

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit
Sunday Worship Sheet – Sunday 22nd January 2022

Our worship for this week was written by Rev'd Rosemary Nunn. You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Opening prayer. Living God, we seek to meet with you in the midst of our lives, bringing all that we are, including our joys, sorrows, excitement, fears and longings. Help us to be completely open to you, whether soothe, chastise, comfort, challenge, or calm us by your presence. Help us to listen and to respond. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

StF 103. God is love, let heaven adore him

Prayers of adoration and confession

Wonderful, God, we remember once more just HOW wonderful You are! You are our mighty God, creator of all and ruler over all, and we owe our lives to you. You are our eternal God – involved in every day of the whole of history, and we owe our hope to you. You are our living God, our loving God, our active God, full of kindness and compassion, and we owe our joy to you. You are our gentle God, whose Spirit speaks to us in the quietness, and we owe our peace to you. You are our gracious God, abounding in love, slow to anger, rich in mercy, and we owe our all to you. Lord of all, our strength and shield, our rock and our fortress, our God and our Redeemer, we owe our worship to you. Receive our praise.

We do praise you, Lord. We do believe in you, love you, trust you, rely on you. And yet there are times when things seem to get between us and you, distracting and drawing us away from you. Sometimes it's as though we can't hear or perhaps would rather not hear you. Sometimes we hear you, yet ignore you. Forgive us, and as we accept your forgiveness and live as forgiven and renewed people, help us to respond in your strength rather than our own when you call, aware that you have the power to transform us in ways beyond our imagining.

Wonderful, wonderful God, we bring our prayers to you in the name of Jesus. **AMEN**

Bible readings: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Luke 4:14-21

Reflection

When I retired in 2011, one of my priorities was to boost my fitness through increased physical activity. Sadly, one week into retirement I broke my ankle, so my personal mission statement for retirement barely launched before dying a sudden death! I doubt that such an accident would have halted Jesus in his tracks. Luke tells us that Jesus, in his home synagogue, used carefully combined prophetic words from centuries earlier to announce his intention to make a difference, to be good news for those unused to good news. His "manifesto" focus was fresh starts for troubled people: good news for the poor, liberty for captives, recovery of sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed.

“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing,” he said, claiming those words as his own mission, passion, purpose, and priority. He was “fired up” because, as the words he read from Scripture said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” Uniquely God-chosen, uniquely God-inspired, uniquely God-enabled, uniquely God-empowered to BE good news, making a difference in human lives.

This synagogue speech was like an advance snapshot of the unfolding life and purpose of Jesus: what he said he’d do he did. The gospels show Jesus giving all the richness of hope to those desperately poverty-stricken where hope of any kind was concerned; overturning the curse of blindness through the gift of physical sight or of insight into new possibilities and new ways of thinking and being; dismantling the prison walls and chains of oppressive and harsh religious rules, of habit, of fear; dying the most cruel of inflicted deaths, uttering words of forgiveness and fresh starts to the end.

Along the way he offered and still offers an invitation: “Follow me”. In other words, come along with me, do what I would do, see things my way, love people my way, make a difference my way, care for the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed – all who struggle – my way. Jesus’ manifesto and active ministry give the lie to the thought that Christian faith is entirely about what happens to us after we die, or about us feeling blessed. Relationships have consequences, and our relationship with Jesus is no different. Faith is active! It has legs! It makes a difference in the lives of other people. Mrs. Thatcher famously said that Christianity is about spiritual redemption – saving souls - not about social reform, but Christianity is not either/or, it’s both/and.

How we make a difference will vary from person to person and from one stage of our lives to another. In our other Bible reading, Paul likened God’s Church in action to a human body made up of many different but related parts, each useless on its own but functioning perfectly together. None all-important, none unimportant to the functioning of the whole – all interdependent and supportive of one another.

I remember reading about a 5 year old girl with severe cerebral palsy. She was called Georgia and she loved classical music. Her ambition was to go to a concert, but for all sorts of reasons it was very difficult for her to venture beyond the walls of her home. So the London Symphony Orchestra came to her! Orchestra members set up their instruments in the family home and played a selection of Georgia’s favourite Beethoven pieces. I’m absolutely certain that Jesus would heartily applaud: music is surely one of God’s healing gifts. They saw what they, uniquely, were in a position to do to make a difference and got on with breaking through the prison walls of Georgia’s isolation.

We can all make a difference in SOME way – through our listening or our words, our warm smile or wave, our prayers, our phone calls, our offers of practical help, our money, food, clothing, time or expertise given to helping agencies, our involvement, support and encouragement for church projects, our political involvement through our well-informed protests and influence expressed through letters, thoughts aired on social media, rallies, petitions, votes, maybe even willingness to stand for election. It’s mainly about spotting a need and doing whatever we are in a position to do – even moving our position somewhat if

necessary! If we feel helpless knowing we can't make much difference on our own, it may help to remember that while snowflakes are small and frail, if enough of them stick together they can stop the traffic.

What impact might we make on God's world and God's people if we ask Jesus every day, "How can I make a difference for you today?"

StF 255. The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Prayers for ourselves and others.

In your caring presence, loving God, we take time to form pictures in our minds of some of the people whose lives could be enhanced, possibly including ourselves.

We bring to mind those impoverished in terms of finances, life-enhancing relationships, quality time, opportunities for rest and relaxation. May their lives be enriched.

We think of those imprisoned by a life within four walls, by the legacy of a difficult past, by poor self-esteem, by crippling loneliness, by frailty or mental illness, by overwhelming grief. May they experience a sense of release and of life beginning to open up for them.

We remember those with poor eyesight, expanding that image to focus on those blinded by an inability to see another point of view, by refusal to see anything but the worst in people, to see future hope beyond present despair. Open their eyes to new understanding, new possibilities.

We try to imagine life for those oppressed by the harshness of tyrannical governments, by some branches of the world's religions, by cruel and divisive cultural customs. May hardened hearts be softened, allowing disadvantaged lives to open up in new and fulfilling ways.

We offer our thoughts in the name of Jesus, who spoke of coming to bring life in all its fullness, asking for guidance to see how we may play our part in answering some of our prayers. AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

StF 673. Will you come and follow me?

Our worship has not ended, it has only just begun, for God is with us every moment of every day. Let us go about our lives, then, offering the worship he desires – to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with him every step along our way.

- 103** 1 God is Love : let heaven adore him ;
 God is Love : let earth rejoice ;
 let creation sing before him,
 and exalt him with one voice.
 He who laid the earth's foundation,
 he who spread the heavens above,
 he who breathes through all creation,
 he is Love, eternal Love.
- 2 God is Love : and he, enfolding
 all the world in one embrace,
 with unfailing grasp is holding
 every child of every race.
 And when human hearts are breaking
 under sorrow's iron rod,
 then they find that selfsame aching
 deep within the heart of God.
- 3 God is Love : and though with blindness
 sin afflicts each human soul,
 God's eternal loving-kindness
 holds and guides and keeps them whole.
 Sin and death and hell shall never
 o'er us final triumph gain ;
 God is Love, so Love for ever
 o'er the universe must reign.

Timothy Rees (1874–1939) (*alt.*)

- 255** 1 The kingdom of God
 is justice and joy,
 for Jesus restores
 what sin would destroy ;
 God's power and glory
 in Jesus we know,
 and here and hereafter
 the kingdom shall grow.
- 2 The kingdom of God
 is mercy and grace,
 the prisoners are freed,
 the sinners find place,
 the outcast are welcomed
 God's banquet to share,
 and hope is awakened
 in place of despair.
- 3 The kingdom of God
 is challenge and choice,
 believe the good news,
 repent and rejoice !
 His love for us sinners
 brought Christ to his cross,
 our crisis of judgement
 for gain or for loss.

- 4 God's kingdom is come,
 the gift and the goal,
 in Jesus begun,
 in heaven made whole ;
 the heirs of the kingdom
 shall answer his call,
 and all things cry glory
 to God all in all !

- 673** 1 Will you come and follow me
 if I but call your name ?
 Will you go where you don't know
 and never be the same ?
 Will you let my love be shown,
 will you let my name be known,
 will you let my life be grown
 in you and you in me ?
- 2 Will you leave yourself behind
 if I but call your name ?
 Will you care for cruel and kind
 and never be the same ?
 Will you risk the hostile stare
 should your life attract or scare ?
 Will you let me answer prayer
 in you and you in me ?
- 3 Will you let the blinded see
 if I but call your name ?
 Will you set the prisoners free
 and never be the same ?
 Will you kiss the leper clean,
 and do such as this unseen,
 and admit to what I mean
 in you and you in me ?
- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
 if I but call your name ?
 Will you quell the fear inside
 and never be the same ?
 Will you use the faith you've found
 to reshape the world around,
 through my sight and touch and sound
 in you and you in me ?
- 5 Lord, your summons echoes true
 when you but call my name.
 Let me turn and follow you
 and never be the same.
 In your company I'll go
 where your love and footsteps show.
 Thus I'll move and live and grow
 in you and you in me.

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

