

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet – 6th September

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Rev Bill Rowell.

Call to worship:

In God's Church there are many different gifts:

But all are the work of the one Spirit.

There are many ways of serving:

But all of us are serving the one God by what we do.

God's people are engaged in many different things:

But in all of us, the same God is at work

from 1 Cor 12.4-6

Hymn: The King of love my Shepherd is

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#).- Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
and he is mine for ever.
- 2 Where streams of living water flow
my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow
with food celestial feedeth.
- 3 Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home rejoicing brought me.

4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.

5 Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days
thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house for ever.

Henry Williams Baker (1821–1877)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 479

Today we are thinking about the practicalities of living together within God's Church. We don't always get it right, and we need God's help, healing and guidance as his people. We are called to be his witnesses in the world, bringing others to know the good news of his love. So let us reflect on our failure to live up to that calling.

Lord Jesus, when we forget that you are our Shepherd and Guide, and choose our own ways instead, come to rescue us and save us.

Lord, have mercy: Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, when we are tempted to follow other voices rather than yours, find us, recover us and lead us to safe pasture.

Christ, have mercy: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, when we find ourselves under attack and feel weak and vulnerable, help us to remember that you do not abandon us, and have laid down your life for your sheep.

Lord, have mercy: Lord, have mercy.

Lord, you search us and know us: may we rely on you in strength and rest on you in weakness, now and in all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer :-

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.**

Amen

Romans 13:8 - 14

Leave no debt outstanding, but remember the debt of love you owe one another. He who loves his neighbour has met every requirement of the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and any other commandment there may be, are all summed up in the one rule, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love cannot wrong a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

Always remember that this is the hour of crisis: it is high time for you to wake out of sleep, for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed. It is far on in the night; day is near. Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.

Let us behave with decency as befits the day: no drunken orgies, no debauchery or vice, no quarrels or jealousies! Let Christ Jesus himself be the armour that you wear; give your unspiritual nature no opportunity to satisfy its desires.

Matthew, chapter 18:15 - 20

Jesus said, 'If your brother does wrong, go and take the matter up with him, strictly between yourselves. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others with you, so that every case may be settled on the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, report the matter to the congregation; and if he will not listen even to the congregation, then treat him as you would a pagan or a tax-collector.

'Truly I tell you: whatever you forbid on earth shall be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you allow on earth shall be allowed in heaven. And again I tell you: if two of you agree on earth about any request you have to make, that request will be granted by my heavenly Father. For where two or three meet together in my name, I am there among them.'

Thanks be to God, for these readings of his holy word.

Amen.

Reflection

The Church is sometimes called “Holy Church” as though just being a church gives us that status: holy - special, blessed by God, chosen by God. In truth, though, no Church can really be called holy until and unless we get the basics right. The basics, that is, of living together in peace, harmony and mutual and generous love. There’s a saying you’ll no doubt have heard that such and such a body’s “so heavenly minded they’re of no earthly use”. But holiness isn’t about escaping from the realities of ordinary life. Holiness is only real if it’s there to be seen in the everyday business of living together.

More seriously, it’s possible for a church to look good but for that goodness to be just a facade. Jesus accused some of the Pharisees for just that when he called them “whited sepulchres” - They were like tombs that were constantly whitewashed so they looked smart and clean on the outside, but the inside was of course full of corruption and decay.

All kinds of organisations and institutions have been revealed to have buried the bad stuff and indulged in cover-ups, so as to eliminate any threat to their good name and reputation. And Churches have not been immune to this, over the years. We still hear stories of abuse, neglect and malpractice that have been kept covered up. My church has recently asked every local congregation to look seriously at their own past history, and to report any historic instance that might need to be looked at again.

Both our readings today contain good practical advice about how we should live together as a Christian community. And though big scandals and cover-ups may hit the headlines, even the smallest disagreements can do damage if they’re not sorted out and resolved properly. And the mission and ministry we offer in the world has to rest on a foundation of good ministry to one another within the Church. We

must start here as we mean to go on out there, for if we don't, what we do out there it won't work.

And that's going to require more of each individual church member than just being politely nice to each other. Paul tells us we must "leave no debt outstanding," - don't overlook things that might otherwise cause damage. And Jesus, taking seriously the fact that people do sometimes fall out about things, instructs his disciples in how to respond progressively where there's disagreement or transgression. In other words, wherever and however things go wrong, it's no use papering over the cracks and hoping we can live with it. Things need to be sorted out. And sadly, as we discover in our Gospel reading, when things really can't be sorted out, it may well be that someone has to either leave or be excluded.

And while that really would be a very last resort, to be done only when every other attempt to sort things has failed, better that than a toxic environment that can drain and damage the life of a church. And yes, I've come across that from time to time: I can think of a church used by two dynastic families at odds as a battleground; and I can think of another where the life of one senior officer was made a misery by another church lady who was clearly consumed by a jealousy she couldn't control.

Leave no debt outstanding, says Paul (and I take that to mean both any debt you owe and also any debt owed to you). But he goes quickly on to say "Remember the debt of love you owe." Practical Christian living isn't just to do with getting things sorted out, and not letting stuff fester, not letting disagreements turn into feuds - it's also about how we do that. What we do must be based in love. "Love your neighbour as yourself" Paul reminds his readers. And in another letter John insists that a Christian "can't claim to love God, whom he has never seen, if he fails to love his brother, whom he sees every day."

“How can I love someone when I don’t like them?” is a question I’ve been asked more than once. It’s all very well to talk about hating the sin, but loving the sinner - but how do you do that in practice?

Asked the same question, C.S. Lewis advised his questioner to do their best to act as though they loved the other person. Having tried to do this himself, he reported on his own experience, and how it had helped him understand why the other person had been acting in ways he was finding difficult, and that made him more tolerant of their behaviour. And that opened the way to changes on both sides, just because things became less negative.

We may well think of love as something that just happens - or perhaps doesn’t, like when two people fall in love, or are bonded together in a family or as friends; and that’s perhaps partly because one word in English translates several different words in New Testament Greek, and so blends into one the several different understandings of what love is that someone writing in Greek might want to convey. And love in the sense of “Love your neighbour as yourself” is an act of will, a deliberate choice, a decision to act in a certain way - a duty, even. It requires us to seek to understand the other person, it disciplines us to desire the best for them, and it requires of us both generosity and honesty. And, because it’s based in the truth, and is looking for the best outcome for both sides where there is conflict or dispute, it can’t condone harmful actions, and will want to heal rather than cover things up. And it can’t therefore accept weak action or inaction by those who are there to lead and to set an example.

In other words, we should do our best to deal with one another as God deals with us. We won’t always succeed, but if we’re not doing our best to apply our faith within our own fellowship, how can we take it anywhere else? Whereas if we are working to get things right where we

are, and seeking God's help to do it, that becomes the Christ-like foundation on which God's kingdom can be built.

May these words, and the thoughts of our hearts, be now and always acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Hymn: Make me a channel of your peace.

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#).- Close the tab after the hymn.

1 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:**

2 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:**

**O 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.**

3 Make me a channel of your peace.

**It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving unto all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.**

**O 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:**

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997)
from the Prayer of St Francis

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 707

Prayers of Intercession :

Let us pray together for the Church and for the world, and let us thank God for his goodness.

We pray for the world that God made and God loves, thinking especially of all who are working today to bring help to those in need, and relief to those who are burdened and oppressed; praying too that those in places of power may exercise the authority they have with compassion and concern, and with peaceful intent. We continue to pray for the international response to Covid-19, and for co-operation in the search for a safe and effective vaccine.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Lord of the Church, we pray that Christians worldwide may be united in mission and service, and that we may work hard to overcome the barriers so easily raised between us. Help us to choose to be like Christ in our humility, our openness and our love. We pray for all who suffer persecution because of their faith, and all whose faith inspires them to speak against injustice and to give a voice to those least able to speak

for themselves. Help us in each local place to be generous and loving in our dealings with one another, to resolve differences and to be persuasive in our witness to you.

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We pray for all who are ill, troubled or in need today, and especially for those in hospital or some other place of care: may they find healing and peace, and may those who care for them do so safely. We pray for those infected with the Covid 19 virus, not only here but across the world: for effective and prompt treatment and for a swift and effective response to new outbreaks.

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves, for our families and friends, and for the life of the communities in which we live and work. We pray for schools and colleges in the first full week of the new school year. We pray for all who are struggling, and especially for those who have lost jobs or whose businesses have failed. And help us to continue to act with responsibility and care, looking out for each other, and keeping safe ourselves.

Lord, in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

Lord, hear our prayers, and make us one in heart and mind, that we may serve you with joy for ever.

Amen.

Hymn - Brother, sister, let me serve you

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#).- Close the tab after the hymn.

- 1 Brother, sister, let me serve you,
 let me be as Christ to you;
 pray that I may have the grace
 to let you be my servant too.

**2 We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.**

**3 I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.**

**4 I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through**

**5 When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.**

Richard A. M. Gillard (b. 1953)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 611

Benediction

May God our Father, who for the salvation of the world gives to his people many gifts and ministries, to the advancement of his glory, stir up in us the gifts of his grace, and sustain each of us in the ministry into which he calls us.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.