hold them at this time  
That in their weakness, they may know your strength  
And in despair find hope.

Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

We pray for all the souls of the departed.  
Grant them eternal rest O Lord,  
And light perpetual shine upon them

Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

Holy Spirit of God, with gentleness and compassion, show us the invitations of our God for our lives.  
For those areas that need a deepening of trust and understanding.

Help us to seek God's grace and to find forgiveness and healing for our own lives. We pray all these prayers in Jesus Christ's name.

(Seasons and Celebrations adapted - Prayers for Christian worship- Donald Hilton) (The Methodist Worship book)

### **The 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, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **Hymn: STF 564 O thou who camest from above**

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

[https://youtu.be/KFYIq53\\_ZcE](https://youtu.be/KFYIq53_ZcE)

O thou who camest from above  
the pure celestial fire to impart,  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
on the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn  
with inextinguishable blaze,  
and trembling to its source return,  
in humble prayer and fervent praise.  
Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
to work and speak and think for thee;  
still let me guard the holy fire,  
and still stir up the gift in me.

Ready for all thy perfect will,  
my acts of faith and love repeat,  
till death thy endless mercies seal,  
and make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

### **A Gaelic Blessing**

Deep peace of the running wave to you  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you  
Deep peace of the gentle night to you  
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.

Deep peace of Christ the light of the world to you.  
Deep peace of Christ to you. Amen. (John Rutter)