

Worship at Home service Sunday 18th August 2024 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A call to worship:

Our best ideas are nothing compared to those of the king of all creation. We come together today to seek his wisdom, to ask for his mercy and to receive his grace. **Amen.**

A gathering prayer

Lord of all, you know our hearts, our hopes and our fears. Please give us your wisdom to know what is best and to serve you and those around us as best we can. **Amen.**

StF 328 Jesus shall reign

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,
does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

2 To him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head.
His name like sweet perfume shall rise,
with every morning sacrifice.

3 People and realms of every tongue,
dwell on his love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim,
their early blessings on his name.

4 Blessings abound where'er he reigns:
the prisoners leap to lose their chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.

5 Let every creature rise and bring,
the highest honours to our King,
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BE4DDB5whyk>

Bible readings

Psalms 111; Ephesians 5.15-20

Reflection:

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is quite a small compact letter and there are no original documents that share the hymns they used in the early church. However, we know from various sources the Psalms were sung and put to music.

John Wesley said, 'Sing all', to the praise and glory of God. It is hoped that 'Singing the Faith' will be a powerful witness to the Gospel, encouraging faith and conviction. Barbara Bircumshaw (chair of the Music resources Group) quotes today's Bible verse, Ephesians 5 v 19 – 20, 'speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

When I came to the Northampton circuit, I quickly found out that Methodist Churches use a variety of different hymn books, including ' Sacred Songs and Solos, Singing the Faith and not forgetting various Songs of Fellowship volumes, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. So within the first few weeks I had to ensure I sent the correct numbers of the hymnbook that each Church uses, to the worship stewards in time for the services.

From a very early age I can remember singing hymns in Churches and learning the words of familiar hymns. The annual Methodist Conference always opens and closes with traditional hymns and many visitors are inspired by the power of a large gathering singing in harmony.

John and Charles Wesley first realised the power of singing to strengthen faith when they were travelling across the Atlantic to Georgia in January 1736. There was a terrible storm at sea, but a group of German Moravian Christians inspired the brothers with their confidence in God. They preached and sang hymns together and the Wesley brothers realised their own faith was much weaker. Two years later, back in London, both John and Charles experienced a conversion in which they felt a deep assurance that they personally had received salvation. Charles wrote in all about 6000 hymns, and many of them are still sung today, not only by Methodists, but by Christians across the world.

I carry around with me a pocket guide to the Methodist Way of Life where it talks about our response to God's gift of love. There are twelve things that we do individually that help us to worship God, including, to serve others, to be evangelistic, and learn and care together. I am closing today's reflection with two questions about worship, for us to consider how we respond. God wants to refresh you and I, worshipping with others helps a faith community to connect with each other.

I leave you with two questions to ponder, 'When have you felt close to God in worship?' and 'What sort of worship refreshes you?'

Prayers of intercession

As we come to God, let us sit in stillness and silence, listening for his still, small voice...
(pause for silence)

O Lord, when you call, let us answer:

Speak, Lord, we are listening.

We pray for our church community. We bring before you any pressing needs or concerns....

We pray for the work of this church during the week ahead. Show us where we can be your hands, eyes, ears and voice in our local area.

Lord, is there someone or somewhere you particularly want us to go to this week? We pause in silence to listen again for your still, small voice....

Help us to take our love for you out into our streets, shops, schools and businesses this week. We pray that our community will be flooded with your love and glory.

O Lord, when you call, let us answer:

Speak, Lord, we are listening.

We pray for those we know who are struggling at the moment: for those who are sick (particularly...); for those who suffer from depression or anxiety (particularly...); for the elderly and bewildered; for those who are sad and sorrowful, especially because someone they love has died (particularly the families and friends of...). Lord, help us not to pass by on the other side when we see someone in need or in pain. Help us to be good listeners to one another and to give up our time just to sit with those who need our support.

O Lord, when you call, let us answer:

Speak, Lord, we are listening.

Finally, Lord, we offer the coming week to you. In the stillness, we picture the places where we are expecting to be and the people we are expecting to be with. Go before us to prepare our way. Smooth the path where there might be friction and ease the path where there might be pain.

Help us to be ready for any eventualities that may take up more time or effort than we might have hoped. Help us to see your presence in every situation and to follow where you lead.

O Lord, when you call, let us answer: **Speak, Lord, we are listening.**

Go before us and guide us and help us to follow. Amen.

He calls me friend.

I have a friend; a faithful friend And Jesus is His name. He will not leave; He stands by me
My Shepherd He remains

I have a friend; a mighty friend And Jesus is His name. I shall not fear, He holds me near
His strength will keep me safe

His name is True King, Lord of creation,

Ruler without end, I call Him Hope, Peace, Wonderful Saviour. And what joy that Jesus calls me friend.

I have a friend, the kindest friend. And Jesus is His name. He hears my cry by day or night and wipes my tears away.

His name is True King, Lord of creation, Ruler without end, I call Him Hope, Peace, Wonderful Saviour. And what joy that Jesus calls me friend.

He calls me friend.

I have a friend, a Saviour friend. And Jesus is His name. He fought for me on Calvary. And trampled on the grave.

His name is True King, Lord of creation. Ruler without end. I call Him Hope, Peace, Wonderful Saviour. And what joy that Jesus calls me friend.

We sing.

His name is True King, Lord of creation Ruler without end I call Him Hope, Peace, Wonderful Saviour And what joy that Jesus calls me friend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6KMWoTOLIk>

A sending out prayer:

King of kings, you have all the wisdom, the glory and the majesty. Continue to give us your gift of wisdom each day so that we might serve you in all that we do. **Amen.**

