

Sunday 23rd August 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

When we see only trouble **Jesus, be our vision**
When we feel only uncertainty **Jesus, be our rock**
When we hear only bad news **Jesus, be our hope**
In all the circumstances of our lives
Jesus, our Companion, be a light to our path

Hymn: One more step along the world I go (StF 476)

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/one-more-step-along-the-world-i-go-stf-476/>

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words:

One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go;
from the old things to the new
keep me travelling along with you:
and it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
more and more about the world I learn;
all the new things that I see
you'll be looking at along with me:

As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;

where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know:

Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough;
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:

You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me;
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you:

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

Let us pray together

Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, mindful, compassionate, constant, thank you for loving us through every season of our lives. May we believe that you call us into a new day, that you call each of us by our name, that we belong to you. And gathered or scattered, you hold us together in love.

Generous and merciful God, the only way to come to you each day is in truth, for you know us completely and love us as we are. Shine your gentle light on us so that we can know ourselves to be real, honest and forgiven. Thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Isaiah 51 1-3

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 4 1-14

Time to Reflect

In November, we moved house. It set me thinking how old and new need to exist together. A different house, same old furniture; meeting new people, keeping old friends. Old and new together enrich our lives. And it happens all around us in different ways.

Grandparents and grandchildren bridge the generation gap. In nature in autumn and winter, already buds are on the seemingly bare branches, nurturing life for another spring. In our north east culture, ancient Celtic sites co-exist with new developments. St Peter's Church by the River Wear bears witness to many centuries of Christian life, now surrounded by a modern university. But I suspect the Venerable Bede would have welcomed new ways of learning, exploring, discovering.

What does Jesus say about this? Many are tempted to think Jesus discarded all that was old giving us licence to do the same. Yes, we have his words about new wine and old wineskins that destroy one another when they are put together. But in the wilderness, whenever Jesus was tempted away from love and vulnerability, he found his resistance in words from the scriptures with their timeless wisdom and relevance.

Jesus held within himself the wisdom of the ages, God the Ancient of Days, 'the rock from which we were hewn' with the effortless ease he had of living with his contemporaries in fresh and creatively new ways.

During lockdown, we have learned of necessity to hold familiar songs and prayers with new ways of experiencing and expressing them. To be able to hold old and new is something we need to take into an uncertain future, as we abide in the timelessness of God, 'ever old and ever new' but allowing Jesus continuously to bring new life to birth in us, bubbling up with laughter, love and possibility.

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Holy and gracious God, we pray for others, prayers that bring to mind the world's realities. Please teach us not to be afraid, because it is here we find you, sharing this deeply troubled world with us.

Please bless all who are continuing to make a difference: scientists working faster than ever before to find cure or vaccine for covid-19; chefs, volunteers, entertainers, neighbours and countless more. **May they know your laughter and love.**

We ask you to bless all who are there to care for those who are at their lowest, especially in health and care services. **May they know your persevering strength.**

We pray for the hundreds of thousands who are grieving here and across the world: for the loss of loved ones, loss of livelihood, loss of confidence and hope, loss of any sense of wellbeing. **May they know your comfort, strong and everlasting.**

We pray for people who need the world to be a more just and equal place, and for those who have power to make changes. May it happen quickly and peacefully. **May they know your righteousness.**

We pray for all who need the world to remember them: refugees and asylum seekers, all living in poverty and suffering from climate change. **May we remember; may they know your provision through us.**

Thank you for all, profoundly known and loved, who enrich our lives every day.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: God to enfold you (StF 648)

Can be sung to 'Morning has broken'

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/hymns/god-to-enfold-you-stf-648/>

God to enfold you,
Christ to uphold you,
Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight;
so may God grace you,
heal and embrace you,
lead you through darkness
into the light.

John L. Bell (b. 1949)

A prayer of blessing

Generous God, please fill your holy gift of life with grace; please bless your fragile gift of life with joy; please help us always to cherish your precious gift of life. Amen.

Original Materials by Jean Hudson
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Isaiah 51: 1-3

1 Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,
you that seek the LORD.

Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were
dug.

2 Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
but I blessed him and made him many.

3 For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.

John 4: 1-14

¹Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptising more disciples than John' – ²although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptised – ³he left Judaea and started back to Galilee. ⁴But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'

¹¹The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?' ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' ¹³Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'