

Sunday 21st July 2024: Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or some other suitable time.



StF 94 H&P 463 'To God be the glory' by Frances van Alstyne (1820 – 1915)

Opening Prayer

Think of the past week and say both 'thank you' and 'sorry' to our loving God.

Old Testament Reading set for today: 2 Samuel 7 v 1 – 13

To think about

Read this passage again and understand what God is saying to David (through the prophet Nathan) about whether God should have a 'house'. The first temple was built by David's son, Solomon.

StF 409 'Let us build a house where love can dwell' by Marty Haugen (b 1950)

Gospel Reading set for today: Mark 6 v 30 – 34, 53 – 56

Message from a Circuit Friend

This Sunday is my last working day as the Superintendent of the Central Norfolk Circuit. This is not my last Worship at Home Sheet because I have said I will try and prepare them up until the time that Rev Derek can take over in September. However, it is the last time that I will write the Message. So, what can I say? I am looking at the readings and see that the verses in Mark describe the lead-up to the story of the feeding of 5,000 people and then jump to the aftermath. Strangely, in this lectionary year, we do not read the facts of the miracle itself as Mark tells them, the story comes next week – from John. If we just hear the verses set for today, it is as though there is a massive elephant in the room with a major story being omitted. It is like me looking back over 5 years in this Circuit and completely leaving out the pandemic and all the challenges that that created for ministry, for churches, for worship, for people in their ordinary lives. But, given that the lectionary compilers have just given us the 'before' and 'after', what can we learn? We see that Jesus desperately wanted a break, he wanted a rest, he wanted to be able to pray, he wanted to spend time with the disciples on their own. Jesus took measures to create the space for himself and for his friends, but his efforts were thwarted. People were also desperate – to see Jesus, to listen to his teaching, to receive his laying on of hands for healing. In both cases Jesus responded to the crowd and put his own needs aside. We can trust that God provided for the necessary rest and respite eventually.

As Jen and I look forward to the first stage of our retirement from full-time formal ministry, we are looking forward to a break and a rest! We need to rediscover ourselves again, to adjust to a new way of being, to develop our relationship with God, being open to the next stage in our Christian service and discipleship. God undoubtedly will continue to call us, and use us, we know that "not for ever in green pastures would we idly rest and stay". Jesus was tested in trying to get the necessary balance between rest and ministry, and so are all of us if we are obedient to God's call and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. But that same Spirit will guide us, resource us, equip us, as spirit-led Jesus was guided, resourced and equipped.

Jacqui Horton (Superintendent of the Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit)

StF 518 H&P 436 'Father, hear the prayer we offer' by Love Maria Wills (1824 - 1908)

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for our world... for the church... for our communities... for our families & friends...

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

StF 545 H&P 378 'Be thou my vision' Irish 8th century, translated by Mary Byrne (1880 – 1931) and versified by Eleanor Hull (1860 – 1935)

May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.

Wider News: The Farewell Service for Rev Jacqui and Deacon Jen is this afternoon in Swaffham at 3 o'clock. It is being zoomed and the Circuit itself is open to anyone. Refreshments to follow as always. Please pray for all involved if you can't be there.

Rev Jacqui's reflections on over 4 years of producing Worship at Home sheets

There must have been a movement of the Holy Spirit across the country in March 2020 when church leaders were faced with the unthinkable prospect that all churches were going to be shut – by order of the government. Like many other situations, our Circuit had a Worship at Home sheet out for the very first Sunday (22nd March). If you had told me then that the lockdowns would continue until Easter 2021 (54 weeks and Worship Sheets later) and that we would continue producing the resource material for Home use (this is the 227th) for over 4 years, I certainly would have had difficulty believing you. We produced the full version until Easter 2023 which meant that we had completed the 3-year cycle of the lectionary. For the last 15th months we have had a shorter version with standard prayers and with just the hymn numbers but no hymn texts. People continue to receive the sheets, and to use them at home, in all 3 sections. Faithful people still email them, or post them, or deliver them to grateful recipients. Apart from the obvious benefit to people who cannot get to church, there are added benefits of the Worship Sheet continuing to unite the Circuit, continuing to carry Circuit news, and continuing to provide occasional ideas and/or help to those leading worship on any particular Sunday.

The Circuit element is really very important. When Methodists across the Central Norfolk Circuit were sitting down at 10.30 am to use the sheets for worship during the lockdowns, it wasn't just that they had a resource with hymns and prayers, readings and a reflection. It was that we were all following the same material at the same time, and the messages were from preachers and ministers and people that we knew. It was (and still is, to a lesser extent) a community worship activity and a vehicle for the Holy Spirit in the same way that worshipping with others in church is a vehicle.

I am extremely grateful to the Staff and to the Local Preachers who have produced reflections when planned to do so – without grumbling or prevaricating or refusing! I am very proud of our Circuit in the way that it has embraced this new way of enabling worship – resourcing those who cannot get to church for whatever reason.

As far as the hymn choices go, I have tried to use as much variety as possible and to cover as many hymns as possible over any particular length of time. The 'Singing the Faith plus' Methodist website is a great resource for being clear about what the readings are and for suggesting hymn choices – sometimes I have used these, sometimes I have been guided by the nature of the reflections and the prayers. I have tried to cover important days in the year and to give relevant information and items for prayer where I can. All in all, preparing the Worship Sheets has kept me on my spiritual and ecclesiastical toes, and has helped me in my own worship preparation each week. Having said that, it has also become a spiritual exercise for me and a spiritual discipline at the beginning of each week. What am I going to do without it?! I will, of course, find other ways of exploring the lectionary, preparing for worship (after a break of 3 months or so) and offering prayer and worship materials to others. However, I will always be grateful for the unique opportunity that the covid pandemic (although, obviously, not a good thing overall) gave us to worship in different ways, to be creative at home with regard to both Sundays and the different Christian festivals, and to come together as a Circuit in a way that I would never have dreamed of when I started out in this appointment in September 2019.

Jacqui Horton
July 2024