

Worship at Home – Sunday 13 February 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you.

Call to Worship

God our Maker
You call us here to worship You together.
To bear witness to Your creativity
seen, heard and found in all who gather.
We are all Your children,
bearing Your divine image,
shaped by Your imagination and breath.
You have gifted us with
the beauty of difference
the blessing of diversity
the pleasure of individuality
and the bond of love and peace.

Hymn 28

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yulQuvsFD00>

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise ;
praise the Son who calls us friends ;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story ;
tell his tales that all may hear ;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are ;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger ;
join the hands of age and youth ;

join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

Jesus calls us to his table
rooted firm in time and space,
where the Church in earth and heaven
finds a common meeting place.
Share the bread and wine, his body ;
share the love of which we sing ;
share the feast for saints and sinners
hosted by our Lord and King.

John L. Bell (*b.* 1949) and Graham Maule (*b.* 1958)

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Let us pray together

God of all,
You alone are worthy of praise,
from every mouth
in every nation and time.

You created the world in your infinite grace,
and by your everlasting love redeemed it.
Hold us to the shared task of loving one
another as You have loved us.

Merciful God,
You made us in Your image,
With minds to know You,
With hearts to love You,
With wills to serve You.
But our knowledge is imperfect,
Our love inconstant and immature,
And our obedience incomplete and self-serving.

Help us to grow in Your likeness,
which is so widely displayed in the diversity of
creation.

Help us to understand our own prejudices and narrow mindedness.

Help us to love our neighbour as we ourselves long to be loved.

Help us to serve others with humility and gratitude.

Do not hold our sin against us, but help us to repent of outdated and inappropriate world views.

Help us to mature in our thinking, loving and serving.

Amen

Today's Gospel Reading:

John 17. 20-23

Time to Reflect

These, of course, are the words of Jesus praying for His disciples as He's about to go to His death. But His prayer is surely for all of us too. It's a prayer for a true communion of people, that's to be seen in the relationship of the Trinity itself, where we can speak of oneness, even when there's clearly difference.

The ethnic mix of many of our communities has changed so much in recent years because of the movement of peoples. And hateful racism is not simply targeted at Black footballers on social media. Immediately after Brexit, the number of racist incidents rose significantly across the country and all too many people saw newcomers as unwelcome. It's not without reason that footballers and others in this country have been 'taking the knee' since the murder of George Floyd in the United States.

Back in the year 2000, Pope John Paul II suggested an aim for the beginning of the millennium that he thought the rest of us might share. Like Jesus in the Gospel, his prayer was that we achieve a 'spirituality of communion'. He described this as being able to see God shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us, to know how to "make room" for people who are different, and to bear "each other's burdens".

In a recent book called "The ungrateful refugee", Dina Nayeri, speaking from personal experience, argues that the most urgent need

for a migrant or a refugee is to belong to a place. She says that this is achieved by existing communities allowing newcomers to change them on their native soil. But this is true not just for migrants or newcomers but also for people who are seen to be different from the majority.

We would do well to remember the different aspects of institutional racism described by Lord MacPherson in the 1990s. One of these is when established groups in society exercise their power in such a way that people, from different backgrounds, feel that they don't really belong. The phrase, "We've always done it this way," is one I sometimes hear, and it betrays an unwillingness to be changed on our own soil. Sadly, the requirement of the majority can all too often be, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do!"

But, to enable people to belong usually requires us to think differently and to listen more to the ways that others might do things if they were given the opportunity. Pope Francis, in a letter he wrote this year to mark 'Migrants' Day' called us to "build communion in diversity, to unify differences without imposing a depersonalized uniformity."

A time of prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
who crossed boundaries and borders,
help us to love our neighbours and break down barriers in our communities.

Wounded Healer,
who made blind eyes see and deaf ears hear,
enable us to perceive the reality of racism,
bigotry and racial injustice in ourselves and our society.

Prince of Peace, inspire us to celebrate difference and reconcile division and help re-imagine this world as a place where justice and peace kiss and freedom abounds.

God our Maker, in whose image and likeness each of us has been created, with a human dignity worthy of respect. Listen to the cry that rises from every corner of this fragile earth, from our human family.

To world leaders and decision makers, grant the wisdom to reach beyond boundary and

border. May our common humanity drive policy and foster peaceful dialogue and constructive collaboration.

To those who misuse their power or take power from others, through violent action or hateful speech. Grant mercy and grow in them a humble heart of compassion, peaceful dialogue and constructive collaboration.

To the innocent ones robbed of dignity, possession, or shelter, to the victims of these forces who have had life taken from them, we entrust them in your everlasting arms, O God, that are wide enough to embrace all of Your creation.

Maker of all you painted into being all heaven and earth, creatures and all living things, with such depth of diversity – shape, size, colour, uniqueness and giftedness, help us to recognise your Divine Image in stranger and friend, to see Christ in the displaced and dehumanised, that we might recognise their dignity and act with Your passion and zeal to see justice, equity and love abound.

When we do not listen to the cries, give us ears to hear.

When we do not recognise racism and injustice, give us eyes to see.

When we do not speak truth to power, give us voices to declare your ways.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn 713

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

Show me how to stand for justice :
how to work for what is right,
how to challenge false assumptions,
how to walk within the light.
May I learn to share more freely
in a world so full of greed,
showing your immense compassion
by the life I choose to lead.

Teach my heart to treasure mercy,
whether given or received —
for my need has not diminished

since the day I first believed :
let me seek no satisfaction
boasting of what I have done,
but rejoice that I am pardoned
and accepted in your Son.

Gladly I embrace a lifestyle
modelled on your living word,
in humility submitting
to the truth which I have heard.
Make me conscious of your presence
every day in all I do :
by your Spirit's gracious prompting
may I learn to walk with you.

Martin Leckebusch (*b.* 1962)

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A prayer of blessing

May God the Father bless us.

May God the Son bless us.

May God the Holy Spirit bless us.

So may the blessing of God who is one in
three and three in one bind us together in
unity, now and forever. Amen.

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<https://ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-13-february-2022/>

John 17. 20-23

'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.