

Worship @ Home for Sunday, 1st of January 2023 with Revd Francis M’Itiri.

Call To Worship

We gather as the scattered church of Christ, *into a new day of the New Year 2023.*

*We bring our praises and thanks to our God. **Blessed be God forever***

*Let us release our grudges, our anger, and our pains. **For there is a God of new possibilities.***

*Let us live each day in the most loving ways. **Blessed be God forever***
God, you make all things new you bring hope alive in our hearts and cause our Spirits to be born again. **Praise the Lord for the New Year and all the potential it holds.**

Come dear Lord and kindle in us a flame of your Holy Spirit. **That many in our time will experience your great wonders.**

Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever. Amen**

Collect of the day

For many churches in the Methodist Connexion today or a Sunday close to today is the day we hold the Covenant Service. At this service we recall the promises God has made to us. We are gathered today as his Church to renew our promises to him. This year the 1st of January also happens to be the 250th anniversary of the release of John Newton’s hymn, ‘Amazing Grace’, which is sung by people in their many cultures and different languages. Today we use this hymn to help shape our devotions and New Year perspective.

STF 440: Amazing grace how sweet the sound

Amazing grace -- how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

God's grace has taught my heart to fear, his grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;
God's grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.

And, when this heart and flesh shall fail and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil, a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we first begun.

Time to Reflect:

Reflecting 1 Chronicles 17

Commencing a fresh start in life requires careful retrospection and energy. We do acknowledge that a lot has really happened in the previous year. To some, it has been a rough year, of mistakes, pain and loss, joy, generosity and kindness, forgiveness and peace, decline and growth, giving and receiving, rejection and exclusion, welcome, inclusion and hospitality and the list is long.

Words from the prophet Isaiah 43:18-19 remind us that there is always a fresh start as found in the following words of the scripture.

“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

There have been many good things that have enhanced positive living and terrible things that have disrupted peace and the general normal life. The words in Isaiah offers a sense of hope. *‘behold I am doing a new thing.* The temptation is here is to try to concentrate thinking on the difficult part of life and whilst on the bigger picture, ignore what God might be trying to do.

For in God, possibilities for a new beginning are many. For countries and continents that had never hosted a world cup before, 2022 was a special year to them and something to really be thankful for, to the almighty God. To those not aware, the World Cup was held 20th November up to 18th of December in Qatar. This in disguise turned into a huge blessing for the economy of Qatar and the Asian continent.

It was the first World Cup ever to be held in the Arab and Muslim world, the second to be held in Asia after the 2002 tournament in South Korea and Japan. Prior to qualifying as the FIFA hosting nation,

Qatar had never qualified in the World Cup since the country's independence in 1971.

During the World Cup, many folks found an opportunity to plan for their holiday to watch live matches in Qatar, or in the comfort of their own home with friends. By God's grace the world cup ended peacefully. We praise God for this.

Today, we are reminded of the experiences of John Newton (1725-1807), formerly a slave trade captain, employed by a slave-trader named Clow, who owned a plantation of lemon trees on an island west of Africa. Clow and his household maid ended mistreating Newton in a very inhumane manner, forcing Newton to beg for food to relieve his hunger.

Throughout these bitter experiences and careless living, he came into faith when God saved him from a shipwreck. He had been reading Thomas Kempis's article, *'The Imitation of Christ'*. He was struck by a line about the "uncertain continuance of life." He also recalled the passage in Proverbs, "Because I have called and ye have refused, ... *I also will laugh at your calamity.*" (Prov 1;24-28). He converted during the storm, though he admitted later, "*I cannot consider myself to have been a believer, in the full sense of the word.*" John Newton later joined the CofE as an ordained Priest, where he worked behind the scenes campaigning and supporting the work of William Wilberforce (1759 –1833, a member of the House of Lords and a British and anti-slavery campaigner) that saw the anti-slavery bill passed through a standing ovation bringing an end to the slavery business within all British colonies in 1807.

Inspired by his own salvation experiences, John Newton wrote the 'Amazing Grace Hymn' which is influenced entirely by King David's life as recorded in I Chronicles Chapter 17.

And if you were to similarly reflect on your life with a song, what could it look like?

At this stage of the year, we come before God to make a covenant with God. We also ought to be careful about New Year resolutions as most of those made by people in the New Year, either never get off the ground or are aborted within days, weeks, or a few months.

At the beginning of this New Year, we discover we might be like John Newton needing a strong nudge from God to change us.

Take a time to sit quietly in prayer

Let us call into mind the promises of God that he promised to be with us always in this life. Loving and eternal God, draw our hearts and thoughts towards you.

We bring into our prayers, those whose dreams, investments, projects, relationships, and careers have been shattered and destroyed.

We pray for those who feel persecuted, abused, lonely, and not loved, that they will find peace and joy during this period of a New Year.

We pray for our loved ones struggling with things in their lives that they will find courage in discerning what is best for them to do.

Merciful God, strengthen, hold your children with your loving arms, as you walk them through victoriously. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer, Our Father

Hymn StF 628 Faithful One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PjSO5lhI0M>

Faithful One, so unchanging, Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,

I call out to you again and again. I call out to you again and again.

***You are my rock in times of trouble. You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the anchor, my hope is in you alone.***

A prayer of blessing

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, remain always with us. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve God.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Wishing everyone, a happy & blessed prosperous new year 2023.