

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Sandra Rose. 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.

Call to Worship

Dear friends,
we gather in the name
of the God of love,
we gather in the presence
of the God of love.

So let us worship the God of love.

Dear friends,
we gather as children of the God of love,
we gather as sisters and brothers.

So let us learn to love one another.

Hymn: Come let us sing of a wonderful love (Singing the Faith 443)

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCSx7ZZ3-2I>

Come let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
come and abide,
lifting my life, till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley (1831 – 1905)

Prayer of Adoration

Mighty God, transcending your world yet dwelling in it,
we worship you.

Caring Father, showing us in Jesus your face of love,
we worship you.

We have no words with which to praise your great and glorious
Name,
only silence.

Yet silence is not enough.

Lift us, hearts, minds and wills, into the joy of your divine
presence,
that seeing you as you are, we may worship you as we ought;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Prayer of confession

Loving Father, we confess how much we have failed you and
each other.

You have given us tasks to do –
but we have not done them.

You have taught us to love one another –
but our love has been cold.

You have bidden us hope –

but we have despaired.

You have shown us the humility of Christ –
but we have been proud.

You have given to those in need –
but we have ignored them.

You have called us to trust –
but we have not listened.

And yet we still have hope, and our hope is in Jesus.
By his incarnation and sharing of our lot,
forgive us our sins.

By his death on Calvary's Cross, which was for us,
forgive us our sins.

By his rising again and his pleading for us in heaven,
forgive us our sins.

Make us anew, in the image of the of the living Christ,
to your praise and glory. **Amen**

Assurance of forgiveness

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
He says to each and every one of us,
“Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven.”

Amen.

Reading: The Gospel of John 15: 1 – 8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Reflection

This is the fifth Sunday of Easter. In the Sundays after Easter the lectionary readings take us through accounts of resurrection experiences as we seek to grapple with this greatest of mysteries. Last week’s and this Sunday’s readings move us on to think about what that relationship with the Risen Christ looks like in practice for the believer now.

When I was a child we had fruit trees in our garden. We had three pear trees and an apple tree. My parents thought it would be good to try something different, so they bought a young plum tree and looked after it appropriately. Each year it produced masses of leaves. After a few years we thought it should start producing plums. Each year we waited expectantly. Each year no plums. My dad started to be annoyed. He threatened to get rid of it. Eventually came the highlight – one plum. The tree got the chop.

The main reason for purchasing the tree had not been fulfilled – it didn’t produce fruit – so it had to go. This is what the John passage is saying – we need to, we are expected to, produce fruit. In order to flourish vines, like fruit trees, need to be treated properly.

Jesus tells us that the way that we, as branches of the vine, can flourish is by ‘remaining’ in him. Older versions of the Bible translate use the word ‘abide’ whereas The Message says ‘live’. The point that they are making is that we need to make and maintain a close relationship with Jesus and with God.

This is not easy in today’s world. People judge us by what they see us do and we get caught up in a stressful state, almost boasting about how busy we are and how much we do and

how long it is since we've had a day off. The end result is that we become more and more stressed, the branch is further away from the vine and so produces plenty of foliage but not always a lot of fruit.

The most fruitful thing a person can do is remain close to the vine. The busier we get, the less time we have for prayer and the less fruitful we become. Time spent in prayer and worship and Biblical study is not wasted, but the most fruitful thing we can do. There is no point in being frantically busy doing the wrong things so we need to take time to get close to, to stay close to the vine, discover His will and then we will become more fruitful.

Perhaps it is good to take a lead from John Wesley. He started every day by praying for an hour – except when he knew that the day ahead was going to be very busy or very problematical – then he prayed for two hours!

Wesley was a very fruitful man. He rode 250,000 miles, gave away 30,000 pounds and preached more than 40,000 sermons. He formed societies, opened chapels, examined and commissioned preachers, administered aid charities, prescribed for the sick, superintended schools and orphanages and published his sermons. In the year in

which he turned 80, one of his societies decided to add coal to the food and clothing they already gave to the needy. They needed an extra 200 pounds to do this. In January, Wesley set out one day to secure this and by the end of the day had achieved his aim. He returned home with feet soaked with the water of melted snow and was very cold.

In order for vines to flourish, to produce much fruit they need to be pruned. I have a vine in my garden. If I want it to grow well I know that I have to cut it back, right back. So it is with us. God needs to prune out the unproductive aspects of our lives so that we can grow and be fruitful.

We know that a branch that is removed from the plant will wither and die. Our concern needs to be that we not only stay attached but to stay close to, to live in, Jesus. We can do that by spending time with him in prayer, study and worship.

Jesus repeatedly uses the word "abide" to describe that relationship of the vine to the branches. One of Jesus' key appeals in John's gospel is that the disciples "abide in me," which is also translatable as "Make your home with me" or "Stick with me." This sticking with, homing, or abiding union with Jesus' life results in the fruit bearing of outreach and discipling. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Jesus Christ, the true vine,
in our need
we come to You,
in weakness,
needing Your strength
for we too easily become dry and lifeless
without Your life-giving spirit.

Jesus Christ, the true vine,
teach us to remain in You
and so to find Your life flowing in us
giving strength and vigour to our discipleship.

And as we come closer to You
our lives are drawn closer to others.
Our minds turn to images of violence we have seen
on the news in places of fear and terror,
to where people are at loggerheads,
over race, religion, land, power.

Our thoughts turn to Christians
living with persecution
who face danger, simply for being linked to You.

Father, prune back all that stands in the way of peace.

Our thoughts turn to people
in leadership and power
– who have decisions to make over the economy
and people whose jobs and livelihood will be affected.
We pray for our nation, and its leaders.
May changes and choices be shaped by the values of the
kingdom.

On our hearts
are people in need in our church and community.
Wherever hearts are breaking ...
bodies are failing ...
minds are confused ...
families are ruptured ...
Lord, come with Your help and healing.

Here, too, as Your church gathered today,
we give thanks for the saints of the past
and the fruit they have borne in our community and beyond.
Like them, help us to remain in You
that we may be fruitful
and bring glory to Your name.
Through Jesus Christ, the true vine. **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.
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: May the mind of Christ my Saviour

(Singing the Faith 504)

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE5fOXSymBc>

May the mind of Christ my Saviour,
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do and say.

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father,
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self forgetting -
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859 – 1928)

Sending

Let us go into the world with a love that moves us into life, into justice, into grace, and to love others before they love us, for this is of God. **Amen.**