

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit
Sunday Worship Sheet – Sunday 16th March 2025.

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

As I come to worship, I come to seek God. I come as I am, with my joys and sorrows, my thanks and doubts, my fears and hopes. I come to seek and worship God, who speaks to me now through the words of the first hymn. **StF 18. Be still and know that I am God.**

Prayers of trust and confession. Assurance of forgiveness

Eternal God, we trust you for today. Inspire us to stay focused and to follow your way. We trust you for tomorrow. Empower us to protect the vulnerable and needy, and to proclaim your truth. We trust you for every day. Be with us as we journey through life towards your great heart of love, in which there is no fear, no failure and no limits.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Forgiving God, you must also weep over the things we do that make the lives of others more difficult. Forgive us for the times we have wanted you to do *our* bidding; when we have not seen the needs of those around us; when our own desires and demands have inadvertently impoverished others in some way. Open our eyes and help us, like you, to be ready to stand in the shoes of those around us.

As a hen covers her chicks with her wings, so you cover us with your forgiving love, drawing us into a new beginning, a new way of being, a new way of serving. Strengthen, sustain and surround us with your power and your presence – each day of our lives and beyond. **Amen.**

Bible Reading: Philippians 3:17 – 4:1

Paul urges the Christians of Philippi to find good role models for their lives, contrasting them with the poor role models he describes as “enemies of the cross of Jesus” - not on the same wavelength as Jesus in terms of core values. Sadly, even ardent churchgoers don't always “walk the Sunday talk” by actively living as disciples of Jesus from Monday to Saturday.

It's not about pointing the finger at others! In this encouraging letter, Paul is challenging the Christians of Philippi (and North Wales) to examine themselves and their own Christian walk and to get that right - one of the key Lenten themes. Paul says the key to this is following the right role model, giving himself as the example, along with those modelling their lives on his. This may make us feel rather uncomfortable. If I were to write “just model yourselves on me, folks, and you'll be on the right track”, hopefully you'd rip up the service sheet rather than read any more from such a boastful person! But was Paul conceitedly pointing to himself as THE perfect example of live lived as it's meant to be, or was he really saying something else?

Just a few verses earlier (v 12-13), Paul had specifically declared his awareness that he's far from perfect, and the letter as a whole is 100% focused not on Paul but on JESUS. “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (v.8). This letter comes from someone who just can't get enough of Jesus; whose life has

been shaken to the core and completely turned around by his meeting with Jesus; who is infectiously and unstoppably excited about Jesus; who is unable to keep quiet about Jesus. Imitating *Paul* means knowing *Jesus* and becoming *more like Jesus*. Jesus is the real model for us to follow – the way he taught, the way he helped people, forgave people, accepted people, encouraged people, healed people, never gave up on people, LOVED people.

StF 504. May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day

Bible Reading: Luke 13: 31-35

Christians are inclined to give the pharisees a uniformly “bad press” over their hostility to Jesus. Here, though, a group of pharisees warn Jesus that he should leave the area where he is teaching and healing, because Herod poses a danger to his life. Jesus is well aware that Herod, who had ordered the beheading of John the Baptist, isn’t to be messed with. History remembers him as one of many (ongoing) paranoid and ruthless madmen. But Jesus has set his course for Jerusalem, aware he has work still to do; aware, too, that this city has time and time again rejected and killed God’s messengers. He refers to Herod as “that fox” – foxes then as now generally viewed as sly and destructive creatures.

Contrasting foxy Herod with himself, Jesus paints a striking image of a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings: a startling self-description for one who will come to be recognised as the Messiah, the Son of God, the human face of God. Not a conquering king or a mighty warrior, but a mother hen – hardly the most elegant, agile or powerful of creatures. As this mother hen stands with wide open wings, offering welcome, belonging and shelter for her children, her wings remain empty. She is a mother mourning, bereft over the suffering she sees for her offspring, willing them to come to her.

I have read that when a predator approaches a mother hen she will stand her ground and swell with indignation, fear and courage as she gathers together her brood, tucking them securely beneath her own soft, vulnerable body, and prepared to die if necessary. I’ve also read about a scorched and blackened hen being found burnt to death in the aftermath of a farmyard fire, yet with her brood of youngsters alive and well, tucked under her wings. She had quite literally given her life for them. This points, surely, to the radical and profound picture of God we see in Jesus as he strides purposefully and with determination to Jerusalem and the cross – eyes wide open to what lies ahead, aware that his sacrifice of love to the death for others will still see many rejecting that offer of love. This hen is no chicken!

We shouldn’t distort this tender image. Jesus isn’t saying that if we turn to him he will banish every ill. We live in a beautiful but messed-up world. Tough things happen. Suffering is no stranger to good people: Jesus himself was executed on a cross. But God, seen in Jesus, longs for the very best for each one of us, even where some of our troubles may be of our own making. He’s there to see us through the bad times, to accompany us, to give us his strength to cope. He’s been through suffering himself – and come out the other side. Newly alive.

Thinking again about role models, if we are to imitate Jesus, we will need to develop our own mother henlike qualities (with the inspiration and enabling of the Holy Spirit), though we’re

certainly not called to do a lot of clucking and flapping about! None of us is personally responsible for eradicating *every* difficulty for *every* troubled person. Where our practical advice, active assistance, targeted giving, or ruffling a few feathers to speak up on behalf of those with no effective voice can make a difference, we shouldn't hold back. Just as important, though, is our *presence*: our *being there* and *going on* being there; the warmth and comfort we can offer; the calming influence we can have; the sense of "I'm here for you". Of course, people are free to insist on battling on alone – as Jesus knew all too well.

Jesus-style mother hens need to allow themselves to be chicks, too. We need to seek and accept the shelter of those divine welcoming wings, maybe searching them out again if we've drifted a little. From time to time, some of us may also need to accept the sheltering and protective tender love of "fellow farmyard members" of our church community.

Prayers for ourselves and others.

Loving, compassionate God, we believe Jesus to be a picture of you – Jesus who spoke of himself as a protective mother hen, longing to shelter her chicks from harm. And so we bring to you in prayer those in desperate need of protection, shelter, care, love.

We think in your presence of those in war-torn parts of the world – those living through days and nights of terror; those who have lost everything and maybe everybody; those forced to flee and those not fit enough to flee. Gather them under your wings, loving God.

We think in your presence of those living in fear because of their experience of being bullied. We think of children bullied at home, at school, on the streets; of adults in abusive relationships; of those bullied at work. Gather them under your wings, loving God.

We think in your presence of those living with the fear of illness – those who wonder and worry – about themselves, about others; those in pain; those afraid of the treatment ahead; those for whom there is no treatment. Gather them under your wings, loving God.

We think in your presence of ourselves – our own needs, concerns, fears, uncertainties, vulnerabilities. Gather *us* under your wings, loving God.

Loving, compassionate God, we ask that you will help us to model ourselves on your open-hearted, all-embracing style of loving, and in whatever ways we are able to become part of the answer to our prayers. In the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen.**

StF 238. Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea

Closing prayer and blessing

May the Christ who died for me live in me. May the Christ who loves me shine through me. May the Christ who welcomes me go with me, now and always. **Amen**

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. **Amen.**

Hymn 18

- 1 Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
- 2 I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
- 3 In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

Anonymous

Based on Psalm 46:10-11

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Hymn 504

- 1 May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.
- 2 May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.
- 3 May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.
- 4 May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea ;
him exalting, self forgetting —
this is victory.
- 5 May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859–1928)

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Hymn 238

- 1 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea ;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee,
yet possessing every blessing
if our God our Father be.
- 2 Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us ;
all our weakness thou dost know,
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe ;
tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,
through the desert thou didst go.
- 3 Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy ;
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

James Edmeston (1791–1867)

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