

Worship sheet for 19 July 2020

Welcome to worship this Sunday the 4th Sunday of Pentecost. Everyone is welcome to partake of this worship from their own homes on whatever device they have.



The gospel reading we will hear later is about welcome. We are still in uncertain times and as yet we are not sure exactly when we will be back worshipping in our church buildings – hopefully by September. Worship will not be the same as it was as we will not be allowed to sing and will be spread out around the sanctuary. Nevertheless we can still worship together as one congregation in spirit today and all are welcome.

Hymn: Let us build a house where love can dwell

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive,
built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace,
here the love of Christ shall end all divisions

Chorus:

All are welcome

All are welcome

All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak
and words are strong and true,
where God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace.
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus.

Chorus:

Let us build a house where the all are named,

their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor and rafter

Chorus:

Marty Haugen (b.1950)

Prayers

Loving God, we gather in response to your invitation; we gather together electronically, welcomed by you. May the warmth of your continued welcome inspire and enhance the worship we offer to you.

O God, your Spirit draws us into your presence, and so we come – drawn by love, upheld by grace – to encounter Jesus, our Saviour.

We know him as our master. We know him as our friend.

In him we see the Father whose love sent Jesus to us. Spirit, Son and Father, we draw close in faith to offer our praise and worship.

We are sorry, dear Lord, for the times we judge others and find them wanting. We are sorry that we turn away from your children in their need.

We are sorry that we think we are too busy. We are sorry for the times our welcome has been lukewarm. Forgive us, and help us to remember the warmth of your welcome, and to be inspired to share that warmth with all people.

Amen

Readings: Romans 6.12-23 & Matthew 10: 40-42

Reflection

We are so used to welcoming people into our church buildings and I think we do it well. Many people have commented that we are welcoming congregations. But we have also had a few who have not come back so was that because they did not feel welcome? At the moment we are not using our church buildings as you are well aware so

how can we welcome people into our worship? It is available on our website.

Are we keeping in touch with our church friends? As an elder I have pastoral care over a small part of the congregation and I do try to keep in touch with them all regularly to find out how they are coping with the current situation, whether they are self-isolating or even shielding. I hope they find my enquiries welcoming. This is good for our flock but what about those who maybe seeking a local church? How can we know who they are? Our weekly service sheets and videos are put onto our website (thank you Alan & David), do we know if anyone apart from our pastorate congregation use them?

To be welcoming is being open to all people and not giving a set of instructions. However before we open we have to carry out a risk assessment so when we do open our building again there will be several safety rules that will have to be followed for the safety of all people. Washing or sanitising hands, keeping social distancing, cleaning places that have been used. not singing, not sharing the communion elements in the way we have done to name a few. These guidelines or instructions do not go well with being welcoming so we do need to think these things through very carefully and pastorally. We may not have all our regulars back with us so for them and others who may not come to church we still need to make them feel welcome even if they are at home.

The gospel reading we heard is a summing up of the instructions and advice Jesus gives as he sends the disciples out. Whoever welcomes the disciples (and us), welcomes him. A disciple's character, actions and words are to be such that they (and we) can be identified as belonging to Jesus. When followers of Jesus are welcomed, it is as if Jesus himself is welcomed, and his Father who sent him too. While a welcome into a home had a far stronger cultural basis than we may experience today, nonetheless our interactions with others, in any medium even email, phone or Zoom or location, should in some way bring Jesus into the encounter. He is there with us always. Part of welcoming is showing hospitality which isn't so straight forward now.

In the Message translation the word welcome is now accepting.

“Accepting a messenger of God is as good as being God's messenger. Accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help. This is a

large work I've called you into, but don't be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing." So we have to start in small ways and then let it grow into as much as we can do with the help of others. We don't have to do it all by ourselves, it is a joint task. Everyone's invited to the home of the Lord and is welcome, so the hymn by Brenda Piper sums this up well:

Everybody's welcome to come;
Anyone can sit down at the table He's prepared
From every nation under the sun.
No matter who we are, no matter what we've done,
No matter if we're rich or poor, He cares for everyone.
Everyone of us must choose to come to Him or go,
God gives us choice who loves us so.

© 1987 Brenda I Piper

So following Romans reading where Paul was encouraging people to make the choice between death and life everlasting by following Christ we have the same choice and by being welcoming to all people can be encouraging to all whom we meet or have contact with to make the Jesus choice.

I challenge you to find ways of being welcoming in these unusual times that can also include those who may not return to church for some time to come. Let us be encouraging to all to follow the Jesus way. Amen

Prayers for the people

We pray for those on the fringes of society;
for those who feel rejected; for those who are overlooked;
for those whom others avoid. For those who do not feel welcome
We pray for those who are lonely.

May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for those in prison; especially those kept in isolation. For those in isolation at home for whatever reason in these difficult times
May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for children excluded from school; for their families and those with responsibility for their education; we pray for those who are struggling with their children at home and are unable to access open spaces or food to feed them

May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for each other and the time we will be able to welcome each other in person into worship. Let us bring before God in silence our personal concern at this time. Loving God, as you welcome us, may we welcome others with warmth and steadfast love. **Amen**

Let us say together the prayer our Lord taught us The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: What will be our future? Original Hymn written by Ray and Nick Stanyon and performed by Ray. Nick is our synod evangelist and he has led worship at our churches a few times.

What will be our future? When will we see friends?
Questions and confusion seem to know no end.
Daily lives now different to the ones we've known,
Special times for gathering spent all on our own.
Loving God please help us know we are still yours.
By your Holy Spirit, Jesus open doors!

In our homes imprisoned fearing what's outside,
Church in prayer and worship stands against the tide
Sending out God's blessing, singing songs of praise,
Sharing help and comfort in these lockdown days
Loving God please help us know we are still yours.
By your Holy Spirit, Jesus open doors!

How are we now different? What are lessons learned?
How will Church appear when "normal" is returned?
Help us with your gracious Holy Spirit's power
To be fit for purpose in that future hour.
Loving God please help us know we are still yours
By your Holy Spirit, Jesus open doors!

Keep our eyes wide open to what springs up new.
Those who for the first time turn their thoughts to you
Help us fight injustice. Help us bind up pain.
Help us tend your world until you come again.
Loving God please help us know we are still yours
By your Holy Spirit, Jesus open doors!

Words 6th May 2020 RNC Stanyon & WNJ Stanyon
Tune “Armageddon” by Louise Reichardt (1853) (Who is on the
Lord’s side)

Blessing:

Go in the name of Jesus, to follow the way of Jesus,
to love with the love of Jesus, and to be sustained by the peace of Jesus.

Amen.