

# CHRISTCHURCH WOODLEY 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021 10:30

## Call to Worship [by Stephen Brown]

We come as a gathered group of your people, Lord God, to give and to receive.  
We come with hearts moved to give praise and receive hope.  
We come with lives moved to give service and to receive a sense of purpose.  
As we gather, Lord, we pray that we may know you near.  
Bless this time we share, that in our giving we may receive,  
and in our receiving we may know your will,  
and in the knowing we may fulfill our calling as part of your worldwide family of faith.  
This we pray in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Hymn StF 409 Let us build a house where love can dwell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPQJ3HXAoHo>

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| <p>1 Let us build a house where love can dwell<br/>and all can safely live,<br/>a place where saints and children tell<br/>how hearts learn to forgive.<br/>Built of hopes and dreams and visions,<br/>rock of faith and vault of grace ;<br/>here the love of Christ shall end divisions :<br/><i>All are welcome,<br/>all are welcome,<br/>all are welcome in this place.</i></p> <p>2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,<br/>and words are strong and true,<br/>where all God's children dare to seek<br/>to dream God's reign anew.<br/>Here the cross shall stand as witness<br/>and as symbol of God's grace ;<br/>here as one we claim the faith of Jesus :</p> <p>3 Let us build a house where love is found<br/>in water, wine and wheat :<br/>a banquet hall on holy ground<br/>where peace and justice meet.<br/>Here the love of God, through Jesus,<br/>is revealed in time and space ;<br/>as we share in Christ the feast that frees us :</p> | <p>4 Let us build a house where hands will reach<br/>beyond the wood and stone<br/>to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,<br/>and live the Word they've known.<br/>Here the outcast and the stranger<br/>bear the image of God's face ;<br/>let us bring an end to fear and danger :</p> <p>5 Let us a build a house where all are named,<br/>their songs and visions heard<br/>and loved and treasured, taught and claimed<br/>as words within the Word.<br/>Built of tears and cries and laughter,<br/>prayers of faith and songs of grace,<br/>let this house proclaim from floor to rafter :</p> |
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Marty Haugen (b. 1950)

## Prayers [by Simon Oxley]

Lord, your love for us brings a smile to our faces as we share together the joy of being alive.  
Lord, your love for us brings wonder into our hearts as we see the beauty of your creation.  
Lord, your love for us brings tears into our eyes as we remember the pain you carry for humanity.  
Lord, your love for us makes us want to shout out loud as we cannot keep quiet about you.  
Lord, your love for us makes us silent as no words can fully express our feelings for you.

*Silence*

Gracious and holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship you for being who you are. We worship you with all that we are. Amen

### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

### **All Age Talk: What makes us feel close to God?**

Junior Church will be looking at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

### **Junior Church Prayer**

Dear God,  
Fill us up with your love.  
When we are worried or when we are happy,  
when we are with others or alone,  
when we feel tired and sad, and  
when we feel full of joy.  
Guide us and help us to follow you.  
Amen

### **Junior Church Hymn: StF 481 The Lord's my shepherd (I will trust)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7eloQjVN54>

1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want ;  
he makes me lie in pastures green,  
he leads me by the still, still waters,  
his goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone,  
and I will trust in you alone,  
for your endless mercy follows me,  
your goodness will lead me home.*

2 He guides my ways in righteousness,  
and he anoints my head with oil ;  
and my cup - it overflows with joy,  
I feast on his pure delights.

3 And though I walk the darkest path -  
I will not fear the evil one,  
for you are with me, and your rod and staff  
are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend (b.1963)

### **Reading: Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56**

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

<sup>31</sup> Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

<sup>32</sup> So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup> But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

<sup>53</sup> When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. <sup>54</sup> As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. <sup>55</sup> They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup> And wherever he went — into villages, towns or countryside — they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

### **Reading: Ephesians 2: 11-22**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands) — <sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

### **Sermon**

I wonder what you are looking forward to the most when Covid restrictions are eased tomorrow. Some people are particularly excited about the possibility of being part of a large group, ‘a crowd’ again. There have, of course, already been some large gatherings, like the Euro football matches recently, and before that few experimental concerts. Other people are longing to gather in theatres and nightclubs etc. But for many of us, such large gatherings, abandoning social distancing and face-masks, feels very risky, a risk that we may not be ready to take yet.

Even before Covid, crowds have always been risky gatherings. There’s always the possibility of things getting out of control, damage being done, people being hurt or even killed in the crush, especially if lots of people are trying to get really close to the main attraction.

Jesus and his disciples were often faced with large and demanding crowds, many people desperately trying to get themselves or their loved ones close enough to Jesus to touch or be touched by him and be healed. There were no loudspeakers or microphones in those days, so even to hear him you had to get as close as you could. And only those people who could get close to the front of the crowd could see and wonder at the miracles he was doing in God’s name. The disciples must have felt that crowd control was an important part of their job: sometimes they got it right and brought individuals to Jesus with life-changing results; sometimes they mistakenly tried to turn away the very people Jesus wanted to encourage to come to him! Everybody wanted to get close to him, and there just weren’t enough hours in the day for everyone to get a turn.

Sometimes even Jesus himself felt a need to get away with his disciples for rest and in depth teaching, but the needy and determined crowds made it impossible.

You would think, wouldn't you, that many of the people in the crowds, having been so determined to get near him, would have become disciples, convinced by the power of his presence, by the authority of his words, or out of sheer gratitude for the healing they had received. But it's fairly clear from all the gospels that few among the throngs of spectators actually committed themselves to follow him or his teaching. Their interest seemed to be fleeting: a desire for entertainment – he certainly was a good story teller; the once-in-a-lifetime thrill of seeing a miracle performed right before their eyes; even in some cases to impress others by arguing against him.

So, was it worth putting much-needed rest, relaxation and training aside, in order to teach and heal them? That wouldn't have been the way Jesus looked at it at all: his pastoral compassion for them (like God's) neither counted the cost, nor weighed up strategic effectiveness. These people had been drawn to him for whatever reason, and he would/ could not turn them away in their need! Maybe if just one person's relationship with God was awakened or deepened by that crowd encounter it was worth it.

Of course, we have no indication in the text how many in an anonymous crowd did draw nearer to the God whom Jesus called Father. A mistake often made by Jesus' first disciples was to presume to judge who might be worthy of Jesus' attention, and who was not. It was an error perpetuated by centuries of Christian groups and sadly still made by us today. We, like the circumcised (Jewish) Christians spoken about in Ephesians, expect all would-be Christians either to be like us or to strive to become like us in life-style, culture, custom, theological understanding etc.

The writer to the Ephesians, like Jesus, blows that expectation out of the water! In the Kingdom of God, and thus in the Church, all are welcome, all are valued and cherished equally, because all are seen through the eyes of God. There can be no 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> class citizens of the Kingdom, for even those who were once far off from benefitting from the promises of God (i.e. Gentiles) have been brought right up to God's throne by what God has done through the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. The world-changing action of Jesus in dying for all of us on the cross, destroyed all distinctions and barriers created and sustained by human judgment and prejudice. For any of us to continue to cling to such distinctions, is to disobey God's will for his people, which says the writer is to create in Christ a new humanity, a harmonious and united household of God. The holiest of temples, this new community, into which we are graciously called, is founded on God's love revealed in the prophets, embodied in Jesus Christ, and maintained by the Holy Spirit dwelling within the church, and extended to all through the faithful preaching and living out of the gospel in the lives of every believer. The inclusivity and mutual tolerance God himself requires of his Church, is not political correctness, but theological correctness!

There will inevitably be tensions, misunderstandings, and failings within the Christian community, because we are sinful people, needing to seek God's forgiveness and reconciliation with one another every day of our lives. Any Gospel passage about Jesus' disciples, any reading of the Book of Acts or later Church history will confirm how far God's creation of a new humanity still has to go. We are literally a creation in progress. The quality of our relationships with one another is dependent upon the quality of our relationship with Jesus Christ and our openness to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No church whose members are not individually and collectively striving for the well-being (peace - Shalom) of all, harmony within diversity, and reconciliation with one another, can be truly reconciled and at peace with God. Jesus himself said that his disciples will be known by how they love one another. Amen to that!

## **Prayer of Confession** [by Stephen Brown modified]

Merciful God, we rejoice that you entered the world in Jesus Christ.  
We rejoice that looking to Christ we see you, and so we know you as love:  
not soft and sentimental love,  
but love that looses the shackles of sinfulness and promises a better way.  
Forgive us when we fail:  
as individuals, falling short of your glory;  
and together as your Church, when we hurt each other  
and frustrate your purposes.  
Forgive us when we fail to value each person's presence among us  
as the gift from you that it is.  
Forgive us, and teach us how to build each other up in the truth of the gospel  
and the fellowship of faith, f  
or the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,  
through whose death on the cross we are forgiven,  
reconciled to God and to one another. Amen

## **Hymn StF 489 All I once held dear** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLX6MH9hIPi>

- 1 All I once held dear,  
built my life upon,  
all this world reveres,  
and wars to own,  
all I once thought gain  
I have counted loss;  
spent and worthless now,  
compared to this.  
*Knowing you, Jesus,  
knowing you,  
there is no greater thing.  
You're my all, you're the best,  
you're my joy, my righteousness,  
and I love you, Lord.*
- 2 Now my heart's desire  
is to know you more,  
to be found in you  
and known as yours.  
To possess by faith  
what I could not earn,  
all-surpassing gift  
of righteousness.
- 3 Oh, to know the power  
of your risen life,  
and to know you in  
your sufferings.  
To become like you  
in your death, my Lord,  
so with you to live  
and never die.

## **Prayers of Intercession** [by Peter Sheasby\_modified]

For all who are finding life difficult:  
people unemployed or on low pay, struggling to make ends meet,  
seeking new opportunities, weighed down with responsibility.  
We pray especially this morning for those whose work puts them under great strain,  
or even into danger.

Loving Lord: **Hear our prayer**

For all who are sad:  
people sick, at home and in hospital,  
anxious for themselves or someone they love,  
worried by bad news, or lost in bereavement,  
We pray especially for those whose lives have been devastated by the floods of the past few days

Loving Lord: **Hear our prayer**

For all who feel unloved:  
lonely people, those isolated from family, friends, and neighbours,  
families whose relationships have been brought to breaking point,  
children used, abused or ignored.

Loving Lord: **Hear our prayer**

For all who want a better life:  
people who do not like the way they are,  
those afraid to go out,  
unable to make new relationships, or repair broken ones,  
fearful of life itself.  
We pray especially for those seeking asylum,  
refugees desperately braving the perils of illegal travel to distant and unwelcoming lands

Loving Lord: **Hear our prayer**

God, you love each and every person,  
whether they are near to you or keep themselves at a distance:  
help those we have held in our prayers to know your love,  
so that their lives may be enriched and fulfilled,  
and they are free to love others.

Loving Lord: **Hear our prayer**

**Amen**

## **Hymn StF 615 Let love be real** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZUo4gGaq2c>

- 1 Let love be real, in giving and receiving,  
without the need to manage and to own ;  
a haven free from posing and pretending,  
where every weakness may be safely known.  
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,  
give me your love wherever we may go.  
*As God loves us, so let us love each other :  
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

- 2 Let love be real, not grasping or confining,  
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free ;  
that helps us face the risk of truly living,  
and makes us brave to be what we might be.  
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness ;  
give me your love in spite of all you know.  
*As God loves us, so let us love each other :  
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*
- 3 Let love be real, with no manipulation,  
no secret wish to harness or control ;  
let us accept each other's incompleteness,  
and share the joy of learning to be whole.  
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments ;  
give me your trust when all my failings show.  
*As God loves us, so let us love each other :  
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Michael Forster (b.1946)

### **Blessing** [by Kate McIlhagga modified]

Weave a web of your presence around each of us today, O God.  
Be with our hands as they work.  
Be with our eyes as they see.  
Be with our ears as they hear.  
Be with our tongues as they speak.  
Be with our feelings and our thoughts.  
Be with the people we meet.  
Be with the things we make.  
Be with the decisions we take.  
Be in and through, over and under all,  
that doing and hearing and seeing,  
speaking and making and being,  
may we each glimpse your glory, hear your voice,  
and joyfully work with you to create a new heaven and a new earth.  
Amen