

This short act of worship has been produced for you by  
Revd Papa Owusu.

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 and  
pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome to our act of worship this morning

### Call to Worship

*based on Psalm 67*

God is of all time and all people.  
He will be gracious to us and bless us.  
His face will shine upon us.  
His saving power will be known among all nations.  
Come, to praise him and sing his song of grace.

**Amen.**

### Hymn: Father of everlasting grace (Singing the Faith 378)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAA\\_hTSCb5Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAA_hTSCb5Q)

Father of everlasting grace,  
your goodness and your truth we praise,  
your goodness and your truth we prove;  
you have, in honour of Thy Son,

the gift unspeakable sent down,  
the Spirit of life, and power and love.

Send us the Spirit of your Son,  
to make the depths of Godhead known,  
to make us share the life divine;  
send Him the sprinkled blood to apply,  
send Him our souls to sanctify,  
to bless and seal us with this sign.

So shall we pray, and never cease;  
so shall we thankfully confess  
your wisdom, truth, and power, and love;  
with joy unspeakable adore,  
and bless and praise you evermore,  
and serve you as your hosts above:

Till, added to that heavenly choir,  
we raise our songs of triumph higher,  
and praise you with a bolder voice,  
out-soar the first-born seraph's flight,  
and sing, with all our friends in light,  
with everlasting love rejoice.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

## Prayer

### Let us pray

Almighty God, we thank you for your word of truth, our new lives in Christ and the indwelling Spirit of God. We thank you that we are in Christ, and he is in us. We pray that we may abide in him and he in us so that the lives that we now live in these bodies and the choices that we make as we journey through life, may come from our new natures as prompted by the Holy Spirit - to your praise and glory.

We thank you for revealing the eternal God of love to humanity. Give us open ears to hear your word and willing hearts to love you more each day. Loving God, it is wonderful to know that we have the Holy Spirit of God living in our hearts, teaching us the truth of your word and guiding our steps. We thank you that our frail bodies have become temples in which you have come to reside forever. Open our understanding to the immeasurable riches of your grace towards us – knowing that at this very moment you are resident within us.

We thank you, O God, for your words of comfort. Help us to keep these precious words of Jesus at the forefront of our minds and enable our lives to be walking witnesses to all we meet.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that in Christ we have been brought back into fellowship with you and adopted into your family. We pray that we may live our lives to the glory of God and that we may carry out your will and purpose in our lives - not in our own strengths, but in utter dependence upon you, and in total submission to the Holy Spirit - so that the life of Christ may be lived through us - to your praise and glory, **AMEN.**

### First Bible Reading: Acts 16:9-15 (NRSVA)

<sup>9</sup> During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' <sup>10</sup> When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

### The Conversion of Lydia

<sup>11</sup> We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. <sup>13</sup> On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup> A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth.

The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup> When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us.

**Hymn: Come down, O love divine (Singing the Faith 372)**

*Read/Pray/Proclaim the words*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXO4rqBQOAU>

Come down, O Love divine!  
seek out this soul of mine,  
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

There let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
and let your glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity  
my outward vesture be,

and lowliness become my inner clothing;  
true lowliness of heart  
which takes the humbler part,  
and for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong  
with which the soul will long  
shall far surpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace  
till he become the place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco da Siena (d. 1434)  
translated by Richard Frederick Littledale (1833-1890)

**Gospel Reading: John 14:23-29 (NRSVA)**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

<sup>25</sup> 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I

have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

### Time to Reflect

#### Responding to a God-given moment...

***Have you ever experienced a God-given moment? Have you a had an unexpected encounter with God? Did you respond to it? How did you respond? As individuals, as a Church, are we open to God's initiatives? How might we encourage openness to God's initiative?***

In our readings today, we meet instances where Paul had an unexpected encounter with God through the Spirit...; where Jesus before his ascension, promises his disciples that: 'the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach [them] everything, and remind [them] of all that [He has] said to [them].' (John 14:26)

In our Acts reading we find Paul experiencing a God-given moment through a dream to go to Macedonia. This was an unexpected encounter with God.

In the earlier verses of Acts chapter 14, Paul and Silas had been forbidden to speak the word in Asia by the Holy Spirit. *'Their plan was to turn west into Asia province, but the Holy Spirit blocked that route. So, they went to Mysia and tried to go north to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them go there either. Proceeding on through Mysia, they went down to the seaport Troas,' (Acts 16:6-8, The Message).*

The dream he had, brought everything together for him...all the pieces had now come together for him. He thus became fully aware that God was calling him and Silas to preach the good news in Europe and specifically in Greece...

We sometimes come as individuals, a church community, or even as a nation to places of contradictory convictions...We sometimes think that what we are doing or may want to do is the right thing...but that is not working. The question here is: Is that what God is saying to us? Is that what God is asking us to do? Are we even listening to God or are we listening to ourselves? Are we thinking of what is only convenient to us or what God thinks it is convenient to us? Are we ready to respond to God's initiative, even when it takes us out of our way?

***There is surely something here to be learnt from the interplay between human intention and divine leading which is sometimes dramatic (v.9); and sometimes understated (v.13) – and the importance of being open to both.***

St Paul was ready to make a sudden and even impulsive change of plan. He responded to God's call to go to Macedonia... it was a new place for them, but one where the ground has already been prepared for their missionary work; and they were open and responsive to that divine initiative. The founding of the church in Philippi only happened because St Paul was so keen to disregard the Jewish custom by addressing a stranger-woman, and to accept an invitation that Lydia is prepared to be resolute about.

***Do we, in our anxiety to direct and control, forget that the Holy Spirit moves beyond the bounds of our churches? How important is it not to over-think our own actions, or pre-judge those of other people? How often do we truly let the Spirit take the lead?***

We live in a world of ambiguities and created contradictions, a world where peace is becoming an illusion...how do we hold a frightened community together? ...We have so many civil unrests, high-rate violence, and abuse... apathy and indifference... issues about Climate Change... the questions here

are: ***what is the remedy? What is God telling us? What is he calling to do? Is God calling us to a new mission or a vision? How do we Respond to a God-given moment...?***

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams warning of existential crisis in the world, in an article he wrote in 2017, said as per the role of the Church and I quote: ***'The job of Christian communities is to keep arguing, keep nudging. ...The church is obliged to be both a good and an awkward neighbour to the state. It earns its place in a plural state by asking certain unwelcome questions.'*** ***Are we responding to the God-given moments?***

We can only be effective and responsive in our role as Jesus said to the disciples before his ascension, by allowing the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in [Christ's] name, to teach [us] everything, and remind [us] of all that [Christ has] said to [us].

It is only by God through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit that we can respond to our God-given moment. The hymn writer Frances Ridley Havergal puts it aesthetically:

I could not do without thee,  
O Saviour of the lost,  
Whose precious blood redeemed me

At such tremendous cost;  
Thy righteousness, Thy pardon,  
Thy precious blood, must be  
My only hope and comfort,  
My glory and my plea.

I could not do without thee;  
I cannot stand alone,  
I have no strength or goodness,  
No wisdom of my own;  
But Thou, beloved Saviour,  
Art all in all to me,  
And weakness will be power  
If I lean hard on Thee.

I could not do without thee;  
No other friend can read  
The spirit's strange, deep longings,  
Interpreting its need;  
No human heart could enter  
Each dim recess of mine,  
And soothe, and hush, and calm it,  
O blessed Lord, but Thine.

I could not do without Thee,  
For years are fleeting fast,

And soon in solemn loneliness  
The river must be passed;  
But Thou wilt never leave me,  
And though the waves roll high,  
I know thou wilt be near me,  
And whisper, "It is I."

**A time of prayer (trusting that others pray with us)**

*(Prayer of intercessions – with a COP26/climate challenge theme from The Roots for Churches Ltd*

*(www.rootsontheweb.com) 2002-2021,*

<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2021/116-november-december-2021-b/proper-27/prayers>

God of all creation,  
you ask us to care and not to destroy;  
to share and not to abuse what you have given to us.  
You ask us to cherish the earth, not to abuse it  
and to use earth's resources fairly and not to waste them.  
Forgive our failures and renew our commitment.

God of all creation,

**May we use your gifts wisely and care for the earth.**

Generous God,  
you have placed us in community  
in our churches, families, schools and neighbourhoods  
where we learn that we are stronger together.  
You created people in your image,  
so amazing and capable of so much that is good,  
yet also capable of choosing the wrong thing.  
Give us ears to listen to one another,  
hearts to care for each other's pain,  
and hands ready to heal the hurts of our world.  
As world leaders meet to discuss climate change,  
may your Spirit of truth and justice lead the way  
to a more compassionate, a more equal and a simpler way of  
life.

God of all creation,  
**May we use your gifts wisely and care for the earth.**

Generous God,  
you give us all that we need for life.  
May we learn to live with the same generosity that you show  
to us,  
using resources for our need and not our greed,  
and offering what we can to improve the lives of people who  
struggle.

May we never be closed to the parts of the world that are  
troubled,  
or closed to the sufferings caused by our greed in the  
developed world.  
Give us and our world leaders generosity of spirit,  
so that we can walk in another person's shoes.  
May we begin to see that we share one home.  
and that our actions can improve or damage life chances for  
others.

God of all creation,  
**May we use your gifts wisely and care for the earth**

Generous God,  
you count the hairs on our head  
and care for the smallest of the creatures on earth.  
May we live as though our days belong to you,  
using the gifts of our time and our talents to serve our  
neighbour,  
and make a difference in the world.  
May we hear the cry of those in pain.  
We place into your hands people who are ill  
and we ask for your healing...

May we also pay attention to the cry of our earth for healing,  
and the fears of the peoples in areas most at risk including:

Lagos in Nigeria; Yemen; Haiti; United Arab Emirates; Manila in the Philippines; Kiribati; Japan; the Netherlands; India and Sri Lanka and so many more...

We hold the peoples of these areas in our hearts together with the hopes and dreams of children and young people.

God of all creation,  
**may we use your gifts wisely and care for the earth.**

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

Let us pray the prayer that the Lord Jesus taught his disciples and us.

**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: In Christ alone, my hope is found (Singing the Faith 351)**

*Read/Pray/Proclaim the words*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnXv2gAfPpE>

In Christ alone, my hope is found,  
he is my light, my strength, my song;  
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,  
fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
scorned by the ones He came to save:  
till on that cross as Jesus died,  
the wrath of God was satisfied  
for every sin on Him was laid;  
here in the death of Christ I live, I live.

There in the ground his body lay,  
light of the world by darkness slain:  
then bursting forth in glorious Day

up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory,  
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
for I am His and He is mine -  
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
this is the power of Christ in me;  
from life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
can ever pluck me from His hand;  
till He returns or calls me home,  
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

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### **Blessing**

Take the baton of hope with you and pass it on.  
Take the baton of faith and pass it on.  
Take the baton of peace and pass it on.  
Take the baton of openness to God's Holy Spirit and pass it on.  
In Jesus' name.

The blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you now and remain with you always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen**

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