Wrenbury & Nantwich Mission Area **Methodist** Churches 

**Sunday 27 September 2020**

This short act of worship has been prepared for us to use as we are not able to gather for worship. We can remain connected in fellowship by following this simple act of worship around the time you would normally be gathered for worship in your chapel/church.

**Opening Prayer**

As we still ourselves we recognise that wherever we are, we are in God’s presence and the God we know in Jesus waits patiently for us.

Lord our God, help us to know your ways and teach us your paths.

Lead us in your truth for you are the God of our salvation.

**Hymn: StF3 Eternal God**

Sing/ read /pray /proclaim the words

Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory

 cascades through life in overflowing grace,

to tell creation's meaning in the story

 of love evolving love from time and space.

Eternal Son of God, uniquely precious,

 in you, deserted, scorned and crucified,

God's love has fathomed sin and death's deep

 darkness,

 and flawed humanity is glorified.

Eternal Spirit, with us like a mother,

 embracing us in love serene and pure:

you nurture strength to follow Christ our brother,

 as full-grown children, confident and sure.

Love's trinity, self-perfect, self-sustaining;

 love which commands, enables and obeys:

you give yourself, in boundless joy, creating

 one vast increasing harmony of praise.

We ask you now, complete your image in us;

 this love of yours, our source and guide and goal.

May love in us seek love and serve love's purpose,

 till we ascend with Christ and find love whole.

*Alan Gaunt (b. 1935)*

**Let us pray together**

Loving God, all worship and adoration belongs to you, for you alone are Lord, you alone are the mighty God, Creator of all that is good.

And yet you are closer than our very breath.

You are closer than my breath and I thank you, Lord, that you are always with me,

whether I know it or not,

whether I recognise it or not,

whether I delight in it or not.

You are always there to comfort and to challenge

Thank you for your saving presence. **Amen**

*You might like to bring to mind the things you are sorry for this week, confident in God’s loving mercy and forgiveness.*

**Today’s Reading from the Old Testament**

**Exodus 17: 1 - 7**

Water from the Rock

From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ Moses said to them, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?’ But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, ‘Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?’ So Moses cried out to the Lord, ‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.’ The Lord said to Moses, ‘Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.’ Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’

**Today’s Gospel Reading:**

**Matthew 21: 23 - 32**

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?’ Jesus said to them, ‘I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?’ And they argued with one another, ‘If we say, “From heaven”, he will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “Of human origin”, we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And he said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

‘What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, “Son, go and work in the vineyard today.” He answered, “I will not”; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, “I go, sir”; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

**Time to Reflect**

‘Is the Lord among us or not?’ This is the question behind both the Old Testament and the first part of the New Testament readings.

Is the Lord among us when we are thirsty in the Wilderness and have no water?

Is the Lord among us in the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth?

No doubt in the last months the question ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’ has been asked as we contend with the global pandemic with all its implications, not least the different ways of worship.

“Is the Lord among us or not?”

The answer of faith is **yes**. We have God’s promise resounding down the generations in the words “I will be with you” and “I am with you”.

Is the Lord among us when we are thirsty in the Wilderness and have no water?

Yes, the Lord provides water from the rock.

Is the Lord among us in the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth?

Yes, the Lord is the source and strength of all they do.

God’s presence does not depend upon us and how we feel. God’s presence is a gift to us, born out of love for us. God’s presence is promised in fire and flood (Isaiah 43:2) because we are precious in God’s eyes and loved.

And ours is the call to respond as God asks us, as the father asked the sons, to work in the vineyard. That is our situation. Whether we have been aware of that challenge for many years or have newly come to faith we are called to tell of the saving love of God in word and deed.

**Take a time to sit quietly and to reflect on the times you have felt distant from God and the times you have known God’s presence.**

**Take time to pause and be present to God.**

**A time of prayer**

Lord, we have set aside this time to pray, yet as people and situations pop into our minds today and in the week to come help us to take time to hold them in your love and to pray for them.

Now, Lord, I use this time to bring my concerns to you. I ask for your Holy Spirit to be in me to guide my thoughts that I may pray in accordance with your will and for your glory.

I pray for those who have suffered this week…

I pray for those who have rejoiced this week…

I pray for those I have seen this week…

I pray for those I have longed to see this week…

I pray for myself…

Lord with me here, take these prayers in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father ……

**Hymn: StF 530 To be in your presence**

To be in your presence,

 to sit at your feet,

where your love surrounds me,

 and makes me complete:

 *This is my desire, O Lord,*

 *this is my desire.*

 *This is my desire, O Lord,*

 *this is my desire.*

To rest in your presence,

 not rushing away,

to cherish each moment --

 here I would stay.

 *This is my desire, O Lord,…*

 *Noel Richards (b. 1955)*

**A blessing for you**

May you know the Lord with you each day of your life, may you answer the call to listen and the challenge to follow.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit will be with you as you go. Amen

*Original Materials by Rev’d Anne Smith*

*All Hymns reproduced under CCLi 155789*

**Broad Lane** are holding their **Church Council** on **Thursday October 1st** at **2pm**.

Please remember to wear a face covering, to sanitise on entry and exit, to sit at least 2m apart, and ***not***to embrace each other or expect refreshments !

**HARVEST CELEBRATIONS**

 A number of churches will be holding harvest services over the next few weeks. We ask that you refrain from going to other churches’ harvests this year, as is the normal custom. As we are very restricted on space we need to allow each church to invite people from their extended families and communities.

 Churches should not be filled with the usual displays and wonderful produce.

 I suggest you have a simple focal point for harvest:

 Think of supporting our local Foodbank with tinned goods and toiletries (no fresh produce). Gifts can be left at a collection point near the entrance of church. If you are unable to attend worship most supermarkets have collection points for the Foodbank.

 Think also about supporting ‘All We Can’ with a financial donation. Envelopes (distributed earlier to most people) can be left at church to be sent off collectively, or posted direct to All We Can using the pre-paid envelope.

 Thank you in advance for your support and co-operation.

God bless,

***Jill*** (Deacon Jill Taylor)

From the Production Team…

Our apologies for confusing a few people last week with the timing of the newsletter. Ideally it is printed on Wednesday to allow time for counting out and delivering the right number of copies to each of the volunteers who then take them to individual homes.

Last week Jill and Pat both had meetings morning, afternoon and evening on Wednesday, so production moved to Thursday. This will not often happen, but is sometimes unavoidable.

The only promise we make is that they are all received in time for Sunday, although we try to allow the ‘deliverers’ flexibility to do so when it suits them best. If ever you still have not received yours on Saturday, ring Pat on 627170 and one will arrive.

If anyone else is willing to deliver some newsletters, please speak to Jill. Picking them up from her porch is helpful.

**Re-opening of Nantwich Methodist Church**

The Church Council has agreed to re-open the church building from October 4th for Sunday worship only, subject to current Government and Methodist legislation.

The doors will open at 10.15am. Please remember that the service will last approximately 45 minutes. Face coverings must be worn (unless exempt); there might be music but no singing; there will be no refreshments or gathering in groups to chat. Everyone must enter via the front door, have their temperature taken remotely, sanitise on entry and exit, give contact details, and follow all guidance and signage. There will be people around to help and reassure you.

As the maximum attendance permitted by law is 30, we need to operate a booking system.  If you wish to attend on October 4th, please phone Margaret Kirkman on 01270 611942  by lunchtime on Thursday 1st. (There is a callminder service on this line, but simply follow the instructions.)  If places are all taken, you will be offered priority the following Sunday. In due course the number of a mobile phone especially for this purpose will be provided.

Everyone is welcome to attend, but especially if you are elderly or have health issues, ***please*** consider carefully whether it is wise and safe to come.

“*In weakness, O Lord, be our strength; in our sinfulness, pardoning love; in our need, all- sufficient grace. In our anxiety, be to us both stillness and rest; and at all times be to us the fullness of blessing; through Christ our Lord. Amen*” *Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)*

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I visited a monastery the other day, and as I passed the kitchen I saw a man frying chips.

I asked, ‘Are you the Fryer?’, and he said, ‘No, I’m the chip monk’.

*A man is walking in the desert with his horse and his dog when the dog says, “I can’t do this. I need water.”*

*The man says, “I didn’t know dogs could talk.”*

*The horse says, ‘Me neither.’*

I asked the student why he had covered his desk with small oranges. He said he was learning to write Mandarin.

Last Monday was the **International Day of Peace**

* Since December 2013 the conflict in South Sudan has claimed thousands of lives and driven nearly 4 million people from their homes.
* Honduras has one of the highest murder rates in the world.
* Conflict broke out in Syria in 2011. Over 400,000 people are estimated to have been killed, and many millions have been forced to flee their homes.
* In the Democratic Republic of the Congo violence is destroying lives and livelihoods across the country. One in four women experience sexual violence in their lifetime.
* Yemen faces the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Conflict means more than 24 million people are in urgent need of food and clean water. The country is on the brink of famine. A child dies every 10 minutes.
* The conflict provoked by Boko Haran in North East Nigeria has led to more than 20,000 people being killed and forced 2.1 million people from their homes.
* In every country where violence and conflict is destroying lives and pushing people further into poverty…

LORD, BRING PEACE. Amen

*Statistics from Tear Fund*

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**And finally … our weekly dose of nonsense**!

A guy goes into a lawyer’s office and asks the lawyer: “Excuse me, how much do you charge?”

The lawyer responds: “I charge £1,000 to answer three questions.”

“Crikey – That’s a bit expensive isn’t it?”

“Yes. What’s your third question?”

*I stayed up all night trying to figure out where the sun was. Then it dawned on me.*

How Long is a Chinese man’s name.

No, it actually is.

*I bought the world’s worst thesaurus yesterday.*

*Not only is it terrible, it’s terrible.*

I told my friend 10 jokes to get him to laugh.

Sadly, no pun in 10 did.

**Q**: What do Alexander the Great and Winnie the Pooh have in common?

**A:** *Same middle name. (Also Rupert the Bear*!*)*

**Q**: What is the resemblance between a green apple and a red apple?

**A**: *They’re both red except for the green one.*

**On the first day**, God created the dog and said, "Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. For this, I will give you a life span of twenty years."

The dog said, "That's a long time to be barking. How about only ten years and I'll give you back the other ten?"

And God saw it was good.

On the second day, God created the monkey and said, "Entertain people, do tricks, and make them laugh. For this, I'll give you a twenty-year life span."

The monkey said, "Monkey tricks for twenty years? That's a pretty long time to perform. How about I give you back ten like the dog did?"

And God, again, saw it was good.

On the third day, God created the cow and said, "You must go into the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer's family. For this, I will give you a life span of sixty years."

The cow said, "That's kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. How about twenty and I'll give back the other forty?"

And God agreed it was good.

On the fourth day, God created humans and said, "Eat, sleep, play, marry and enjoy your life. For this, I'll give you twenty years."

But the human said, "Only twenty years? Could you possibly give me my twenty, the forty the cow gave back, the ten the monkey gave back, and the ten the dog gave back; that makes eighty, okay?"

"Okay," said God, "You asked for it."

So that is why for our first twenty years, we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves.

For the next forty years, we slave in the sun to support our family.

For the next ten years, we do monkey tricks to entertain the grandchildren.

And for the last ten years, we sit on the front porch and bark at everyone.

Life has now been explained to you.

There is no need to thank me for this valuable information. I'm doing it as a public service.

If you are looking for me I will be on the front porch.

*Found and submitted by Doris Tucker.*

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**Q**: What do you call bears with no ears?

**A**: *B*

**Q:** Why aren’t koalas actual bears?

**A**: *They don’t meet the koalafications*.