

# Weoley Hill URC Order of service

27 September 2020

## Introduction

For those who are in church, this morning's worship is a combination of live prayers and readings and a video of Rev Martin Robinson giving his reflection on the epistle reading for today. Martin is not with us in person as he is quarantining.

## Call to worship:

*based on Psalm 25.4-5*

The psalmist wrote: 'Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me.' Let us also seek the way and the truth of God. So, into the mix of humanity, with friends and neighbours, visitors and strangers, both here in person and with those at home together we join to worship you, O Lord our God.

**Amen.**

**Hymn** At the name of Jesus

## Opening prayers

Generous, hospitable God, who turns no one away, welcome each one of us now in this time of worship and gathering and embrace us in your being.

We are grateful, Lord God, that you love us and care for us, that Jesus lived and died for us. We are grateful that you are interested in us, even us with all our faults and failings. Thank you for sharing our lives and our livings, for being within our hopes and dreams. Thank you for giving us purpose and meaning. Thank you for showing us how to live a life of goodness and truth, a life of caring and sharing. Thank you for your generosity and abundance even if we fail to see it. Thank you, God, for being you and thank you for making us, us and for each of us for making me, me.

We sometimes think that the more we have the happier we will be.

'If only', then all will be well. We sometimes turn the other way, closing our eyes and ears, ignoring what we see, choosing to neglect those asking for help. Sometimes we refuse a helping hand to those in need – we want to do 'our thing' instead. We do not want to confess these things but, Lord God, in this moment, in this place,

in this space that we've been given, give us the desire to confess our failings and our sins, renew us from within and set us free from all that shackles us. Set us free to be the human beings you would have us be.

**Amen.**

**Reading:** Philippians 2: 1-13

## **Reflection**

Making Paul's Joy Complete

Good morning! It is a delight to be with you this morning. My name is Martin Robinson and I am a member of Rowheath Pavilion Church and I bring you greetings from that congregation. The scripture this morning is taken from Philippians 2: 1-13 and I want to share a few thoughts with you from that passage.

A few days ago, the BBC featured a radio programme called The Spark. It centred on a new book by Paul Collier and Paul Kay, called Greed is Dead. That might be rather optimistic but the point they were trying to make is this: since the 2nd World War, there has been an obsession with what the authors call "destructive individualism". That way of thinking has caused much to unravel in our society and they argue instead for "mutual obligation" and "community". They make this claim because it goes to the very heart of what it means to be human. We are not in fact autonomous individuals operating only in our own interest. We are in reality social beings built for relationship and cooperation with one another.

It's good to see some of the latest thinking catching up with the gospel message, shared some 2,000 years ago. They are catching up with the Bible!

Some of these themes are to be found in the scripture that we read this morning and I want to share with you three simple thoughts.

First, Paul was writing to the Philippians, a church he had founded, and he was saying to them, I am concerned for your unity. Not your uniformity – that is where we are all the same. Not your unanimity, that is when we might agree on a proposition of some kind, but their unity which goes much deeper. The kind of unity that he is looking for is something that begins when we make a commitment to Christ which, because we desire now to imitate Christ, produces a degree of restraint in the ways in which we behave towards one another.

That different way of acting towards one another is further enhanced by the fellowship of the Spirit which produces love for one another. These two elements combine to produce the basis for unity in the local congregation and that is what Paul was looking for from the Philippians.

Second, Paul is saying that the way we might achieve that is to model ourselves on Christ. In a situation where greed prevails, that tends to push us towards what has been called “upward mobility”. And Paul points out that Christ was concerned with “downward mobility”. He came down from heaven to earth, he humbled himself, even to the point of death upon a cross. Downward mobility produced by the humility of Christ, not seeking equality with God, that is our example.

Thirdly, Paul suggests that they work out their salvation in “fear and trembling”. What he is not saying in the passage is that they don’t have salvation and need to find it. He is not suggesting that their salvation is somehow in doubt. Rather he is saying that having received salvation they now need to work that out.

What does salvation mean in terms of their internal unity and their impact on the world around them? Paul is saying in effect, in my absence you need to work this out for yourselves. They need to work out what it means to be really united, to love one another, and what impact this unified body is going to have on the world around them.

Three simple thoughts from God’s word. I hope that these are of some help to you as you meditate on God’s word.

Amen.

## **Hymn** Lord Jesus Christ

### **Prayers for the people**

So often we want to pray for others. but sometimes, God, we don't know how. We can't remember names or numbers; other issues weigh heavily on our hearts. Thank goodness, God, that you know what we mean when we pray. So, we bring in this moment those names and faces, images and desires for others that pop in and out of our minds throughout the day: the old lady at the bus stop who needed a hand up the step; the young mum at the checkout trying to contain her four kids; the chap up the road who's lost his dog and is calling for him; the teachers struggling to understand the needs of those in their class; the doctors who wants to give us more time but who simply can't; the young families who can't make ends meet; those without work, who can't find new jobs; those helping people to find work, knowing it is an uphill struggle; those with mental health issues and seeking help, or who are afraid and ashamed to seek help, or who are ignored and can't get help. So, God, for all these people and countless others, we offer our prayers. We know you do not need reminding, but you do need willing workers – even us – to help them know your love and have their needs met. In a moment of silence let us bring before God the concerns in our hearts ....

Hear our ramblings, O God.

**Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

## **Hymn** Lord of all hopefulness

### **Offertory prayer**

Lord we ask your blessing on the gifts of money given in the different ways we can and on those people, who serve you and the church in many ways now and in the time to come. Amen

## **Blessing**

May we go, Lord God, to meet the needs of others and share the love with joy we have from you. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and those whom you love now and forever more.

Amen