

# **North Staffordshire Circuit (11/22)**

## **Service Sheets For the Month of June 2024**

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2024 – 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

*This service has been compiled by Rev'd Joy Ventom*

### **Call to Worship:**

Open our minds, O God;  
open our hearts, O Christ;  
open our souls, O Spirit;  
that we might hear your call afresh,  
respond with enthusiasm and commitment,  
working together to build your kingdom,  
to your praise and glory.

**Amen.**

### **Hymn: Hear the call of the Kingdom (StF 407)**

Hear the call of the kingdom  
Lift your eyes to the King  
Let His song rise within you  
As a fragrant offering  
Of how God rich in mercy  
Came in Christ to redeem  
All who trust in His unfailing grace

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
To be children of light  
With the mercy of heaven  
The humility of Christ  
Walking justly before Him  
Loving all that is right  
That the life of Christ may shine through us

*King of Heaven we will answer the call  
We will follow bringing hope to the world  
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
Salvation in Jesus' name*

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
To reach out to the lost  
With the Father's compassion  
In the wonder of the cross  
Bringing peace and forgiveness

And a hope yet to come  
Let the nations put their trust in Him

*King of Heaven we will answer the call  
We will follow bringing hope to the world  
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
Salvation in Jesus' name*

**Prayers:**

Lord God, you spoke to Samuel in the middle of the night.  
He needed Eli's help to hear you; but you persisted till he heard.  
Lord, you speak to us – sometimes directly, the middle of the night  
is good! – sometimes through others, and that can be equally  
unexpected and amazing.

You speak, you persist.

Where would we be without you, most patient Lord?

For the times we only listen with half an ear – if that; the times we are the  
one being called, but we're just not open enough to hear it.

**Forgive us, Lord, and open our ears to your wisdom.**

For the times we doubt something is your word to us, because  
we're not tuned in to you; or perhaps because it comes from an  
unlikely source.

**Forgive us, Lord, and open our ears to your wisdom.**

When we don't give people the benefit of the doubt; when we  
think they are too young, too old, too different.

**Forgive us, Lord, and open our ears to your wisdom.**

For the times we might give wrong advice, not because we want  
to, but we don't hear you clearly enough.

**Forgive us, Lord, and open our ears to your wisdom.**

We imagine the Lord standing before us, arms outstretched,  
forgiving us. Let us spend a moment silently thanking God for the power in  
that forgiveness.

Thank you, God, for your blessing, and that we can go out as new.

Nothing is hidden from you, and if we acknowledge that, and  
confess our sins, we know you will forgive us and lead us further into you.

**Amen**

## **Hymn: Dear Lord and Father of Mankind (StF 495)**

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
forgive our foolish ways;  
re clothe us in our rightful mind,  
in purer lives thy service find,  
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard  
beside the Syrian sea  
the gracious calling of the Lord,  
let us, like them, without a word  
rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,  
O calm of hills above,  
where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
the silence of eternity,  
interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all  
Our words and works that drown  
The tender whisper of thy call  
As noiseless let thy blessing fall  
As fell thy manna down.

Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
till all our strivings cease;  
take from our souls the strain and stress,  
and let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire  
thy coolness and thy balm;  
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,  
O still, small voice of calm!

## **Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 3.1-10**

<sup>3</sup> The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

<sup>2</sup> One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. <sup>3</sup> The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup> Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup> And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

<sup>6</sup> Again the Lord called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

<sup>7</sup> Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

<sup>8</sup> A third time the Lord called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup> So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup> The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

### **Sermon:**

God calls Samuel’s name. Our name is our personal identity, and it is so important to us. Our name allows us to hear someone calling us – calling us, specifically! How do we respond when someone calls our name? That may depend on a number of factors: who is calling, the tone of voice, our history with that person, the present context, and more. But what if it is God who calls?

In the popular hymn ‘I, the Lord of sea and sky’, Samuel’s response in this week’s reading – ‘Here I am Lord’ – is followed by a question, ‘Is it I?’ That stage probably comes for most of us before we can confidently say ‘yes’ to God, before we can turn the questions into a confident statement ‘It is I!’ Understanding our calling may be a long, drawn-out process, with a decision coming only after a time of exploring and testing. That is particularly true of formal ‘vocations’, of course, but it can also be true at a more personal level. We think about things for a long time, we warm to ideas and then get cold feet, we chat about things with those who are close

to us. But then, how often do you hear someone say, once they have taken the plunge, 'I should have done this ages ago'?

The point is that, in terms of being called by God, we have to be open to that call. We have to be open to the prayerful counsel of those in whom we trust. We have to be open to the possibility that God's call may not lead where we expect or particularly desire. That it may demand hard things of us. But, sometimes, hearing hard things can move us out of our comfort zone, and that may be exactly what we need to do.

**Hymn: I the Lord of sea and sky (StF 663)**

I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard My people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin,  
My hand will save.  
I who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear My light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go Lord, if You lead me.  
I will hold Your people in my heart*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have born my peoples pain.  
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
Give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak My word to them,  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go Lord, if You lead me.  
I will hold Your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them,

My hand will save  
Finest bread I will provide,  
Till their hearts be satisfied.  
I will give My life to them,  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go Lord, if You lead me.  
I will hold Your people in my heart*

### **Prayers of Intercession:**

We pray, Lord God, for the people who have helped us along life's road:  
those who have nurtured us and cared for us;  
those who have taught us and trained us;  
those who have embraced and emboldened us.  
For them all:

**Lord God, I pray.**

I pray for those who have a troubled road to travel:  
those who find themselves lonely and friendless;  
those who find themselves frail and faltering;  
those who find themselves angry and aggrieved;  
those who find themselves frightened and fearful;  
those who find themselves disgruntled and dissatisfied;  
those who find themselves empty and desolate.  
For them all:

**Lord God, I pray.**

I pray for those who cannot see the treasures they have;  
treasures that come from those around them, or from you.  
For them all:

**Lord God, I pray.**

**Amen.**



**Hymn: Master speak thy servant heareth (StF 666)**

Master, speak! thy servant heareth,  
waiting for thy gracious word,  
longing for thy voice that cheereth,  
Master, let it now be heard.  
I am listening, Lord, for thee;  
what hast thou to say to me?

Speak to me by name, O Master,  
let me know it is to me;  
speak, that I may follow faster,  
with a step more firm and free,  
where the Shepherd leads the flock,  
in the shadow of the Rock!

Master, speak! though' least and lowest,  
let me not unheard depart;  
Master, speak! for oh, thou knowest  
all the yearning of my heart,  
knowest all its truest need;  
speak! and make me blest indeed.

Master, speak! and make me ready,  
when thy voice is truly heard,  
with obedience glad and steady,  
still to follow every word.  
I am listening, Lord, for thee:  
Master, speak, oh speak to me

**Blessing:**

Go in the name of the Lord  
to your homes, your neighbours, your communities.  
Go and make a difference.  
Raise up those who are disheartened.  
Tell others about the risen Christ.  
Visit those who are lonely,  
and may your heart and mind be open  
to receive all that God gives to you and asks of you.

**Amen.**

## Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024 – Methodist Homes Sunday

*This service has been compiled by Rev'd Liz Singleton*

### **Opening Words:**

Come, all of you, just as you are, to worship.

Whether today you feel strong or weak, full or empty, God welcomes you all.

So come, just as you are, to worship.

### **Hymn: All praise to our redeeming Lord (StF 608)**

All praise to our redeeming Lord,  
who joins us by his grace,  
and bids us, each to each restored,  
together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;  
and, gathered into one,  
to our high calling's glorious hope  
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,  
we all delight to prove;  
the grace through every vessel flows,  
in purest streams of love.

E'en now we think and speak the same,  
and cordially agree;  
concentred all, through Jesu's name,  
in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,  
the common peace we feel,  
a peace to sensual minds unknown,  
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below  
in Jesus be so sweet,  
what heights of rapture shall we know  
when round his throne we meet!

**Prayer:**

God of all,  
as one family we worship you.  
We are mothers and fathers,  
we are sisters and brothers,  
and we worship you.  
We are sons and daughters,  
aunts and uncles, grannies, granddads,  
and we worship you.  
We are cousins and neighbours, friends and colleagues, and we worship  
you.  
As your family, as your church, as your community, wherever we may be,  
we worship you.  
Amen.

**When we are too weary** by Thom M Shuman (*published in Where the  
Broken Gather*)

When we are too weary  
to take another step  
on the road to the kingdom;  
  
when our hearts are worn down  
by the pain always rubbing  
against our lives;  
when we are wasting away  
because of fears and worries,  
you come, Soul Strengtheners,  
stretching out your hand  
to hold us in your love.

When everyone else has turned  
their backs on us and walked away;  
when we cry out in the night  
only to find the world has  
turned a deaf ear to us;  
when folks think we are crazy  
because we believe that  
good can overcome evil,  
love can conquer hate,

hope can replace despair,  
you do not forsake us,  
but stay at our side,  
Brother to all people.

When our doubts rub  
a callous on our souls;  
when we wonder if we  
are able to see your kingdom  
emerging all around us;  
when others seem to want  
only the worst for us,  
you pull us out of harm's way,  
Spirit of faith and hope.

And so as we reflect on the grace upon grace  
that are the gifts we receive from the Lord  
let us bring him our thanks as we pray as he has taught us.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Hymn: Father God, I wonder (StF 72)**

Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist  
without the knowledge of your parenthood and your loving care. But now I  
am your child, I am adopted in your family,  
and I can never be alone 'cause Father God you're there beside me.

*I will sing your praises, I will sing your praises,  
I will sing your praise, forevermore.  
I will sing your praises, I will sing your praises,  
I will sing your praise, forevermore.*

### **Reading: Mark 3: 20 – 35**

One time Jesus entered a house, and the crowds began to gather again.  
Soon he and his disciples couldn't even find time to eat. When his family  
heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. "He's out of his  
mind," they said.

But the teachers of religious law who had arrived from Jerusalem said,  
"He's possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That's where he gets the  
power to cast out demons."

Jesus called them over and responded with an illustration. “How can Satan cast out Satan?” he asked. “A kingdom divided by civil war will collapse. Similarly, a family splintered by feuding will fall apart. And if Satan is divided and fights against himself, how can he stand? He would never survive. Let me illustrate this further. Who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger – someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.

“I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences.” He told them this because they were saying, “He’s possessed by an evil spirit.”

Then Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him. They stood outside and sent word for him to come out and talk with them. There was a crowd sitting around Jesus, and someone said, “Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you.”

Jesus replied, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” Then he looked at those around him and said, “Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

### **Reflection:**

On the wall above the desk in the church office was a little notice – ‘You don’t have to be crazy to work here, but it helps!’ It was meant as a bit of a joke, of course, but there’s actually a depth of truth to it. There is something different about church, and to the outsider maybe even something strange. We aren’t just another club or social gathering. We say and do things that often don’t make sense to other people. On days when many people are washing their cars, preparing a barbecue, cutting the lawn, we gather together to lift our voices in worship, to break bread, to be challenged by words that don’t always seem to fit with the prevailing views of the world around us. To some all of this does look a little bit crazy. But that’s nothing new.

Mark tells us about the day when Jesus’ family came to ‘rescue’ him. Word on the street was that he’d lost the plot, he was ‘out of his mind’, that he was crazy. Over the coming weeks we will hear from Mark’s gospel about many of the things Jesus did. Freeing people from their sickness to live full and purposeful lives. Mark doesn’t depict Jesus as someone who accepts that the world is a place of sickness, sin and evil. Mark shows us a Jesus acting as if God has begun to do something new, acting as if God’s

reign had already come. That's why people were saying 'he's out of his mind.' And this is a message that runs through all the gospels – the kingdom of God isn't simply near, it's actually here.

In one of his worship songs Matt Redman sings the lyrics 'I will dance I will sing to be mad for my King.' And in 2 Corinthians 5: 13 we read 'If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God.' The song at the very end of this service talks about God inviting us to engage in the mission of Christ on earth. To work with him and his kingdom values, which will often mean swimming against the tide of the world around us. I'm sure you've seen the poster of the one fish in the shoal swimming in the opposite direction to the rest. It's not an easy place to be and many would think you were daft for even trying but it is what Jesus calls us to do. Martin Luther King, who knew only too well what swimming against the tide can mean, remained faithful to his vision and his belief in God against all the odds. He used to talk about maladjustment – in the sense of not adapting to the circumstances and surroundings we find ourselves in just because that's what is expected by society. He said that he never intended to adjust to the evils of segregation and discrimination. He never intended to adjust to religious bigotry. He never intended to adjust to economic conditions that meant necessities being taken from many in order that a few might have great luxuries. He said that it may well be that the salvation of the world lies in the hands of the maladjusted, those who don't just adjust their lives in order to 'go with the flow'. He ended one of his speeches with these words – "Let us be as maladjusted as Jesus of Nazareth, who could look into the eyes of the men and women of his generation and cry out, 'Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Pray for them that despitefully use you.'" These are the actions that transform relationships and could change the world. This is what it means to be swimming against the tide, standing out in the crowd because you're different, being the voice that is laughed at or shouted down because others don't want to hear what you are saying.

'You don't have to be crazy to work here, but it helps!' Likewise, you don't have to be out of your mind to do the work of Jesus Christ but there are some who, as you live a life that is faithful to God's kingdom, may think of you in that way. We must each decide by what values we will live our lives by – will we be with the main shoal swimming in one direction or will we be out there with Jesus swimming the other way because that is the way of the kingdom. It isn't easy – but when we accept the invitation to

engage with Christ in his mission on earth that's when we hear his voice gently whispering in our ear 'You're my brother. You're my sister. You are my family.'

### **Hymn: For I'm building a people of power (MP 151)**

For I'm building a people of power  
and I'm making a people of praise,  
that will move through this land by my Spirit, and will glorify my precious name.

Build your Church, Lord,  
make us strong, Lord,  
join our hearts, Lord, through your Son; make us one, Lord, in your body,  
in the kingdom of your Son.

### **Prayer:**

As members of Jesus' family, we pray in his name. Let us pray:  
Lord, may we show your likeness in all that we say and do.  
That through us and the Church others may see your beauty and truth,  
experience open-hearted love and acceptance, and find a unity of purpose.  
Gracious God : **let your will be done.**

Lord, as members of the human race help us to work together.  
Sharing resources, looking out for those who are struggling,  
respecting and learning from one another.  
Gracious God : **let your will be done.**

Lord, may we give support and space to those we love and nurture.  
Through our words and actions may they come to see the depth of your  
love for them. Gracious God : **let your will be done.**

Lord, may all who come to you in need find forgiveness and healing,  
a wholeness of body, mind and spirit,  
and the strength to cope with whatever difficulties they are facing.  
Gracious God : **let your will be done.**

We bring our prayers in faith and trust as members of the family of Jesus,  
and we pray in his name. **Amen**

## **Hymn: The Church's one foundation (StF 690)**

The Church's one foundation  
is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
she is his new creation  
by water and the word;  
from heaven he came and sought her  
to be his holy bride;  
with his own blood he bought her,  
and for her life he died.

Called out from every nation,  
yet one through all the earth,  
her charter of salvation  
one Lord, one faith, one birth;  
one holy name she blesses,  
partakes one holy food,  
and to one hope she presses  
with every grace endued.

In toil and tribulation,  
and tumult of her war,  
she waits the consummation  
of peace for evermore;  
till with the vision glorious  
her longing eyes are blest,  
at last the church victorious  
shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth has union  
with God the Three in One,  
and mystic sweet communion  
with those whose rest is won.  
O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we,  
like them, the meek and lowly,  
in heaven your face shall see.

### **Blessing:**

God of understanding,  
help us to follow Jesus in sincerity and truth,



that we may be his mother, sister, brother.  
And as we go from this space  
may your blessing rest on us  
and on all those whom we love,  
now and forevermore.  
Amen

## Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024 – 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

*This service has been compiled by Rev'd Christine Legge*

### **Call to Worship:**

Our God looks on us and loves us;  
come with thanks and praise.

Our God sees us and knows us;  
come in worship and adoration.

Our God leads us and cares for us;  
come to listen and go out in faith.

### **Hymn: Jesus is Lord, creation's voice proclaims it (StF 353)**

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,  
For by his power each tree and flower was planned and made.  
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;  
Sun, moon and stars in heaven cry: Jesus is Lord!

*Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!*

*Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!*

Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal  
In flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree,  
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding –  
Yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free.

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror  
From death he rose; and all his foes shall own his name.  
Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit  
To show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

David John Mansell (b. 1936)

Let's pray together:

### **A Prayer of Adoration:**

Our God, who never changes, has ultimate power to change us.  
**We adore you; we worship you; we raise our hands to you.**

Our God is with us in our smallest and biggest moments.  
**We adore you; we worship you; we raise our hands to you.**

Our God anoints us with his spirit.

**We adore you; we worship you; we raise our hands to you.**

Our God wants us to change to be more like him.

**We adore you; we worship you; we raise our hands to you.**

**Amen.**

## **A Prayer of Confession and an Assurance of Forgiveness**

### **A Prayer of Confession:**

Lord, forgive us when we don't see change as a positive thing; when we try to hang on to things because we are used to them; when we don't acknowledge that we need change, and only you can do it.

**Forgive us, Lord, help us to change and grow.**

We often only look at outward appearance, make snap judgements, reject someone on looks alone, see the negative and not the positive. We might not cope with a change in circumstances. We might try to change others but are not open to change ourselves.

**Forgive us, Lord, help us to change and grow. Amen.**

### **Assurance of Forgiveness:**

Our unchangeable Lord doesn't see us as others see us. God sees the whole picture. God has heard the cries of our hearts and forgives us. Pure and simple. No questions asked. Bless you, Lord and Thank You – from the bottom of our hearts. **Amen.**

### **Introduction to Mark 4: 26 – 24:**

Mark records that Jesus told a story which elevates an insignificant shrub to demonstrate that God chooses ordinary people to grow the kingdom.

Both images in the parables are often understood as picturing the unseen growth of kingdom values of justice, peace and love under God's direction. The link with the story of David suggests an alternative reading in which they illustrate how human beings grow into the maturity that God intends for us. The youngest and smallest hold the capacity for developing into the greatest, when God oversees the growth.

### **We read Mark 4:26-34:**

The Parable of the Growing Seed

<sup>26</sup> He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed

sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

#### The Parable of the Mustard Seed

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup> With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

### **Introduction to our Old Testament Reading:**

Saul has proved himself unworthy to be king and God has rejected him, telling Samuel to find and anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king. All of Jesse’s sons meet with Samuel, who is warned by God not to pay attention to outward appearances, for God sees what is on the inside. It is only when Jesse’s youngest son is brought in from tending the sheep that God says, ‘This is the one’. Anointed by Samuel, the spirit of God came upon David. This week’s Old Testament reading draws our attention to the need for change. God wants us to go on growing, and we learn from Samuel’s experience that it’s often our attitudes that have to change. If we’re willing to change, God will do the rest.

### **Reading 1 Samuel 15: 25 – 35, and 16: 1 – 13:**

<sup>34</sup> Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul. <sup>35</sup> Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

### **Samuel Anoints David**

**16** The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

<sup>2</sup> But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’” <sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

<sup>5</sup> Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” <sup>9</sup> Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” <sup>11</sup> So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

<sup>12</sup> So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

<sup>13</sup> So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

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*This is how God enables us to be changed, through the sacrifice and wonder of the Cross. We sing, or reflect upon the words, of this wonderful hymn:*

**Hymn: When I survey the wondrous cross (StF 287)**

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads o'er his body on the tree;  
Then am I dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

**Reflection:**

'Your mission, should you choose to accept it...' (made famous in the 1960s American TV series Mission: Impossible and subsequent films) signals the invitation to embark on a highly dangerous but heroic mission, with only the barest of briefings. Samuel's situation was a bit like this – and he certainly wasn't looking for an adventure, being lost in his grief

over Saul's failed kingship. But God has a mission for him: 'Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' This sentence highlights the way God chooses to work with human beings to bring about change, helping us to discern what's our part and what's God's part. It seems an altogether risky approach: what if the person (in this case, Samuel) refuses? Or fails?

Samuel dares to query God's instructions and is given further reassurance ('I will show you what you shall do'), and 'Samuel did what the Lord commanded'. He is willing to change: to let go of his grief and to take hold of God's new purpose for him. What if God has a mission for us – either individually or as a church? What might it be, and how will we respond?

But there's more. Samuel has allowed God to turn him around; now God is going to turn him upside-down. He has to learn that just as we can be held back by regrets and 'If only's', so too can we be held back by our prejudices and preconceived ideas. Perhaps you remember a time when you had to eat something you would never have chosen – and decided you'd been missing a treat? If we're going to go on with God, we have to be 'life-long learners', always ready to accept that we might be wrong – and change our minds. This was Samuel's experience: he learnt that 'the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart'. He got the message, and then he had to stay in close touch with God as he put his learning into practice, trusting God to show him which of Jesse's sons would receive the divine seal of approval: 'this is the one.'

God wants to change us: to change our minds, and thus our attitudes and behaviour. As Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect'.

Let's end with an experiment. Fold your arms, just as you always do. Now unfold them, and fold them again – but the other way round. It's quite tricky to do, isn't it? And the new way doesn't feel right. Habits are hard to change; the psychologists tell us it takes about six weeks to change a habit, as we gradually get used to 'the new normal'.

Being a Christian means being free to change. Dare we be open to God's amazing changing grace this week?

### **Hymn: Amazing Grace (StF 440)**

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me;  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear,  
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

When we’ve been there a thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise  
Than when we first begun.

*John Newton (1725 – 1807)*

### **Prayers of Intercession:**

Eternal, ever-present God, visible and yet invisible,  
we bring our prayers for those we know  
and those unknown to us.

We seek to journey with you and with them,  
to support and uphold them with prayer and love.

For those who journey with illness and pain,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those searching for meaning and purpose,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those wanting to belong and yet seemingly always on the edge,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who lack confidence in themselves,  
**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who have no faith, no vision for an eternal future,



**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who live with lies, secrets and untruths,

**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

For those who live without the very basic foundations of life: without food and water and homes,

**transform them by your grace, Lord.**

By praying for these, we know that we must walk and work hand in hand with you, to relieve their suffering and pain. We trust our prayers, our loving and our living, to your almighty and eternal presence. **Amen.**

**Hymn: Will your anchor hold (StF 645)**

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,

When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?

When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,

Will your anchor drift or firm remain?

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,

When the breakers roar and the reef is near?

While the surges rave, and the wild winds blow,

Shall the angry waves then your barque o'er flow?

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,

When the waters cold chill your latest breath?

On the rising tide you can never fail,

While your anchor holds within the veil:

Will your eyes behold through the morning light

The city of gold and the harbour bright?

Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,

When life's storms are past for evermore?

Priscilla Jane Owens (1829-1907)

**A Sending Out Prayer:**

Thank you, Lord, that you love us and you can change us:  
help us to trust you this week.

Thank you, Lord, that you love this world and you can change it: help us to work with you this week. Amen.

**Blessing:**

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and with all those whom you love and cherish, in this world and the next, for evermore. **Amen.**

## **Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 – 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*This service has been compiled by Mrs Sheila Heap*

**Wherever you are, welcome to this time of worship.  
May you find it to be a time of blessing.**

### **Call to Worship:**

Wherever we go, Lord, whatever else we do, help us respond to Your call –  
Honouring You in our thinking and feeling,  
Speaking and doing,  
Working and resting,  
Living and loving.  
Help us to hear Your voice and to answer. **Amen.**

### **Hymn: Praise my soul, the King of Heaven (StF 83)**

Praise my soul, the King of heaven;  
To His feet Thy tribute bring,  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who like Thee His praise should sing?  
Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise Him for His grace and favour  
To His people in distress;  
Praise Him still the same forever,  
Slow to chide and swift to bless.  
Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!  
Glorious in His faithfulness.

Fatherlike, He tends and spares us;  
Well our feeble frame He knows;  
In His hands He gently bears us,  
Rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!  
Widely as His mercy flows.

Angels in the height adore Him;  
Ye behold Him face to face;  
Sun and moon bow down before Him,  
Dwellers all in time and space.

Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

Francis Henry Lyte (1793–1847)

**Prayer of Praise:**

Everlasting God, You are worthy of all honour and adoration,  
For You are great and mighty, all good, all powerful, all loving, all  
merciful, the Creator of everything that is and has been and shall be,  
sovereign over space and time.

Lord of heaven and earth, however hard we try, we can never honour You  
as You deserve, never fully express Your awesomeness, never even begin  
to offer the worship You are due, but we want to honour Your name, to  
sing Your praises, to offer our heartfelt adoration.

Hear our prayer, and receive the reverence we offer, in the Name of Christ.  
**Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:**

Loving God, thank You for Your grace and mercy, Your willingness to  
receive us as we are.

Thank You that though we repeatedly fail You and constantly fall short of  
the life we long to lead, still You love us,

Your patience knowing no limits, Your forgiveness never exhausted.

Whenever we get things wrong, may we learn to trust in Your transforming  
power, rather than losing heart.,

Remembering that Your love is not reserved for a special few but is poured  
out on all who recognise and acknowledge their faults. Help us to so trust  
You that You may accomplish in our lives what we may never achieve  
alone. **Amen.**

**You may like to join in The Lord's Prayer here ... Our Father, who  
art in heaven ... Amen.**

**Hymn:**

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest friend  
But wholly trust in Jesus name

*Chorus:*  
*Christ alone, Cornerstone*  
*Weak made strong in the Saviour's love*  
*Through the storm He is Lord*  
*Lord of all*

When darkness seems to hide His face  
I rest on His unchanging grace  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil

*Chorus:*

When He shall come with trumpet sound  
Oh, may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless stand before the throne

*Chorus:*

Jonas Myrin, Reuben Timothy Morgan and Eric Oskar Liljero

### **Gospel Reading: Luke chapter 4 vs. 35 -41 'JESUS CALMS THE STORM'**

That day when evening came, He said to His disciples: "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't You care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet. Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey Him."

**Thought: ‘PETRIFIED!’**

We were petrified, quite simply scared out of our wits,  
for the winds and waves grew fiercer by the minute,  
tossing our boat about like so much driftwood.

Could we have ridden it out?

I don't think so,

For we were taking in water by the bucket-load,

And, frantically though we tried to bale it out,

It was only a matter of time before we capsized.

What was Jesus doing, you ask?

Well, believe it or not, He was sleeping!

I *know*, it sounds crazy doesn't it,

And if *you're* surprised, how do you think *we* felt?

We were used to the sea, remember,

Experienced fishermen,

But this storm was something else,

As savage as any we'd encountered.

Yet while we lurched around in panic,

Jesus bedded down there in the stern of the boat

As though we were taking a gentle cruise,

His face as peaceful as the proverbial baby.

Even when we woke Him there was no sign of fear –

Just that serene, almost surreal, air of calm,

And the next moment the storm was stilled,

As if it had never been.

A relief, you'd think,

And so it was eventually,

But I tell you what:

For a time afterwards we were more scared than we'd been before,

Not of the water, but of *Him*,

For who or what gave Him such power and authority?

We'd seen Him forgive sins,

Heal the sick,

Restore the broken,

But now here He was not just changing people

But the world itself,

Even the wind and waves obeying Him.

He was an amazing character, we knew that already,

But we were beginning to realise He was much more,

For, dare I say it,  
No ordinary man could do such things –  
Only God!

**Reflection: ‘SUCKED IN, WASHED UP, BLOWN OVER**

Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming! One second he was peacefully on his perch, the next he was sucked in, washed up and blown over. The problems began when Chippie’s owner decided to clean his cage with the vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang and she turned to pick it up. She’d barely said “Hello” when ‘ssssopp’! Chippie got sucked in! The bird’s owner gasped, put the phone down, turned off the vacuum cleaner and opened the bag. There was Chippie – still alive but stunned.

Since the bird was covered with dust, she raced to the bathroom, turned on the tap, and held Chippie under running water. Then, realising Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate owner would do .... She reached for the hairdryer and blasted him with hot air. Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

A few days later, a friend who had heard about Chippie’s troubles rang his owner to see how the bird was recovering. “Well,” she replied, “Chippie hasn’t sung much since – he just sits and stares.”

Who can blame him? Sucked in, washed up and blown over ... that’s enough to steal the song from anybody’s heart!

I wonder if that’s how the disciples felt when the storm hit the boat? I wonder if that’s how we feel when experiences come along unexpectedly, and we end up feeling a bit like Chippie – sucked in, washed up and blown over – and the wind blown out of our sails? So many experiences in life leave us feeling like that! Does it sometimes feel as though we seem we are in the middle of a storm, tossed this way and that, wondering if we’re ever going to reach calmer water?

Distressed disciples – why did the situation arise? Jesus is pictured in today’s reading as needing a break. Non stop teaching and preaching to huge, pressing crowds had left Him drained and exhausted. It seems to be a snap decision and they leave straightaway. [v.36]. As Jesus was already in the boat, it made sense to cross over to the other side of the Lake. Soon afterwards, a great windstorm arises, not just rocking the boat but lashing it with such violence that it was already being swamped.

Storms on the Sea of Galilee were a common occurrence. Due to its low lying position in the valley of the Golan Heights the Sea is always quite warm. Cold winds rushing down from the sharply rising hills meets the warm air rising from the Sea, the result is a sudden, violent storm. But how does Jesus respond to the imminent danger?

It is uncharacteristic of Mark to give such detail as we read here. He tells us that Jesus is safely snuggled down in the ship's stern, curled up on a comfy cushion. The disciples wake Him in panic and despair. They fear the boat will sink and they will drown.

An ancient Eastern tradition recognises that sleep and rest are a divine characteristic. In Genesis, the all-powerful, Creator God acknowledges the completion of creation by resting. The Sabbath calls on the Jewish tradition to observe a time of rest. There are several interpretations of this in Eastern theology: God the Creator can rest because cosmic chaos had been transformed into divinely ordained order. A sleeping God indicated that His divinity was undisturbed by other powers. God sleeps because He has no concerns about any challenges to His divinity. [Bernard F. Batto *The Sleeping God*]. If this understanding is correct, Jesus' ability to sleep during a raging storm at sea takes on new meaning and power. It's not just that He is exhausted and needs a rest, or even that He has complete trust and faith in His Father's protective power that enabled Him to rest undisturbed. It implies that Jesus' sleeping state is another revelation of His truly divine identity.

There is another point to Mark's story that gives another clue to Jesus' identity. The Sea of Galilee is consistently used as a symbol of chaos, evil and demonic power. So, perhaps this story has a deeper meaning than a concerned Teacher caring for His friends. When the sleeping Jesus is roused by His disciples, He responds – not with an action – but simply a word – a divine rebuke – “Be still”, which is enough to slap the Sea into submission. The storm has no power to threaten the divine Jesus. He swiftly deals with it as if it were no more than an annoyance. Jesus has power over chaos. So, perhaps for Mark, the story is more about Jesus' identity rather than the miracle. The disciples raise the question that Mark is perhaps attempting to answer for us: “Who is this?” [v.41] that can sleep without concern, control chaos with a word and exercise authority over all creation?



Mark's miracle story invites us to consider two questions: First, 'Who is Jesus?'. Second, 'Will you trust Him?'. The disciples fail on both counts on this occasion. Even though they suspect Jesus' identity, they have not yet learned to fully trust His love and care for them. Fear, doubt and insecurity overwhelm them on this stormy voyage.

Chippie never saw what was coming, but he was well and truly sucked in, washed up and blown over, but he was not overwhelmed by it. And that is the reassurance for us. No matter what storms in life we face, we can call on Jesus for help, then trust that He can intervene, and finally listen for the word He speaks: **PEACE**.

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ, still the storms of our lives –  
Of fear and anxiety, of sudden crises,  
Of tragedy, trauma and trouble.  
Still the storms in our world –  
Of injustice and intolerance,  
Of manmade and natural disaster,  
Of hatred, bloodshed and war.  
Through Your divine power, reach out wherever life brings turmoil  
And calm the waves,  
Bringing true and lasting peace,  
Rest for our souls. **Amen.**

**Hymn: Will your anchor hold in the storms of life (StF 645)**

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,  
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?  
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,  
Will your anchor drift or firm remain?

*Refrain: We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,  
When the breakers roar and the reef is near?  
While the surges rave, and the wild winds blow,  
Shall the angry waves then your barque o'erflow?

*Refrain: We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,  
When the waters cold chill your latest breath?  
On the rising tide you can never fail,  
While your anchor holds within the veil:

*Refrain: We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

Will your eyes behold through the morning light  
The city of gold and the harbour bright?  
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore,  
When life's storms are past for evermore?

*Refrain: We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*

*Priscilla Jane Owens (1829 – 1907)*

### **Prayers of Love and Concern**

We open our hearts to the needs of the world  
and cry with the tears of the sorrowful.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We mourn with the grieving souls of the world  
and feel their loss and share their pain.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We share our love with the lonely and loveless  
and feel the pulse of their life.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We offer our touch to the untouchable folk  
who are shunned by a passing throng.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We catch the whisper of the unspoken truths  
that burden the lives of so many.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

We decipher the cries of a traumatised world  
for whom peace is an impossible dream.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

Hear our prayers, Lord, and let us be the servants  
you would have us be.

**Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.**

**Hymn: Lord, I come to You (StF 471)**

Lord, I come to You,  
Let my heart be changed, renewed,  
Flowing from the grace  
That I found in You.  
And Lord, I've come to know  
The weaknesses You see in me  
Will be stripped away  
By the power of Your love.

*Hold me close, let Your love surround me;  
Bring me near, draw me to Your side,  
And as I wait,  
I'll rise up like the eagle,  
And I will soar with You,  
Your Spirit leads me on  
In the power of Your love.*

Lord, unveil me eyes,  
Let me see You face to face,  
The knowledge of Your love  
As You live in me,  
Lord, renew Your mind,  
As Your will unfolds in my life  
In living every day  
By the power of Your love.

*Hold me close, let Your love surround me;  
Bring me near, draw me to Your side,*

*And as I wait,  
I'll rise up like the eagle,  
And I will soar with You,  
Your Spirit leads me on  
In the power of Your love.*

*Geoff Bullock (b. 1956)*

**Blessing:**

Go with us, Lord, in the roller coaster of life, and whatever our hopes or fears, triumphs or tragedies, help us to recognise Your presence by our sides,

Go with us in the days ahead, whatever they may bring, and in spite of all our limitations, help us to live and work for You, to Your praise and glory.

**Amen.**

## Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 – Conference Sunday

*This service has been compiled by Rev'd Liz Singleton*

### **Opening words:**

Loving God,  
wherever we are sharing in this service today  
we step into this holy space  
knowing that you meet us here.

### **Hymn: Be thou my vision (StF 545)**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;  
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;  
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
be thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;  
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:  
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise;  
be thou mine inheritance now and always;  
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won;  
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

### **Prayer:**

For your caring ways,  
for your gentle touch,  
for your healing powers,  
Lord, we thank you. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

In our reading today we are reminded that when someone needs his healing love Jesus has no hesitation in pushing aside the social, cultural or religious barriers of his time. He breaks taboos and ignores conventions if it means he can meet people where they are and so address their needs. We are also reminded that even though faith in itself is powerless, it is a channel through which the power of Jesus can work.

### **Reading: Mark 5: 21 – 43 NLT**

Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. Then a leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, pleading fervently with him. “My little daughter is dying,” he said. “Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live.”

Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him. A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had got no better. In fact, she had got worse. She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. For she thought to herself, “If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed.” Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition.

Jesus realised at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my robe?”

His disciples said to him, “Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realisation of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.”

While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, “Your daughter is dead. There’s no use troubling the teacher now.”

But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid. Just have faith.”

Then Jesus stopped the crowd and wouldn’t let anyone go with him except Peter, James, and John (the brother of James). When they came to

the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw much commotion and weeping and wailing. He went inside and asked, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn't dead; she's only asleep."

The crowd laughed at him. But he made them all leave, and he took the girl's father and mother and his three disciples into the room where the girl was lying. Holding her hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum," which means "Little girl, get up!" And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! They were overwhelmed and totally amazed. Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone what had happened, and then he told them to give her something to eat.

**Hymn: We cannot measure how you heal (StF 655)** (tune The Banks o'  
Doon)

We cannot measure how you heal  
or answer every sufferer's prayer,  
yet we believe your grace responds  
where faith and doubt unite to care.  
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,  
survive to hold and heal and warn,  
to carry all through death to life  
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,  
the guilt that clings from things long past,  
the fear of what the future holds,  
are present as if meant to last.  
But present too is love which tends  
the hurt we never hoped to find,  
the private agonies inside,  
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help  
and some have come to make amends  
as hands which shaped and saved the world  
are present in the touch of friends.  
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here  
to mend the body, mind, and soul,  
to disentangle peace from pain  
and make your broken people whole.

## **Reflection:**

Two people from very different backgrounds encounter Jesus – the haemorrhaging woman, excluded by others from the day-to-day niceties because she was considered unclean, and Jairus, revered as one of the leaders of the synagogue. The story of Jairus and his daughter is divided into two parts, with the tale of the woman placed between them like a sort of gospel sandwich! Each story stands alone whilst at the same time complementing each other as they keep us in suspense and show how the power of Jesus can turn fear into faith.

Let's begin with the woman. We don't know her name, but we do know that she has been suffering from chronic bleeding for 12 years and the medical profession of the time weren't able to do anything to help her. In the midst of a great crowd, and the undoubted sense of excitement, she probably went unnoticed. I wonder if any of those around here were aware of the torment and the shame that had brought her to this place. I wonder if she muttered those words aloud to herself – "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." And there, with people jockeying for position around her, pushing and nudging others out of the way so that they can see Jesus, she reaches out. In her state of desperation this is her last resort. She doesn't expect him to acknowledge her, in her state of impurity why would he? She touches the hem of his robe and instantly she felt renewed and restored, healed of her disease. Jesus turns – "Who touched my robe?" It must have sounded like a ridiculous question with all those people jostling and clambering to get near him. Yet every time Jesus healed it took something out of him and he felt the healing power go from him. The woman owns up and is rewarded quite possibly with a smile to accompany those words – "Your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

Like the haemorrhaging woman, Jairus is desperate. And, like the woman, he takes a risk. His position as a leader in the synagogue would have put Jairus among those who were opposed to Jesus. Indeed, perhaps that's why he came to Jesus himself, leaving his dying daughter at home, when you'd have thought he would have wanted to stay with his daughter. Maybe all his friends advised him against approaching Jesus and refused to get involved. Perhaps they even thought they'd been proved right when the messengers arrive to tell Jairus his daughter is already dead so there's no need to bother Jesus now. "Don't be afraid," Jesus says in response to this devastating news. "Just have faith." They go to the house where we are told of the most tender scene as in the presence of just five other people



Jesus takes the girl by the hand and says “Talitha koum” – it’s time to get up, little girl.

The power of Jesus can turn fear into faith and whilst faith in itself is powerless it is faith that offers a channel through which the power of Jesus can work.

Let me end with a couple of thoughts about these stories. Thinking of the woman caught up in that crowd. Sometimes it feels like life crowds in around us with all the pressures placed upon us, the expectations of others, and the demands made on our time – and yet there is still room in the midst of it all for us to reach out and touch Jesus. And, even if we metaphorically just brush against the hem of his robe, he lovingly responds.

And then thinking of Jairus. When the messengers told Jairus his daughter was dead they said it wasn’t worth troubling Jesus anymore. And when Jesus said that the child was just sleeping, that she hadn’t died, the crowd laughed at him. There’s something here about how the faith, or lack of faith, of others can have an impact on us. There are times when we really do underestimate what God can do. Times when what we call being realistic is in effect a lack of faith. Times when we give up too soon, when we don’t open our hearts and minds to the immense possibilities God offers us.

We should keep reminding ourselves about the haemorrhaging woman and about Jairus. Two stories about two people from very different backgrounds who encounter Jesus and whose fearful faith brings healing to themselves and healing to others.

### **Hymn: Christ’s is the world in which we move (MP 1163)**

Christ’s is the world in which we move,  
Christ’s are the folk we’re summoned to love,  
Christ’s is the voice which calls us to care,  
and Christ is the one who meets us here.

*To the lost Christ shows his face,  
to the unloved he gives his embrace,  
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,  
Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.*

Feel for the people we most avoid,  
strange or bereaved or never employed,  
feel for the women, and feel for the men  
who fear that their living is all in vain.

*To the lost Christ shows his face.....*

Feel for the parents who've lost their child,  
feel for the women whom men have defiled,  
feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,  
And feel for the weary who find no rest.

*To the lost Christ shows his face;*

Feel for the lives by life confused,  
riddled with doubt, in loving abused;  
feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,  
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.

*To the lost Christ shows his face;*

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ, lover of all, we pray for the communities around us.  
May the touch of your robe be known among us – bringing respect, justice  
and peace.

Lord Jesus Christ, lover of all, we pray for the sick and needy, the lonely  
and bereaved.

May they reach out towards you, and so find the wholeness of life.

Lord Jesus Christ, we pray for your Church, which tries to be the hem of  
your robe spread wide in the world.

Help us to draw others to you, and to show in our lives and our living your  
love and healing.

Lord Jesus Christ, we bring our own prayers in a moment of quiet, as we  
come to touch the hem of your robe.

*Silence*

May healing come to the people, places, situations and communities for  
which we pray, and may we be channels of your loving touch.

Lord Jesus Christ, lover of all, in your name we pray. Amen

**Hymn: There's a wideness in God's mercy (StF 416)**

There's a wideness in God's mercy  
like the wideness of the sea;  
there's a kindness in his justice  
which is more than liberty.

There is plentiful redemption  
in the blood that has been shed;  
there is joy for all the members  
in the sorrows of the Head.

There is grace enough for thousands  
of new worlds as great as this;  
there is room for fresh creations  
in that upper home of bliss.

For the love of God is broader  
than the measures of the mind;  
and the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.

But we make his love too narrow  
by false limits of our own;  
and we magnify his strictness  
with a zeal he will not own.

If our love were but more simple  
we should take him at his word;  
and our lives would be illumined  
by the presence of our Lord.

**Closing prayer:**

Lord Jesus,  
you looked with compassionate eyes and saw where there was need  
and you responded.

Help us to see the world through your eyes  
and to respond with your love,  
showing courage where there are challenges  
and strength where there are barriers to overcome.

Amen

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