

This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Revd Kathleen Richardson to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

These services of worship on-line started as a temporary measure to help us to stay together as the community of Christ in Enfield; none of us thought then that they would stay in place for so long. I realise that I approach them differently now than if I were preparing a service for a congregation. The experience is more personal, even though I have no idea who is watching or listening or reading, alone or in a family group. For me it is more like one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. The lectionary readings for today make it even more personal as we hear how God communicates with us one by one.

### **Approach to Worship**

*We use words from Psalm 139 vv 1-6, 13-18 (appointed for today in the lectionary) as set in Singing the Faith 835*

O Lord, you have searched me out and known me;  
you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

**You mark out my journeys and my resting place and are acquainted with all my ways.**

For there is not a word on my tongue, but you, O Lord, know it altogether.

**You encompass me behind and before and lay your hand upon me.**

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, so high that I cannot attain it.

For you yourself created my inmost parts;

**you knit me together in my mother's womb.**

I thank you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

**marvellous are your works, my soul knows well.**

My frame was not hidden from you,

when I was made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.

**Your eyes beheld my frame, as yet unfinished;**

**already in your book were all my members written.**

As day by day they were fashioned

**when as yet there was none of them.**

How deep are your counsels to me, O God!

**How great is the sum of them.**

If I count them, they are more in number than the sand,

**And at the end, I am still in your presence.**

*When I was a little girl I used to go to stay with my grandma. The bedroom where I slept had a picture over the bed of a large open eye, with the words underneath, 'Thou, O my God, seeest me'. I was terrified of it – I used to get undressed in the dark, I didn't think it was right for God to see me without my clothes on!*

*While the psalm speaks of God's knowledge of me, I am profoundly grateful that the gospel speaks of God's abiding love for me and for all God's people. This is the thought picked up by Bernadette Farrell in her hymn based on this psalm. I am particularly drawn to her phrase 'with love everlasting you besiege me'.*

**Hymn O God, you search me and you know me**  
**Singing the Faith 728)** written by Bernadette Farrell and based on the psalm.

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEGc3\\_D19Vo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEGc3_D19Vo)

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 every 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 Farrell (b 1957)

### Prayer of adoration

Almighty God, we acknowledge your voice in all creation.

You spoke and the universe came into being;

you spoke and gave form and purpose to its life.

At your word men and women of old began in faith to discover your truth.

In Jesus, your Word became flesh, and your loving purpose was revealed in human life.

Through him you called together the first disciples and enabled them to receive your Holy Spirit, moulding them into your Church.

We believe that you speak still, calling even people like us to your service.

Open our minds and our hearts to what you are saying to us now, that we may more clearly understand your purpose and more truly serve you: through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Prayer of confession

Lord, we bring to you our prayers of confession.

Because you know us through and through,

you already know our failures, and our need of your forgiveness,

but we believe that by naming them we open ourselves to your healing,

and we are confident that you are willing and waiting to forgive,

and to lead us to a new beginning.

So, we confess to you the poverty of our discipleship, our arrogance which makes us unable to learn your way and your truth,

the complacency with which we view our feeble efforts,

We confess our lack of faith, and hope, and love.

We confess our failure to be fully open to your call, and to be whole-hearted in our response.

*(Silence)*

Lord, forgive us.

Call us again to your service; teach us, heal us, and send us to live as your disciples,

for your Name's sake. **Amen**

### Reading John 1:43-51

*(After the Baptism of Jesus, John in his gospel records that John the Baptist introduced Andrew to Jesus, then Andrew brought his brother Peter. Here, Jesus selects two other disciples.)*

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me".

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth”.

Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Philip said, “Come and see”.

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!”

Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?”

Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you”.

Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these”.

And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”.

### Reflection

As I was making another attempt to prepare this service, I went to make a cup of coffee. I needed to open a new container of milk. But try as I might, I couldn't open it. I fetched one of my most useful possessions, a sort of loop that I

can tighten round the top and a lever to turn it. It opened straight away.

I had been struggling with the reading from John's gospel – not because it has obscure texts or anything like that, but because it all sounds just too simple. Jesus found Philip and said, ‘follow’ and he did; Philip found Nathaniel and said, ‘come and see’ and after a bit of hesitation, he did; and they became disciples and went with Jesus. It just can't have been as easy as that – I want more details. Did they know each other before, growing up in the same parts of Galilee, young men looking for meaning; thinkers and seekers sitting under fig trees to meditate on God's purposes and to look for pointers to God in their sacred texts of the law and the prophets? Did they read about their ancestor Jacob who despite big flaws in his character was granted the privilege of seeing a ladder that linked earth and heaven, with two-way traffic on it, and did they wonder whether God still communicated in a real way with the created world? What other prejudices might they have had to overcome in following Jesus as well as the fact he came from Nazareth? And what did it take for them to realise that following Jesus was not just being in his company but recognising him as God incarnate?

Then I remembered what John said about the purpose of his gospel – ‘Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name’. And it was like that tool that allowed me access to my milk. John is writing quite a long time after the events he records, not for us to pick over inconsistencies or puzzle over how something could have happened, but to invite us to use these signs as an insight into how God communicates with us now, in our situations today, and invites us to follow.

Nathanael must have been so grateful that he had a friend who persisted in introducing him to Jesus. Though we don’t hear his name mentioned very much in the gospels, he was there when Jesus appeared to his disciples in Galilee after the resurrection. The really significant thing though, is not that the disciples followed, but that they, sometimes haltingly and imperfectly, began to see that the presence of God in Jesus did not disappear after his death, but continued to inspire followers who had never seen him in the flesh but could know him in the Spirit. People like us.

Do you recall how you first felt the door opening for your own faith? For me, although I had been a ‘chapel’ girl it was my

religious education teacher at secondary school who opened the scriptures for me. I wrote to her on the day of my ordination to thank her for starting me on the journey. Her response made me glad that I had done so.

As part of the worship this morning we will pause to recall with thankfulness the people who introduced us to Jesus or were influential in helping us to see ourselves as beloved children of God.

And importantly – to whom might we be the friend who says, ‘come and see’?

We come to worship today in our own homes, on our own or with family members. But we are in the company of the great congregation, of all times and places, who have seen and believed that God is in the world he has made, redeeming us from sin and death and opening the kingdom of heaven.

Thanks be to God.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Gracious God, we thank you for all disciples of yours who believed your word, answered your call and followed your ways. Today we give especial thanks for those whose lives and expression of faith enabled us to hear your word and gave us

the courage to respond to your call. We remember them now.....

We give you thanks that your everlasting love has besieged us, and we pray for your Spirit to be alive in our lives so that we too can be the carriers of your word of hope and love and everlasting life. Let your love at work in us turn our prayers into real concern and effective action so that we may create in other people the faith to overcome the darkness of fear, the pain of separation and the loss of hope, and turn to you to be healed.

We recall in your presence those to whom we want to say 'come and see how gracious the Lord is'.....

We pray for all involved in the ministry of healing in this time of great need. For all who work in the NHS, in support services, vaccination processes and food distribution often at risk to themselves and their well-being.

We hold in your great love all those who have died and those who grieve; those distressed by poverty and unemployment; those whose faith has been shaken in the face of such pain and loss, and those who have turned to you for comfort and help.

We pray for your church, the continuing witness to the life you promised in Christ, that in these days of testing our discipleship will remain strong, and our faith in your kingdom of love and hope will not be diminished.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

**Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is 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 for ever. Amen**

**Hymn Have you heard God's voice (Singing the Faith 662)**

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

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtzpZ\\_2n31Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtzpZ_2n31Y)

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 walk the path that will cost you much  
and embrace the pain and sorrow?*

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

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 the pain and sorrow?*

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

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?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much  
and embrace the pain 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?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much  
and embrace the pain and sorrow.*

*We will trust in One who entrusts to us  
the disciples of tomorrow.*

Jacqueline G. Jones

**Blessing**

God sends us into his world to accept the cost and discover the  
joy of discipleship.

God's grace and peace are with us. Let our hearts be full of  
hope. Amen.