

## **Worship at Home with Mary Winchcombe for 12<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

### **Call to Worship:**

Lord, we are here today to worship you, with our hearts open before you, with our voices raised in praise, with our minds and understanding, and with every fibre of our being. **Amen.**

### **STF 28 Jesus calls us here to meet him**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yulQuvsFD00>

*Jesus calls here to meet him  
as, through word and song and prayer,  
we affirm God's promised presence  
where his people live and care.  
Praise the God who keeps his promise;  
praise the Son who calls us friends;  
praise the Spirit who among us,  
to our hopes and fears attends.*

*Jesus calls us to confess him  
Word of life and Lord of all,  
sharer of our flesh and frailness,  
serving all who fail or fall.  
Tell his holy human story;  
tell his tales that all may hear;  
tell the world that Christ in glory  
came to earth to meet us here.*

*Jesus calls us to each other,  
vastly different though we are;  
creed and colour, class and gender  
neither limit nor debar.  
Join the hand of friend and stranger;  
join the hands of age and youth;  
join the faithful and the doubter  
in their common search for truth.*

### **Prayers:**

We praise you, glorious God,  
for all the seeds that have been planted in our lives that you have watered  
and tended so gently and faithfully,  
seeds of hope and acceptance;  
seeds of belonging and forgiveness;

seeds of grace and encouragement.

May we share those gifts,

and be your gardeners,

so that others too may grow in the knowledge of your love.

We know that only you Lord are perfect. So often we fall short in our walk with you but you are always so willing to forgive and for that we thank you in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**Readings: Deuteronomy 30: 15-20**

**Matthew 5: 21-26; 33-37**

**Message:**

In Deuteronomy, as the first descendants of those rescued from Egypt are about to enter the Promised Land, God invites them to renew their Covenant commitment.

In our Matthew reading Jesus continues to teach his disciples. We sometimes overlook the fact that a 'disciple', in the simplest sense, is someone who accepts a 'discipline'. And here he teaches them about the need to discipline thoughts and feelings, so that right behaviour follows naturally; that thoughts, feelings and actions must all be aligned in the direction of Jesus.

He challenged his disciples and he challenges us not to live so much by the letter of the law but by its spirit of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, we are asked to consider our relationships with one another and to deal positively with struggles and conflict in our lives, both as individuals and in the wider community, including the church. To trust in God to help us to resolve issues as they arise, to be reconciled to those people that we have hurt, or have hurt us.



The screen shows a picture of a sculpture by the Irish artist Maurice Harron called 'Hands Across the Divide' which stands in Carlisle Square in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, part of our UK which for years experienced violence, bloodshed and division.

Those hands are not quite touching – but they are reaching out.

Jesus' teaching about anger reminds us that reconciliation is an essential part of community life. Reconciliation doesn't mean we all agree. It means we find ways of disagreeing agreeably.

We probably all know of families where an incident, be it recent or in the past, has caused a rift which has not been resolved. Sometimes many years have gone by. In life there will always be people and situations that are difficult; Sadly we live in a divided world – a world where division and unrest seem to be rife.

Justin Welby Archbishop of Canterbury said in his speech on Reconciliation: Reconciliation doesn't mean we all agree. It means we find ways of disagreeing – perhaps very passionately – but loving each other deeply at the same time, and being deeply committed to each other. That's the challenge for the church if we are actually going to speak to our society, which is increasingly divided in many different ways.

Reconciliation is about our relationships - with God and with each other. It involves people, communities and nations learning to live together with deeply-held differences – in a spirit of love and respect. It is to work for justice and seek truth in the light of God's mercy and peace. For Christians this is not optional: it's the very heart of the gospel. As we are reconciled in Jesus we now share this gift of God with each other and the whole human family.

Reconciliation transforms how we live with the inevitable conflict life brings, while itself bringing us into conflict with all that excludes and diminishes people and communities. On the journey of reconciliation enemies become friends and hope replaces despair.

The Bible and Jesus always point to God. If we read the Bible and follow Jesus' teaching, they will keep us on the right course. People and experiences can knock us off course, but we can always turn back to God. We are all of us infinitely precious in God's sight.

That needs to be a bedrock value in all our relationships.

Our love for God can only be the response of beloved children towards their loving parent. 'We love because he first loved us' (1 John 4.19). This was true for the Israelites on the verge of entering the Promised Land, because of all that God had done for their parents' generation. It is even more so for us as Christians, because of all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

### **Prayers for others:**

Gracious God we bring to you our broken world, so full of injustice and exploitation, suffering and sorrow, hatred and division.

We pray for all who work for change; all who strive to bring help and healing, hope and wholeness. Loving God bring healing and renewal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **STF 707 Make Me a Channel of your Peace**

Make me a channel of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring your love; Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord; And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

*Oh master, grant that I may never seek, So much to be consoled as to console; To be understood as to understand; To be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace, Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope; Where there is darkness, only light; And where there's sadness, ever joy:

#### **Refrain**

Make me a channel of your peace. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned, In giving to all men that we receive, and in dying that we're born into eternal life.

#### **Blessing:**

God of all, in you we are changed; by you we are blessed; through you we are enabled to grow in faith, in maturity, and in usefulness in your world. So, we go in peace, and unity, in the name of Jesus.

**Amen.**