



Birstall and Rothley Methodist Churches



A Service for January 24th, 2021

This service has been prepared for use at home.

If you are able to join us online at 10:30am on Sunday,
please use this link:

Call to worship

God so loved the world -
the sparrows, and the mountain lions,
the fish and the people.

God still loves the world -
in success and failure,
in sickness and health,
in mediocrity and the extraordinary.

God still loves the world -
enough to become one of us,
enough to suffer along with us,
enough to offer new life for us.

***God loves -
and we will worship!***

Hymn StF 101

Before the world began, one Word was there;
grounded in God he was, rooted in care;
by him all things were made;
in him was love displayed;
through him God spoke and said,
'I am for you.'

Life found in him its source; death found its end;
light found in him its course, darkness its friend.
For neither death nor doubt
nor darkness can put out
the glow of God, the shout:
'I am for you.'

The Word was in the world which from him came;
unrecognized he was, unknown by name;
one with all humankind,
with the unloved aligned,
convincing sight and mind:
'I am for you.'

All who received the Word by God were blessed;
sisters and brothers they of earth's fond guest.
So did the Word of Grace
proclaim in time and space
and with a human face,
'I am for you.'

words: John L Bell (b.1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019)

Prayers

We gather to meet with you, God -
Father, Son and Holy Spirit -
and to be aware of your presence in our day;
for you are here now;
your Spirit dwells within us.

We are here to bring you our worship, and offer you our praise;
to be conscious that you walk beside us, and we do not make the journey alone.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
draw near to us as we draw near to you,
for we are feeling isolated and alone,
and we do not know when we will next be together.

Triune God, you exist in eternal relationship.
You are One and yet you are three.
Draw us closer to this mystery.
May it remind us that even in physical isolation, we are never truly alone.
Your love links us together,
making us a people for your praise.

We belong to each other.
We belong to you.
Even now.
Especially now.

Holy God,
our contentment comes and goes,
our happiness ebbs and flows.
Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,
our physical health, our brain chemistry;
but our joy is deeply rooted
in our identity as your beloved children,
and we give you thanks.

Amen.

Readings: 1 John 1:1-9

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us - we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the

light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Mark 1:14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Reflection

In today's gospel reading, we read how Jesus recruited his first disciples, and told them that they would "fish for people."

This metaphor has been used for generations by evangelists and missionaries all over the world even though it's a metaphor of death: for when a fish is taken out of the water, it will die. But we use it because we die to our old life in order to be raised to new life in Christ.

In this reading, Jesus fished two sets of brothers out of their existing lives. Taken away from the comfort and familiarity of the lives they were living, they must have wondered where they were going - but Jesus didn't say.

They must have wondered what they were going to be doing; after all, how *do* you fish for people? He didn't tell them that, either.

And they probably wondered who they would be living and working with, but guess what - Jesus gave no clue.

So, we are told that they gave up their livelihoods, their income, and their homes, to begin a life that was utterly dependent upon the goodwill and generosity of the people they encountered as they travelled with Jesus.

Most of us are not called to do that - but we are called to live and work for the gospel:

- to choose an occupation, not for the size of the salary, but because it uses your God-given talents to benefit the world;
- to regard promotion as an opportunity to make a greater difference in people's lives;
- to spend money, and to use your voice and your energy, in ways that make the world a better, fairer place for the people who live in it;
- to use the freedom of retirement to do the things that were not possible before - not to indulge ourselves, but to make the world a place where the Kingdom of God might be seen and known.

I wonder how your life changed because you were "fished out" of the life you were leading?

How your priorities changed as you lived as a disciple of Jesus?

And how you have helped others to take that same step, and allow themselves to be "fished out" of their comfortable lives, and follow Jesus?

silence for quiet reflection

Hymn

StF 664

Lord, you call us to your service,
each in our own way.
Some to caring, loving, healing;
some to preach, or pray;
some to work with quiet learning,
truth discerning,
day by day.

Life for us is always changing
in the work we share.
Christian love adds new dimensions
to the way we care.
For we know that you could lead us,
as you need us,
anywhere.

Seeing life from your perspective
makes your challenge plain,
as your heart is grieving over
those who live in pain.
Teach us how, by our compassion,
you may fashion
hope again.

Lord, we set our human limits
on the work we do.
Send us your directing Spirit,
pour your power through,
that we may be free in living
and in giving
all for you.

words: Marjorie Dobson (b. 1940)

Prayers of Intercession

You, wonderful God, whose glory the heavens declare
and whose handiwork the whole earth sees;

***be with astronomers and astronauts
artists, photographers and all who teach us to see.***

You, whose Spirit brooded over the face of the earth
and brought breath to all that lives and grows;

***be with health workers who control viruses and bacteria,
or who make vaccines.***

You, for whom truth is not mere facts and figures
but relationship and the gift of eternal love;

***be with those whose science has left them empty
or whose technology has become a slavery.***

You, who give us faith that leads to many doubts
and deep doubts that lead to a larger faith;

***be with all agnostics and those who despair,
and all the pure of heart who hunger for you.***

You, who have created us for fulfilment and joy,
and do not rest while one lost person is in misery;

be with those who are lost in addiction.

You, who should mother and father forsake us,
cherish us as your very own family;

***be with abused children and street kids,
social workers, magistrates and foster parents.***

You, who when thick darkness covered humanity,
leapt into the night bringing light and joy;

***be with night-shift workers and police,
evangelists, counsellors and pastors.***

You, whose first-born, perfect Child
covered our sins and bore our griefs;

***be with mothers and midwives,
the falsely accused and sorely abused.***

You, who banish fears and bring a new dawn,
who swallow up death in victory;

***be with those who risk their lives for others
and all who today face death alone.***

You, who know our needs before we utter them
and do far more than we can ask or imagine;

***be with us as we offer these prayers
and with all who have forgotten how to pray.***

Through Jesus Christ our Brother and Saviour.

Amen.

Our Father....

Hymn

StF 239

Sent by the Lord am I;
my hands are ready now
to make the earth a place
in which the kingdom comes.

(Repeat)

The angels cannot change
a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love,
of justice and of peace.
The task is mine to do,
to set it really free.
O help me to obey;
help me to do your will.

Blessing

May the holy wisdom of God guard your ways and guide your paths;
may the living truth of God enlighten your hearts and open your minds;
and may the living Spirit of God give you life, and life to the full!

Amen!