

Circuit Service: Sunday 22nd August 2021 prepared by Revd Dr Ruth Midcalf

Welcome to Worship! Wherever you are, whatever time it is, whether you are worshipping in the same physical space as others, or in the quietness of your own home, welcome. Take time, to be still, to acknowledge God's presence, to set aside the list of things to be done in the day, and focus on worshipping God, the creator, life-giver and sustainer.

We reflect on words from Psalm 28: The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults and with my song I give thanks to him. (Psalm 28:7)

We give thanks to God as we sing our first hymn "Great God your love has called us here".

Hymn 499 Great God your love has called us here (CCL Song Number: 2573609)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKTKBA_yxaM

<p>1 Great God, your love has called us here as we, by love for love were made. Your living likeness still we bear, though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed ; we come, with all our heart and mind, your call to hear, your love to find.</p> <p>2 We come with self-inflicted pains of broken trust and chosen wrong, half-free, half-bound by inner chains, by social forces swept along, by powers and systems close confined, yet seeking hope for humankind.</p> <p>3 Great God, in Christ you call our name, and then receive us as your own, not through some merit, right or claim, but by your gracious love alone ; we strain to glimpse your mercy-seat and find you kneeling at our feet.</p>	<p>4 Then take the towel, and break the bread, and humble us, and call us friends ; suffer and serve till all are fed, and show how grandly love intends to work till all creation sings, to fill all worlds, to crown all things.</p> <p>5 Great God, in Christ you set us free your life to live, your joy to share ; give us your Spirit's liberty to turn from guilt and dull despair and offer all that faith can do, while love is making all things new.</p> <p>~(Lord God, your love has called us here)</p> <p>Brian Wren (b. 1936)</p>
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Opening Prayers

Loving and ever-living God, we come before you this day to worship you. We come to acknowledge that as we have just sung you are indeed a Great God. You are the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We bless your name.

We praise you that in your love, in your generosity, in your graciousness and in your mercy you sent your only Son Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world, the Servant

King, the one who came not to be served but to serve and gave his life, that we might have abundant life now and into all eternity.

We are sorry Lord for when we have not lived that abundant life; when we have taken you and your generosity for granted; when we have created obstacles, hurt or anxiety with our words and actions that have made life less abundant and less fulfilled for others. We ask your forgiveness Lord and as forgiven people move us in the power of your Holy Spirit that we might live lives that bring glory to you and share the joy of walking in relationship with Jesus with others.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus who taught us when we pray to say "Our Father..."

Reflection/Children's Talk

I wonder what the word Trust means to you? As a scientist I was always told never to trust atoms because they make up everything! More seriously though, I've been thinking about Trust and began to list the number of times in any given day I place my trust in something or someone.

Each time I sit down on a chair, I trust that it will hold me and not collapse

Each time I turn on the tap, I trust that water will come out of it

Each time I switch on the satnav in the car, I trust that it will direct me safely to my destination.

I place a lot of trust in objects...

I also place a lot of trust in people and they place trust in me.

I trust that if my friends say they will meet me at a particular place and time, they will be there and they do the same with me.

But sometimes things don't work out the way we had hoped.

The chair gives way under my weight

Something happens to the water supply and no water comes out of the tap

The sat nav doesn't recognise the one way street and I end up in a mess!

My friend and I get confused about times and dates and I'm left waiting or I keep them waiting.

In the book of Proverbs we read "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3: 5 (NIV)). Trust is about constancy and consistency ..it's about believing that someone is who they say they are and will do what they say they will do. We can trust God completely! God doesn't wobble or stop working or misdirect us or not turn up! God loves us and wants the very best for

us. It takes time to build trust, when you learn to ride a bike it takes time to trust yourself and the bike and your balance enough to take the stabilisers off, in our friendships and relationships it takes time to build trust to share our deepest thoughts and feelings and so it is with our relationship with God. When we take time with God and invest in that relationship so we deepen our trust in God who loves us so much that Jesus came to earth and died and rose again that we might have life that is joy filled, hope filled and trust filled.

Hymn 54: I will worship (CCL Song Number: 487976)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJsN358apt8>

<p>1 I will worship (I will worship) with all of my heart. (with all of my heart) I will praise you (I will praise you) with all of my strength. (all my strength) I will seek you (I will seek you) all of my days. (all of my days) I will follow (I will follow) all of your ways. (all your ways)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I will give you all my worship, I will give you all my praise. You alone I long to worship, you alone are worthy of my praise.</i></p>	<p>2 I will bow down, (I will bow down) hail you as King. (hail you as King) I will serve you, (I will serve you) give you everything. (give you everything) I will lift up (I will lift up) my eyes to your throne, (my eyes to your throne) I will trust you, (I will trust you) I will trust you alone. (trust you alone).</p> <p>Dave Ruis</p>
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Reading: Mark 5: 21-43

Sermon

In my travelling around this month I've been keeping a particular eye out for removal vans. No! – this is not an adaptation of "I-Spy" whilst in the car, rather that August is the month where many Methodist ministers are on the move. Some will be moving into their first appointments, others into new Circuits. When we moved to this Circuit 6 years ago, it was the 11th time I had moved, and the 7th time as an adult, so I'd had a bit of practice. If you've ever moved house, you will appreciate the upheaval and the trust involved: trusting those who are helping with packing or moving your worldly goods; trusting that they will reach the correct destination, all in one piece; trusting (if you've bought your own property) that all will work out with the final release of keys, trusting that this is the right move.

Moving location of course is not a new phenomenon. One of the first accounts of moving in Scripture is in Genesis 12. Abram is happily settled in Haran and has been for the last 75 years. He has a wife, a wider family, a household. But God has other plans for Abram – and tells him to go with his family – to the land that God will show him. We read Abram’s response to this in Genesis 12: Chapter 4 – “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him”. There is no mention of Abram questioning this, of saying “I’d rather stay here, thank you”; simply, “So Abram went” – placing his trust, the welfare of himself and his family and his household in God’s care.

We are of course, not all called to move our whole household’s physical location in our walk with God, but we are, all called at points to ‘move’, to shift, to change. We’re sometimes called to change our thinking, our mindset, our position. We’re called to take the first courageous step, to make the move, in reconciling with another; we’re called to make a move to offer or to ask for help. We’re called to take a first step, even when we can’t clearly see what the rest of the journey will bring. Perhaps like me, you’re a planner and want to know the detail, want to tie up as many as possible, if not all, of the loose ends and simply stepping out into the unknown is really difficult. But when those moments come I’m reminded of Moses and the Israelites who journeyed in the wilderness for 40 years. They were and we are not alone in our next steps. In Exodus 13, we read “The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night” (Exodus 13: 21). For sure, their journey was not easy. We read in the account in Exodus of a series of ups and downs – not just in the terrain – but God never left them, not for one microsecond. Whatever, you or I are walking in to in the next minute, the next hour, the next day, week, month, year, we can trust that God goes ahead of us into it and is with us by the power of the Holy Spirit, in each ‘next step’, however faltering or firm our step is.

Well, you might say, this trusting business is all very well Ruth, when the going is good – when the road is easy, when our relationships are harmonious, when we are physically well, when all is well with the world. But what about when our individual situations turn upside down, what about when we’ve been so let down by others that we find it difficult to even utter the word Trust...

In our Gospel reading today, we read of two people whose individual situations had been turned upside down – one for many years, the other for a comparatively short time. The first we encounter is Jairus, a well-known respected figure in the community, a leader of the synagogue. Jesus has just arrived in town and already a large crowd has gathered. Jairus’s daughter is dying and we can imagine him making his way through the crowd before falling on his knees before Jesus. In his actions and his words, in the challenge he faces, Jairus places his trust in Jesus –

“Please come...so she will live”. And Jesus goes with him. But as they make their way to Jairus’ home with the crowd pushing around him, a woman who has been haemorrhaging for over a decade, who has had her trust broken by a succession of doctors, who now has no money to pay for any more treatment, reaches out to Jesus. She has heard about him and reaches just for the hem of his cloak, that in touching it, she might be healed. The encounter this woman, whose name we never know, has with Jesus is life-changing. Her reaching out in trust is transformational.

But whilst the world is changing for the woman, it’s not changing for Jairus. I have this image in my mind of Jairus shifting from foot to foot as Jesus stops as he feels someone touch his clothing, as he asks “Who touched me?”, as he waits, as the woman shares her story, as Jesus speaks with her. Whilst all this is happening, Jairus must be in turmoil. His daughter is dying...every second that is spent here is a delay. He needs to get back to his daughter but Jesus is busy – he can’t interrupt – come on Jesus....

And then the worst possible news comes. Friends of Jairus arrive. “Your daughter is dead”, they say. “Don’t bother the teacher any more”. We can only imagine Jairus’s reaction but he hears Jesus calling him to follow and somehow finds the trust, the courage, the support of others, that propels him to follow Jesus to his daughter...who Jesus restores to health.

But what about when there isn’t a ‘happy ending’...I’ve wrestled with that for the last 18 months since my Mum died suddenly. Broken by grief, unable to fix an unfixable situation, my wrestling with trust was more about me and how I would cope and manage. Over the last 18 months, God has heard it all from me – the joys, the challenges, the lamenting, the grieving, the thankfulness, the memories, the tears, the missed opportunities – and is big enough to hold it all. God has accompanied the faltering steps, and the more confident ones and gently said “Trust me...trust me in the good things, I’m with you in them and when it feels like your treading treacle, when the waves break again – I’m here too”. And when at one point I didn’t know how I would make it through the next day – here I am 18 months later.

As we approach the end of this Methodist year, may we look back on all that God has brought us through and trust God for the present and the future. When I moved as a child with Mum and Dad (who was a Methodist minister) at the end of every leaving service we would sing “This, this is the God we adore” – a hymn that has been a firm favourite since and the last verse of which has been a blessing to me particularly in recent months. I pray it will be so for you now whatever steps God all is calling you to take, whatever it is you need to trust God for, and wherever you are in that journey....“Tis Jesus the first and the last, Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home, We’ll praise Him for all that is past, and trust Him for all that’s to come”. Amen.

Hymn: STF 18 Be still and know that I am God (CCL Song Number: 7089829)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyDr9-Mpc s>

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Anonymous Based on Psalm 46:10-11</p>
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Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Loving Lord, for your world, we give you thanks. We thank you for those who seek to bring peace in your world, for those working for justice and equality, for those alleviating hunger and thirst. We bring before you the needs of your world at this time. We bring you communities and countries torn apart by war and unrest; countries ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic; homes and families at risk because of the impact of humanities use of our planet. Show us how we may make a difference in your world and speak out for what is right.

For your world Lord, in you we place our trust.

Loving Lord, for your church we give you thanks. We thank you for the faithful witness to you of millions of people across the world; for the many ways in which the church interacts with and takes the lead in community initiatives; for places where ecumenical relationships flourish and your love is reflected in unity. We bring before you those places in your world where the church must meet underground or as dispersed individuals; where people are persecuted for their faith, praying for courage, strength and hope.

For your church Lord, in you we place our trust.

Loving Lord, for all who care for others this day, we give you thanks. We thank you for those who care within families, within hospitals and other healthcare or residential settings; those who care for the dying and the bereaved. We pray for those who need your healing, your comfort, your strength, your peace this day. For all in any kind of need Lord, in you we place our trust.

Loving Lord, for all you have blessed us with we give you thanks. (You may want to give thanks either aloud or in the silence of your heart for specific ways in which God has blessed you). Strengthen us for all you call us to and help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. We make this prayer in His precious name. Amen.

Hymn STF 658 A charge to keep I have (CCL Song Number 2647360)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w-m4JlKjy4>

<p>1 A charge to keep I have : a God to glorify ; a never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky ;</p> <p>2 To serve the present age, my calling to fulfil ; O may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will !</p>	<p>3 Arm me with jealous care, as in your sight to live ; and O your servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give !</p> <p>4 Help me to watch and pray, and on yourself rely, so shall I not my trust betray, nor love within me die.</p> <p>Charles Wesley (1707–1788)</p>
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Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.