

“Our Calling: Worship”
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Dear Friends,

Welcome to this Local Arrangement service resource. It is the first of a set of four such services focussing on the four themes of the Methodist 'Our Calling' priorities, reaffirmed at the 2018 Methodist Conference. The theme for this service is "Our Calling: Worship".

Please feel free to 'customize' your service to your own congregation... e.g. ... The hymns are only suggestions - if your congregation knows others that fit in with the theme, especially any newer ones, feel free to use those. You will also need to prepare for the prayers of intercession, to reflect current concerns. This is *your congregation's* service of worship to God, so make it as individual as you think appropriate!

I have suggested that you use 2 leaders and 4 readers, possibly plus others for the sketch (see page 2), but you can adjust this too. **The sketch is printed out on a separate last page for ease of printing - you could print this out in a bigger font if that would be helpful.**

More information about Our Calling can be found on the Methodist Church website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/>

and

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/responding-to-our-calling-questions-for-churches/>

Chris Odell (Sheasby)

“Our Calling: Worship”

Introduction to the theme of the service: Leader 1

Welcome to worship this morning. In Millennium Year, 2000, the Methodist Church produced the statement ‘Our Calling’ in which they listed the four main callings of the Christian. They are: Worship; Learning and Caring; Service; and Evangelism. It was reaffirmed at the 2018 Methodist Conference and we have been asked to look again at how, as a Church, we might best respond to ‘Our Calling’ today. This service is part of a set of services which looks at each calling in turn. We start today by looking at our calling to be a worshipping people. Let us prepare ourselves for worship as we sing....

HYMN: Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here....*StF 20; MP 50*

Call to Worship: Leader 1 (from Psalm 95)

Come, let us bow down and worship the Lord; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
He is our God; we are the people he cares for, the flock for which he provides.

HYMN: The God of Abraham praise....*StF 91; H&P 452; MP 645*

Prayer of Adoration: Leader 2

Before we offer God our prayer of adoration and praise, I want you to shut your eyes and remember the most awesome thing you have ever witnessed. Perhaps it was the mighty crashing of waves on the seashore in a winter storm – or a magnificent panorama spread out before you. Perhaps it was when you looked down from a great height, or when you were caught up in a situation when you felt your life was in danger.... Remember those feelings of awe, and perhaps fear and helplessness, as we pray....

God of mystery and power,
Your greatness is beyond our understanding;
Your glory blinds us
And we step back from the heat of your love.
God of mystery and power,
We worship and adore you.

God of past, present and future,
You come to us, the living God of every time, the great ‘AM’,
Calling us and challenging us
And giving us the strength to live new lives.
God of past, present and future,
We worship and adore you.

God of perfect love and goodness,
Your care for us astounds us,
Your coming as Jesus to share our human existence
Fills us with wonder and awe.
God of perfect love and goodness,
We worship and adore you. **Amen.**

Reading: Reader 1 – Isaiah 6:1-5

Comment: Leader 1 Why are we called to worship?

So what's it all about, this thing we call life? All of a sudden, there we were, cute but clueless, new human beings in an old world. How were we, as we grew up, going to make sense of life? Was what we could see, or touch, or taste, or feel, or hear all that there is? Is what we experienced in our hearts or understood with our minds all that there is? Or is there something that is what we, and most other people, might call 'other', or 'a higher power'? Something that is greater, deeper, wider, more mysterious than everyday human thought? Something that is central to all existence? Something we catch glimpses of most days? If our answer to those questions is 'yes, there is', let's give that something a name and a personality. Let's call it God, as people through the ages and all over the world have done. And let's offer this amazing, awesome, all-important God what we can – something worthy. Let's offer the 'worth-ship' of our free and thankful lives. It is both our duty and our delight.

Reading: Reader 2 – Acts 17: 22 – 28.

Sketch: 'Why do you go to worship?' (*Three voices – attached on a separate sheet*)

Prayer of Confession: Leader 2

Loving God of our lives

We confess to you how hard we find it to get our worship right:

We can come into your presence preoccupied with our own concerns;

We can come to watch and listen, not to truly participate;

We judge the quality of worship by how good it makes us feel;

We fail to relate our worship to our daily lives.

Loving God, forgive us when our worship falls short of our calling.

Give us the help of your Spirit that we may worship you in spirit and truth.

In the name of our saviour, Jesus Christ,

Who offers us forgiveness and new life in him, **Amen.**

HYMN: God is here, as we his people.....*StF 25; H&P 653*

Comment: Leader 1 – Why are we called to worship together?

Religion has never been a solitary occupation – the word religion comes from an old word that means to bind together. Our worship together plays a vital role in our 'binding together in love'. In the gospels, we see Jesus going to worship at both synagogue and Temple. In the first days of the early church Christians continued to attend Jewish worship on the Sabbath, the last day of the week. Later the Christian day of worship became Sunday, the first day of the week, the day of Resurrection, the day of new Life. Worship was of central importance to their lives – a time to thank God for all that he had done for them in Christ, but also a time to re-enforce their identity together as the Body of Christ ... their belonging not only to God but also to one another. In the epistles we find advice about how such worship should be conducted so that it was both spiritual and loving."This is what I mean, my brothers and sisters. When you meet for worship, one person has a hymn, another a teaching, another a revelation from God, another a message in strange tongues, and still another the explanation of what is said. Everything must be of help to the church."

Let us remain seated as we sing together, as a prayer, 'Bind us together, Lord...

Sung Prayer: Bind us together, Lord... *MP 54 OR* As your family, Lord...*StF 571;H&P 595*

Reflection: Reader 3: Some thoughts shared on the internet...do you agree?

Living in an age of self-centred everything, we see that a lot of self-centred Christianity has emerged. Church leaders seek to provide people with what they want, rather than perhaps what they need, because many of those people are the centre of their own universe, rather than God being the centre. This attitude has led to all sorts of slogans like 'I'm spiritual not religious' which translates as— I don't attend religious services, I can be spiritual all by myself....

At the beginnings of Methodism an anonymous 'serious man' said to John Wesley, 'Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember that you cannot serve him alone. You therefore must find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.'

... When you are born you are normally born into a family. It is like that with faith.

Reading: Reader 4 – I Corinthians 1: 2-4

Offering: Leader 1: Your offering of money will now be collected...

Offering Prayer: Leader 2

Together, Lord, we offer you this money.

Together, Lord, we offer you our worship.

Together, Lord, we offer you our lives

As the Body of Christ, serving this needy world. Amen.

HYMN: Take my life and let it be ... *StF 566; H&P 705; MP 624*

Prayer : Reader 1 –

It was sung in the musical 'Godspell'. You probably first said it in school assembly. But here are the original words of that famous prayer by St Richard of Chichester: Let us pray...

'Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits thou hast given me, for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,

may I know thee more clearly,

love thee more dearly,

and follow thee more nearly, day by day. **Amen.**

Comment: Leader 1 – How are we called to worship God in our daily lives?

We are called to worship God. We are called to worship God together. But we are also called to worship God in every aspect of our lives, day by day, by giving what is of worth to him – our time and talents and money, but also our thinking, our speaking, our loving, our praying. Worthship embraces every aspect of our lives, as St Paul explains in the letter to the Thessalonians...

Reading: Reader 2 – I Thessalonians 5: 12 - 24

Comment: Leader 1

'Pray at all times' - giving God his true worth in our lives means seeking awareness of him in the present moment, practising our faith through private devotions, looking out for glimpses of his presence in the world and people around us. And, most of all, it means prayer: prayers of **thanksgiving**; prayers of **confession**; prayers for **guidance**. In this world of so much wickedness and suffering, if we can do nothing else, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, we can pray – for the world, for the church, for those in need, for ourselves. This is our calling. And so, as we worship now, we offer our prayers of intercession...

Prayers of Intercession: Leader 2 - (or shared)

Another name for 'worshipping' could be 'hallowing' – our acknowledgement and respect for the holiness of God, the power of his goodness and love that is so central to our lives. Our prayers of intercession are based on lines taken from The Lord's Prayer, which we will pray together at the end. There is a response – Your kingdom come: **Your will be done.** Let us pray...

'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name'

We know you, Father, as 'God of Justice', and so we pray for victims of injustice, for.....

We know you as 'God of Mercy', and pray for compassion for the needy, for.....

We know you as 'God of Love', and pray for peace in our homes, our communities, our land and our war torn world, for.....

You are our God; we are your people.

May we hallow your name in both worship and service.

Your kingdom come: **Your will be done.**

'Give us this day our daily bread.'

We pray for those who do not have enough to eat today, for..... asking that they might be fed.

We pray for those hungry for love, forgiveness, peace, purpose, asking that they might be fed.

We pray that we might receive the daily spiritual food we need

In order to meet the needs of other people.

Your kingdom come: **Your will be done.**

'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

We pray for those who have hurt us asking that we might absorb that hurt and not return it.

We pray for relationships where there is hatred, misunderstanding or abuse.

We pray for the Church, that we may be made one.

Your kingdom come: **Your will be done.**

'Save us from the time of trial'

We pray for those going through trying times:

Those who are ill, or anxious, for

Those who have been bereaved, for

Those facing big challenges, for

In faith we pray that they, and we, may receive from you

Grace sufficient for our needs: strength and guidance, comfort and hope.

We make our prayers in obedience to Jesus Christ, who taught us when we pray to say

Our Father....

HYMN: Fill thou my life.... *StF 73; H&P 792; MP146*

Dismissal

Fill our lives, Lord, with worship of you.

Help us to give you the glory

In all that we say, or do, or are.

Make us a people of your praise.

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and remain with each one of us, now and evermore, **Amen.**

Sketch: 'Why do you go to worship?' (*Three voices*)

A: Hello, John! How are you? Were you there when that preacher came into town? Did you go?

B: I did. I followed the crowds to see what was going on.

A: What did you make of what he had to say?

B: It was interesting. He made his case well and it was thought-provoking. But it made me feel uncomfortable, because, you see, I'm not religious.

A: Not religious? What do you mean?

B: Well, I don't know if there is a God or there isn't. All I know is that life's too busy for me to worry my head about such things. It all seems a bit irrelevant. And I really haven't time to go to church. I'm not a joiner, and I don't get the worship thing.

A: What do you mean, you don't get worship?

B: What's the point of it for someone like me, even if I did believe in God? I don't like singing. Prayers are personal things. The Bible is boring. The preachers are dull, or try too hard. If God is everywhere, as that preacher said, why bother with church services?

A: Well I do. Look, here's Jane. She goes to church, too. I wonder what she makes of worship.

C: Hey up, you two! What are you talking about so earnestly?

B: Going to worship in church!

C: Oh – it's great at our church! You'd love it – lively singing, relevant prayers, stirring preaching. And everyone there is so friendly – we're a real family. That's why I like to go.

A: Yes, but there's more to worship than having a good time, isn't there?

C: What do you mean?

A: Well, John was just saying that not everyone likes to sing. And the Bible can be difficult to understand, and the preacher, too. Even praying together can be demanding. I don't always come away from a service feeling better for it.

C: That's true.

B: So, why do *you* go to worship at church?

A: I go because, as a Christian, I have decided to put the Loving God, who I know in Jesus, at the centre of my life. At the centre of my life instead of myself. I go to offer this amazing God my worship and praise, my life and my love and, most of all, my thanks. I don't go for what I can get out of it, I go to give back for all that I have been given by God. I go to worship because I believe that is what God calls me to do.

B: Goodness, that's a lot to take in and think about!

C: It is!

B: But why do you think God calls you to worship him? Surely he has everything he needs – he doesn't need your adoration and praise and thanks.

A: No, but he wants me to express my love for him – he wants a loving relationship with everyone. That's the whole reason for everything!