

Worship at Home service Sunday 28th April 2024 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A call to worship:

We gather together to meet with our Lord, to refresh our faith, to learn new things, and to be encouraged on our journey. So, come, let us worship. **Amen.**

A gathering prayer

God of our journey, guide our path, and make us ready in our encounters with others to learn new things about you – for you are the God of surprises. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

StF 476 One more step along the world I go.

One more step along the world I go, one more step along the world I go; from the old things to the new keep me travelling along with you:

and it's from the old I travel to the new; keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn, more and more about the world I learn; all the new things that I see you'll be looking at along with me:

As I travel through the bad and good, keep me travelling the way I should; where I see no way to go, you'll be telling me the way, I know:

Give me courage when the world is rough, keep me loving though the world is tough; leap and sing in all I do, keep me travelling along with you:

You are older than the world can be, you are younger than the life in me; ever old and ever new, keep me travelling along with you.

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

Bible readings

Acts 8.26-40; Psalm 22.25-31; 1 John 4.7-21; John 15.1-8

Prayer

Help me, Lord, when times are good, to thank you for your everlasting support. Help me to wonder at the awesome natural world. Help me to appreciate the people, near and far, who brighten my day. Help me, Lord, to be strong for others. Help me to be ready for whatever you ask of me. But most of all, help me to grow in you. **Amen.**

Elva Towler, Clayton Methodist Church, inspired by the Beatles song 'Help'

Prayer of thanksgiving

Creator God, we acknowledge that as your handiwork, we stand alongside all that you have made. Trees and rivers, mountains and valleys, soaring birds and scuttling creatures, all are held within your care. May we grow in our love and appreciation for the fabulous variety around us; and may our awe and wonder draw us closer to the natural world, and through it to you, the God of all things.

Amen. This prayer is from Rev Cate Williams, Diocese of Gloucester, from the Church of England's World Environment Day prayers.

Time to reflect:

Today's reflection from John's Gospel in Chapter 15 picks up on one of Jesus sayings in verse 5, 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing'.

On reading this passage I have just noticed the word remain is repeated eight times, in just eight verses. Sometimes when a word is repeated, it emphasises the word and it may be an opportunity to look a little closer at the word remain.

For me these few verses remind me of the natural world we live in, and the Creator God who is connected in and through our beautiful world. In a small way, I try to be a good steward of what I have.

This year, for the first time in early March, I brought some peat free compost for my rhubarb and some new triangular planters, where I am planning to plant parsnips and leeks. I have always enjoyed the challenge of growing vegetables from seed. The reality is that growth in the seeds is inevitable, but I am not always guaranteed a crop.

Vines grown in the middle east are often grown quite close to the ground, and in so doing the gardener who prunes the branches to encourage the growth, bends down and cares for the plant with a watchful eye. Just like our heavenly Father who is in heaven, cares and loves his children, and watches over this world He has created.

As Christians, we have a choice to remain in Him. It is clear from these verses there is an incredible opportunity as we live our lives faithful to God's word, as branches, we too will bear much fruit for God's glory.

I am reminded of a hymn in Singing the Faith called 'To God be the glory great things has done' In the chorus we sing,

'Praise the Lord praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice,
Praise the Lord praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice,
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory great things He has done' .

In the changing seasons, from spring into summer when we see the wonders of God's creation, I am sometimes lost for words. All I can do is worship.

Last week, in each of our worshipping communities, we considered green issues here at NMC. I was reminded of Mark Dowd a Catholic priest who I met seventeen years ago, he made a documentary for Channel four called 'How Green is God? More recently, last year I listened to Ruth Valerio who is Global Advocacy and influencing Director at Tear Fund, challenging the Methodist Church to be activists in challenging the injustice in our world at present. Ruth Valerio issues a challenge for us in the Methodist Church, and I will end today's reflection with a prayer she shares with us today.

Ruth says as followers of Jesus, through whom all things were made, let's be at the forefront of protecting and restoring his creation. The climate crisis is a huge and urgent challenge that requires all of us to play our part.

Proverbs 31:9 says: 'Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.' We are called as Christians to stand up for justice, calling on those in positions of power to make decisions that protect the most vulnerable people and the Earth we all rely on. Let's keep standing together in prayer and action to see a breakthrough in the climate crisis.

Let us pray Creator God, thank you for the beauty of your creation, teeming with life. Thank you for the ways you've designed all things to work together.

We pray for your whole creation, as it suffers and groans. And we pray for those who are vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis. Where there are droughts, we pray for rain; where there are storms, we pray for protection. Lord, forgive us for the ways that we've made this problem worse.

We pray for leaders in governments and businesses around the world to take bold steps towards tackling this climate crisis. Guide us in raising our voices and living differently to bring justice to this situation. Amen.

StF 645 Will your anchor hold in the storms of life.

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

Refrain:

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rage, and the wild winds blow,
shall the angry waves then your bark o'erflow? **[Refrain]**

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,
when the waters cold chill your latest breath?
On the rising tide you can never fail, while
your anchor holds within the veil. **[Refrain]**

Will your eyes behold through the morning
light the city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,
when life's storms are past for evermore?

[Refrain]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQQO8v-0VBo>

A sending out prayer:

Lord, be with us on our journeys with others
and open our eyes to you. **Amen.**