

**FORTH VALLEY METHODIST CIRCUIT WEEKLY SERVICE
SUNDAY 11th OCTOBER 2020**



Opening prayer

Loving God, you gather us together tenderly
as a shepherd gathers their sheep;
you bring us together to feed us
and to strengthen us with your living water.
In you we find peace.
Help us to accept the invitation to come to you;
make us willing to respond to your call,
and ready to receive you now.
Amen.

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Hymn 481 The Lord's My Shepherd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MGO>

- 1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want ;
he makes me lie in pastures green,
he leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.
*And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.*
- 2 He guides my ways in righteousness,
and he anoints my head with oil ;
and my cup — it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.
- 3 And though I walk the darkest path —
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

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This Sunday is both Homeless and Prisoner's Sunday. Unfortunately, these two groups often overlap but we will think about both and pray for them during the service.

Prayer of Approach and Thanksgiving

Lord God you gather us together at your invitation
as the shepherd gathers his sheep.
We may feel quite distanced from each other at the moment
but we remember that you are with us and we join spiritually
with people praying across Scotland and across the world.

We thank you for your blessings which we receive.
We are blessed with a roof over our head and food to eat,
with warmth and security.
We thank you for friends and family
even though it is hard to see them at this time.
We count our many blessings
but the gift of love from you is the highest and most valued.

Today we think of those who are homeless.
We pray for them and for those who provide support for them.
Many of them may not have been told of your love.
We pray that they will know your love through the example of those who offer them
support and friendship.
We thank you for the many who work to provide services for the homeless community
including the churches running Soul Food to provide meals and companionship to them.

Amen

Let us confess our sins to God:
Most merciful God,
we confess to you
before the whole company of heaven
that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed,
and in what we have failed to do.
Forgive us our sins,
heal us by your Spirit
and raise us to new life in Christ. **Amen.**

If we confess our sins,
God is faithful and just,
and will forgive our sins,
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading:

In the gospel reading this week Matthew is recalling parables Jesus told on the theme of wedding feasts.

Matthew 22:1-14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

“But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

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Many commentators believe that the last part (verses 11-13) was added by Matthew from other teachings as this does not appear when the parable is told in Luke. This addition emphasises that accepting God's invitation requires a change from us in response unlike the guest who accepted the invitation but was not prepared to change.

Reflection

Wouldn't it be lovely to have a wedding banquet to look forward to, free from all the restrictions? But many in the story in Matthew's Gospel this week are not so keen. They have heard the invitation but not responded. Some have even responded with violence.

Like the servants who were sent out by the king with his wedding invitation we are called to evangelise and bring the good news of God's grace, and the offer of forgiveness through faith, to all we meet. The gift is for all. There are likely to be responses of rejection from those we invite but that is for individuals to decide, and we cannot tell who will accept or reject. In the story the king says that those the servants went to first are 'not worthy.' The next time they go out the servants invite both 'the good and bad.' As God's missionaries we are not called on to make these judgements on anyone. We are called to seek all and so there is no decision to be made about whether people are worthy or not because that is not an issue. We often used to say that our churches were a place where all are welcome but is that really true? Did we invite all into fellowship when churches were open or just those we felt comfortable with?

Today is a Sunday where we are asked to think about both prisoners and the homeless. These are two groups of people who we might not leap up to show the love of God to, but our mission is to seek out all, particularly the lost, which is all of us. The shepherd rejoices for the lost sheep which has been found.

Edinburgh seems to have less homeless people on the streets now. There was a commitment following on from sheltering all homeless in unused hotel rooms at the start of the COVID19 lockdown that they should not return to the streets. I am not sure how successful this has been, but I often jog through town in the early morning and my route takes me down Princess Street on the way to Arthur's seat. I used to see homeless in colourful sleeping bags sheltering in the shop doorways and I have noticed that they do not seem to have returned. Hopefully they are being given decent accommodation because in countries with a housing first model, when someone is given an address, sorting out benefits, healthcare and employment all follows, and they are much less likely to return to the streets. I pray that they have not just become out of sight and out of mind.

When we have the opportunity, how would we feel about welcoming the homeless and those who have been in prison into our churches? Is there anything we can do to make sure that the wedding banquet is open to all?

Something to think about as we continue our worship. How can we respond?

Hymn 256 When I needed a neighbour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fExR7eOhJ00>

- 1 When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there ?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there ?
*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
were you there ?*
- 2 I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there ?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there ?
- 3 I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there ?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there ?
- 4 When I needed a shelter, were you there, were you there ?
When I needed a shelter, were you there ?
- 5 Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.
*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter (1915–2004)

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Everything touches

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeNg2FovDOQ&feature=youtu.be>

Click on the link above to listen to a poem by Roger McCough. This was originally commissioned as a modern hymn. This is a special recording made for the Prisoner Advice and Care Trust.

Te Deum Laudamus (A Song of the Church)

We praise you, O God,
we acclaim you as Lord;

all creation worships you,
the Father everlasting.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Throughout the world the holy Church acclaims you:

Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son,
worthy of all praise,
the Holy Spirit, advocate and guide.

You, Christ, are the king of glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.
When you took our flesh to set us free
you humbly chose the Virgin's womb.

You overcame the sting of death
and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

You are seated at God's right hand in glory.
We believe that you will come to be our judge.

Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood,
and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.

Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance.
Govern and uphold them now and always.

Day by day we bless you.
We praise your name for ever.

Keep us today, Lord, from all sin.
Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.

Lord, show us your love and mercy,
for we put our trust in you.

In you, Lord, is our hope:
let us never be put to shame.

Amen

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Prayers of Intercession

God our Father,
We remember those who and in need of your strength at this time, Lord
For leaders across the world and the difficult decisions they have to make,
For the churches and church leaders who provide spiritual guidance,
For teachers and those involved in education,
For our nation and its people,
For the homeless,
For prisoners,
For the people in our community in need through sickness, distress or loneliness,
For the members of our church, our friends and our family,
For ourselves that we will have strength and peace.

In your mercy Lord,
Hear our prayers.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name.
your Kingdom come.
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever, **Amen.**

Hymn 673: Will you come and follow me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o469PRLdbHU>

- 1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name ?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same ?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me ?

- 2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name ?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same ?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare ?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me ?
- 3 Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name ?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same ?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me ?
- 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name ?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same ?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me ?
- 5 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

John L. Bell (*b.* 1949) and Graham Maule (*b.* 1958)
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Blessing

May God's goodness strengthen you.

May God's mercy comfort you.

May God's promise of eternal life inspire you
with hope and love.

In the name of the Father, Son and Spirit.

Amen

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With thanks to Keith Burns for preparing this week's order of service.