



## AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2025

*compiled by Rev. Melvyn Cooke*

### Call to Worship

*We meet in the presence of God and with each other to offer our worship, our praise, our confession and adoration. We bring our hopes, our fears, our selves to this place at this time. So let us worship God.*

### Song - 36 Singing the Faith

1] There's a quiet understanding  
When we're gathered in the Spirit  
It's a promise that He gives us  
When we gather in His name  
There's a love we feel in Jesus  
There's a manna that He feeds us  
It's a promise that He gives us  
When we gather in His name

2] And we know when we're together  
sharing love and understanding  
that our brothers and our sisters  
feel the oneness that he brings  
Thank you, thank you, thank you Jesus  
for the way you love and feed us,  
For the many ways you lead us;  
thank you, thank you, Lord.

*Tedd Smith (1927-2023)*

### Prayers of Approach

Lord God, we offer our praise at your creation.  
We see the sunshine brightening up our world,  
we feel the rain cooling our bodies and feeding the soil.  
The wind blows and petals swirl and our washing dries.  
Our vast oceans and mountains are incredible,  
as is the intricate detail of every cobweb or flower.

And yet, we take so much for granted,  
that we fail to take notice of what we are doing to your planet.  
We use the resources for our own need or gain  
with no regard to the damage, we are doing.  
We plunder and destroy for our own benefit with no regard for consequences.  
We are sorry for our selfishness and greed.  
We are sorry that we want for ourselves what is provided for others.  
Forgive our jealousy of others  
and our willingness to turn a blind eye to what is fair,  
so that we can have what we want.

Lord, we know that if we are truly sorry, you will forgive us.  
That if we commit to turning our lives around and trying again,  
we are assured of your forgiveness.  
We offer our commitment and receive your blessing.

Thank you, Lord, for your world and our part in it.  
May we share what we have, offer our love, compassion and care  
to all we meet that we might honour your name and live out your word.  
Thank you for the gifts you provide us with to fully become your people.

Be with us now as we listen for your word  
that we may be inspired to go out and live for you every day. Amen

### **Reading        Luke 9: 51 - 62**

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village.

#### **The Cost of Following Jesus**

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."

Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

### **Hymn – 501 Singing the Faith**

1] Help us, O Lord, to learn the truths your word imparts. to study, that your laws may be inscribed upon our hearts.	2] Help us, O Lord, to live the faith which we proclaim, that all our thoughts and words and deeds may glorify your name.
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3] Help us, O Lord, to teach  
the beauty of your ways,  
that yearning souls may find the Christ  
and sing aloud his praise.

*William Watkins Reid Jr (1923-2007)*

### **Reflection**

On the Sunday that you are sharing in this service, I will be preaching at the church anniversary service of Third Avenue Methodist Church in Gillingham, Kent, a very special church in my heart, as I had the honour to be their minister for some 13 years. It was an interesting appointment in so many ways, not the least because as a young 17-year-old I was sent out from a church in that town to become a lay pastor of a church some 30 miles away. When I became the minister of what was then Gillingham Methodist Church I was literally returning to my hometown, back to my beginnings.

I returned to my hometown some 30 years after I had left, not only older but I hope a lot wiser, with the price paid for many lessons learnt along the way, and on this morning, I share with you some of those mistakes, scars and blessings of this journey.

I had learnt that in my witness for Christ, and in my ministry that I **needed to be forthright**, that I constantly required that Christ should set my priorities, rather than my own obsessions and interests. How easy it had become during those years for me to concentrate on what I liked doing, rather than that which Christ had

called me to become. As I read Luke's account of Jesus speaking with his disciples I hear the echo of the challenging words, that one of the hardest challenges of discipleship is to give over ownership of my life choices. "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

I had learnt in my witness for Christ and in my ministry that I **needed to be focussed**. To quote that much loved bear, Pooh Bear, "I am a bear of little brain", this too could be said of me, I can be so easily distracted in life. My years in ministry as I returned to my home town had enabled me to realise that I required of myself to be intentional in so much that I did, not seeking the easy path, nor allowing myself to be distracted in fulfilling tasks that were not productive for God's Kingdom. When God called me and equipped me for what is still my ministry, he gave me spiritual gifts which work alongside my own skills and abilities. In ministry I have learnt that there is a job to be done, but not at the expense of the gifts God has given me, and unless I share my gifting with the gifting of others, then not only do I deprive others of fulfilment, but I negate my own calling and purpose of that calling. Tough words of Jesus when he says, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." But sometimes hard love is the best love.

I had learnt in my witness for Christ and in my ministry that I **needed to be forward thinking**, this church in Gillingham that I was appointed to, was the result of merging four churches together. The Circuits thinking was that four churches near each other with diminishing congregations and ageing buildings, should combine to form a new church in the largest of the buildings. The reality was four tired and ageing congregations, now made a larger church of tired and ageing congregants, with no more energy or passion for anything other than to see out their days. If I brought anything into this situation it was the hard learnt lesson that there was no need to live in the past. I could live with the past, recognising all that had been, but that, God had not finished with his purpose for that church, we had to discern what God was doing, and going to do in that place. It is so easy to rest upon the triumphs and good times of the past, and past generations that we get drawn into the 'good old days syndrome', the best has been! Did you know that a recent report has shown that there are over 2 million more people attending church now than there were 6 years ago, and that the attendance figures for young men aged between 18 – 24 has risen from 4% to 21%?

When Jesus says, "No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.", perhaps we should read this not as an admonishment, but an encouragement to keep looking forward.

## **Prayers**

*Today is Conference Sunday for the Methodist Church in Britain. We will remember this as we come to God With our prayers for others and ourselves.*

Gracious God, you call all kinds of people  
To work for You, in Your church and in other places. We pray for those who have responded,  
And who are being ordained today.  
We ask your blessing upon them,  
May they be true to Your call,  
And never forget how much You love them. Jesus said, 'Go in my name.'

**Lord, may Your servants hear and obey.**

We thank You that Your church is to be found  
In every part of the world.

We pray for representatives from the world church, who have come for this year's conference.

May they find a warm welcome here.  
Give them opportunities to tell their stories,  
So that those they meet may be encouraged. Jesus said, 'Go in my name.'  
**Lord, may Your servants hear and obey.**

We pray for those who will be starting new work After this conference,  
And for those whose work will come to an end.  
May they remember that You love and accept them, whatever work they may be doing.  
Jesus said, 'Go in my name.'  
**Lord, may Your servants hear and obey.**

We pray for our own church,  
For our minister, and for all who worship here. You send us out to serve You,  
Just as Jesus sent the disciples.  
Strengthen our faith and give us confidence In Your power to help us,  
So that we may also be His faithful disciples. Jesus said, 'Go in my name.'  
**Lord, may Your servants hear and obey. Amen**

We say together the **Lord's Prayer** in the version, and language you are most comfortable using.

### **Hymn – 658 Singing the Faith**

1] A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify, A never-dying soul to save, And fit it for the sky.	2] To serve the present age, My calling to fulfill: Oh, may it all my pow'rs engage To do my Master's will!
3] Arm me with jealous care, As in Thy sight to live; And O Thy servant, Lord, prepare A strict account to give!	4] Help me to watch and pray, And on Thyself rely, Assured, if I my trust betray, I shall forever die.

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

### **Blessing**

As we go out from this place and into our week,  
let us go out and love our neighbour as ourselves  
as we know that the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
is with us all, now and always. Amen

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