



Birstall Methodist Church
A Service for Sunday July 4th 2021



This service has been prepared for use at home, as well as in church and online at 10.30am.

Call to Worship

We are all disciples of Jesus
We are the salt of the earth and a light to the world
We are called to make disciples of every nation
May we be blessed as we meet together in worship

Hymn StF 415

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| 1 | The Church of Christ in every age
beset by change but Spirit-led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead. | 2 | Across the world, across the street,
the victims of injustice cry
for shelter and for bread to eat,
and never live until they die. |
| 3 | Then let the servant Church arise,
a caring Church that longs to be
a partner in Christ's sacrifice,
and clothed in Christ's humanity | 4 | For he alone, whose blood was shed,
can cure the fever in our blood,
and teach us how to share our bread
and feed the starving multitude. |
| | 5 | | We have no mission but to serve
in full obedience to our Lord:
to care for all without reserve,
and spread his liberating Word. |

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Prayers of praise, thanksgiving and confession

Almighty God, we praise you that you created the world to reflect your love and truth, and that everything in the world relies on you for its' life.

We praise you that your love for your creation never ends and that it has no limits.

We praise you that your love reaches out to seek and save a lost world and broken lives, and in Christ you have demonstrated your mercy and your love for all peoples of the world.

We praise you for the good news of his life, death and resurrection and that this is the message that you have called and commissioned us to make known.

Almighty God, we cannot praise you too much, and we cannot offer too much worship for all you have done for us.

We praise you that through your Holy Spirit we can know your presence and power within our hearts and lives, and we can know what it means to be made new.

We praise you, for you are our God, our great and glorious sovereign Lord.
We ask that you will take our words of praise and by your Holy Spirit transform them into words and deeds that bring you glory forever. **Amen.**

Merciful God, forgive us when we fall, and when we lose our way.
Forgive us when we lead others astray because we do not listen to your voice.
Forgive us the hurt we cause in our relationship with you and with each other by our angry words and our selfish attitudes.
Forgive us for those we know to be hungry, but we do not feed them;
For those who are lost, but we do not search for them,
For those whose lives are naked and vulnerable, but we do not care for them,
For those who are imprisoned in fear and loneliness, but we are not there for them,
For those who are thirsty for love and acceptance and a life that is real, but we send them away empty handed,
For those whose lives are sick and broken and hurting, but we do not offer them the name of the Good Shepherd to heal them and hold them.
For those who are strangers, who are different from us, but we do not seek to include them.
Merciful God, we ask you to forgive us, and that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will cleanse and renew us.
We know and we accept that Jesus died for our wrongdoing, and that we have been forgiven.
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen.**

Our Father, who art in heaven.....

Hymn StF 404

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| 1 God's spirit is in my heart;
he has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
what I have to do: | 2 Just as the Father sent me,
so I'm sending you out to be
my witness throughout the world -
the whole of the world: |
| <i>He sent me to give the old news to the poor;
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
tell blind people that they can see,
and set the down trodden free,
and go tell everyone
the news that the kingdom of God has come;
and go tell everyone
the news that God's kingdom has come.</i> | |
| 3 Don't carry a load in your pack;
you don't need two shirts on your back;
God's workers can earn their own keep -
can earn their own keep: | 4 Don't worry what you have to say
don't worry because on that day
God's spirit will speak in your heart -
will speak in your heart: |

v. 1 and refrain Alan T. Dale (1902-1979)
vv. 2-4 Hubert Richards (b. 1921)

Bible reading - Mark 6: 1 - 13

1 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. **2** On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! **3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offence at him. **4** Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." **5** And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. **6** And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. **7** He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. **8** He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; **9** but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. **10** He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. **11** If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." **12** So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. **13** They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Reflection

Jesus called his disciples together, and he gave them instructions to go out in pairs but not to take anything with them. I have often wondered how they felt about this, having to rely totally upon the hospitality of others. Jesus point of course was for them to rely totally upon God for all their needs during the journey. Even so, some of them probably felt slightly insecure, or even vulnerable. I guess some of us may have experienced these feelings of vulnerability on our journey of discipleship today.

We are all aware of the importance of protecting those who are vulnerable today, be it minority groups, the disadvantaged and disabled, young people and children. We are also aware of situations when things go wrong and the vulnerable become victims. Even Christian churches get things wrong sometimes, and that is why Safeguarding is so important. I was truly shocked when I recently read an article in the Guardian by Frances Ryan entitled 'during Covid, to be vulnerable is to be told your life does not matter.' I suggest you read it for yourselves, there is a weblink below.

If we were to ask a group of people to define vulnerability we would be given a wide variety of answers. So, here are some thoughts. Personal vulnerability introduces uncertainty, risk and exposure into our lives. It is not about winning or losing. It is about having the courage to show up, to be seen, to take part when we have no control over the outcome. It is to love with our whole hearts, with no guarantee. It is not a weakness. Our open vulnerability is actually a great measure of courage.

However, this is different to the values and objectives that many in our society hold today, where personal independence and strength are more highly valued, and belief in oneself is emphasised so much. Unfortunately most people that have adopted this approach have desensitised their feelings and emotions, and research has shown that one cannot selectively numb an emotion. Regrettably we as Christians are not wholly immune from this mindset, because we live and work in our society and we are influenced by it.

As Christians though we are in a much stronger position because we have the Word of God to call upon for encouragement, support, advice and instruction. We know we are not 'conformed to this world' (Romans 12:2), and we are the 'salt of the earth and light to the world' (Matthew

5;13), and we are commissioned to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matt 28;19). But even with all this we still have to face our own vulnerability. As Jesus' disciples sometimes we have to accept an amount of uncertainty, risk and uncontrolled outcomes. As happened in Jesus day, the rewards from God can be unimaginably great when we have to rely upon Him! So, be encouraged, remain close to God, walk the path of discipleship, this is where God wants us to be.

[During Covid, to be 'vulnerable' is to be told your life doesn't matter | Frances Ryan | The Guardian](#)

Hymn StF 662

- 1 Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?
Are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?
Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow?*

- 2 Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?
Will you make a choice to stand your ground
when the crowds are running violent?

- 3 In your city streets will be be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?

- 4 Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
and believe it could be different?
Will you share your views using words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.
We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.*

Jacqueline G. Jones

Prayers of intercession and concern

Merciful God, we pray for this world in which so many people see you simply in terms of a remote power, a punishing God, someone to fear.

We pray for those who are angry, who are filled with a desire for revenge, for those whose bitterness has destroyed their lives.

We ask you to open their minds to a wider understanding, and to soften their hearts to enable them to feel compassion.

Taizé response;

*oh Lord hear my prayer, oh Lord hear my prayer, when I call answer me,
oh Lord hear my prayer, oh Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.*

Caring God, we pray for families whose love is being destroyed by jealousy, where people expect loving relationships simply to happen without any effort or commitment on their part each day.

May your love renew their hope and their striving for peace.

Taizé response (oh Lord hear my prayer.....)

Loving God, we pray for children who suffer the consequences of their parents' failure to love and to care, for children whose lives are suffering the results of physical, mental or sexual abuse.

May your caring and healing hand be upon them, and protect them.

Taizé response (oh Lord hear my prayer.....)

Loving God, we pray for our friends and neighbours, for those who are without joy, hope, peace, or any real sense of purpose and direction in their lives.

May you show them the revitalising love and life that comes from you.

Taizé response (oh Lord hear my prayer.....)

Almighty God, we bring before you all those who we know are vulnerable; the weak and ill, the disadvantaged and poor, those unable to speak for themselves.

We ask you to protect them from harm, and show them the infinite love that comes from you.

Taizé response (oh Lord hear my prayer.....)

Everlasting heavenly Father, we pray for ourselves. You know the things that make us stumble and fall, our weaknesses, our secret shame.

You know our words of faith and our feeble trust, our good intentions, and our faltering steps.

Grant to us wisdom, gentleness, mercy, faith and love, as we dedicate our lives to you.

Give us the courage to show up, to be seen, to take part when we are unsure of the outcome.

Direct us on the path you want us to walk as a disciple of Jesus, and grant us the fortitude and faith to become more like Christ.

Taizé response (oh Lord hear my prayer.....)

Blessing and dismissal

We say together.....

May God the Father bless us,

may Christ our Saviour take care of us,

may the Holy Spirit enlighten and guide us, all the days of our lives.

May the Lord be our defender and keeper of body and soul,

both now and for ever, to the end of our age, amen.