

**Sunday 14 March 2021**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you 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.

**Opening Prayer**

‘Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His faithful love endures forever. [Psalm 107:1]  
Holy God, though we do not worship together in one building we worship together in one spirit and with one heart. Through our worship reveal to us your will we pray. Amen.

**Hymn: Praise to the Lord (Singing the Faith 88)**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen here:

[Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation! \(StF 88\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!  
All ye who hear, brothers and sisters, draw near,  
praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;  
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee:  
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,  
who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,  
fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee,  
then to thy need he like a mother doth speed,  
spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,

who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding,  
sheddeth his light, chaseth the horrors of night,  
saints with his mercy surrounding.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!

Let the amen sound from his people again:  
gladly for aye we adore him.

*Joachim Neander (1650-1680)*

Let us pray together:

Holy God,  
we praise you for the faithfulness of your people down the ages.  
We worship and adore you as creator of this wonderful earth, and of us made in your image.  
We praise you that you are a Giving God. For our family and friends, God we thank you.  
For the signs of Spring all around us, God we thank you.  
For the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God we thank you.  
Forgiving God, we bring you our confessions now.  
We are sorry God for the times when we have failed you and ourselves.

(in a moment of quiet offer your confession to God)

We know God you are quick to forgive.  
As Jesus said to many he met, ‘Your sins are forgiven’, it is on this promise that we too rely. We pray in Jesus’ name,  
Amen.

**Today's Reading from the Old Testament:**  
Numbers 21:4-9

**Today's Gospel Reading:** John 3:14-21

**Time to Reflect**

I wonder how many times through this pandemic you have been unhappy with things and complained out loud or inwardly to yourself? Perhaps you haven't agreed with Government decisions, perhaps you have been angry at the people who seemed to mindlessly flout the rules put in place to keep us all safe, perhaps you've complained when you were unable to attend church, or if you were, you were unable to sing; there are many reasons of late why we are likely to have moaned. And this is how it was with the Israelites as they travelled slowly towards the promised land. They took their frustration out not only on their leader Moses, but also on God. They had forgotten the miracles God had performed for them, their faith was waning, and they refused to obey God's law (see Psalm 78). We see too that when the Israelites complained things only got worse. They improved at once though when the people recognised that they had sinned against God through their attitude and actions. When the bronze snake was hung on a pole the Israelites didn't anticipate the fuller meaning that Jesus would bring to this experience. In the Gospel reading Jesus explains that just as the Israelites of old were healed of the sickness caused by the snake bites by turning their gaze towards the snake on the pole, we today can be healed from the sin that pervades our lives by turning our gaze towards Jesus' death on the cross. You see it was not the bronze snake that healed the Israelites, it was their renewed belief in God's healing power, in God's compassion for them, in God's love for those created in God's image and called beloved. Today, God's healing power, compassion and love exists for each one of us too; it is there for the taking but like the Israelites we too need to recognise the times we stray away from the path of light that guides us and turn back wholeheartedly towards God. Amen.

Take some time to sit quietly in reflection.

**A time of prayer**

Gracious God,  
We thank you for the blessings in our lives,  
We pray now for those struggling at this time:  
We pray for our world in these difficult times,  
that your peace will reach across borders and  
into the lives of all your people.

We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters  
living in lands where they risk their liberty and  
lives to follow you, be their courage and strong  
foundation.

We pray for leaders and others in positions of  
authority and power, that they will be guided by  
you.

We pray for your churches who await your  
direction, may your will be done.

We pray for all people suffering with ill health at  
this time, for those awaiting treatment or test  
results, for those recovering from operations or  
illness, for those suffering with mental health  
problems, may you heal them.

We pray for all who have suffered the loss of  
loved ones, may you be their source of strength  
to face another day.

We pray for ourselves, may we be people of  
peace and justice, bringing hope to those we  
interact with.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer, Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to a fabulous version of 'Turn  
your eyes upon Jesus' here**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2tKVqZZiI4>

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to  
mind**

**A prayer of blessing**

God of grace and restoration be the strength  
in our lives as we go about our days, now and  
forever more, Amen.

Original Materials by Rev. Zena Smith  
All

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### **Numbers 21:4-9 (NRSV)**

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous[c] serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

### **John 3:14-21 (NRSV)**

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."