



The Methodist Church

Bury St Edmunds Circuit.

WORSHIP SHEET FOR 20TH SEPTEMBER

Welcome to worship

Be still, you may like to light a candle. Take some time to remember and focus on God's loving presence with each one of us, wherever we are.

Call to Worship :

God calls the strong and the weak,
the grateful and the grumblers,
**those who have much to give
and those who have little.**
And he calls us,
so come and worship the God
**whose generosity is beyond words
and whose love binds us all together.**

Hymn: StF 91 The God of Abraham praise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYUn2PSbvqU&list=TLPQMDkwOTlwMjBuZiL3ogkLkQ&index=3>

- 1 The God of Abraham praise,
who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of everlasting Days,
and God of love.
Jehovah! Great I AM!
By earth and heaven confessed ;
I bow and bless the sacred name
for ever blessed.
- 2 He by himself has sworn,
I on his oath depend :
I shall, on eagles' wings upborne,
to heaven ascend ;
I shall behold his face,
I shall his power adore
and sing the wonders of his grace
for evermore.
- 3 The God who reigns on high
the great archangels sing ;
and 'Holy, holy, holy,' cry,
'Almighty King,
who was and is the same,
and evermore shall be ;
Jehovah, Father, great I AM,
we worship thee.'
- 4 Before the Saviour's face
the ransomed nations bow ;
o'erwhelmed at his almighty grace,
for ever new :
he shows his prints of love,
they kindle to a flame,
and sound through all the worlds above
the slaughtered Lamb.
- 5 The whole triumphant host
give thanks to God on high ;
'Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!'

they ever cry.
Hail, Abraham's God, and ours !
We join the heavenly throng,
and celebrate with all our powers
in endless song.

Thomas Olivers (1725-1799)

Prayer of Praise

You are the God who formed us,
The God who knows us,
The God who loves us,
The God who leads us,
The God who feeds us,
The God who blesses us,
The beginning and end
of all that we are,
and hope to be.
Worthy of our praise.
God
I am not a poet or musician,
but
I have written
a song of praise
in my heart.
And in the quietness
of this moment
I shall share it with you,
in the certain knowledge
that any imperfections
will be made perfect,
in the simple act
of opening my heart
and singing
God, you are my God. Amen

Prayer of Confession

Loving God,
it seems we cannot decide.
we say we will live to serve others, but end up
meeting only our needs.
We claim to live in a way that honours Christ,
but we do not take him to work, school, and
home.
We believe that the gospel can transform lives,
at least, for those who need it – but surely not
us.
Forgive us, Presence of Peace.
Instead of grumblers, may we be ambassadors
of grace.
Instead of continual complaining, may we carry
compassion to the hurting.
Instead of whiners, may we be workers with
Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, to reach
out and bring the kingdom of God to everyone
we meet.

*in this moment of stillness bring your own
prayers of confession*

Assurance of Pardon

This is the good news: there is no ranking in God's kingdom.

God graces everyone with the same gifts: mercy, restoration, new life.

God has kept his covenant. We have been forgiven; we have been made new people.

Thanks be to God Amen.

Hymn: StF 693 Beauty for brokenness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kVHKuldZyw>

- 1 Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase!
- 2 Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for all people,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*
- 3 Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
his cross for the pain. *Refrain*
- 4 Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned —
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content with
the things that we need. *Refrain*
- 5 Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise. *Refrain*

Graham Kendrick (b.1950)

Bible reading Psalm 105 : 1 – 7

- ¹ Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he
has done.
- ² Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
- ³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek
the LORD rejoice.
- ⁴ Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.
- ⁵ Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he
pronounced,
- ⁶ you his servants, the descendants of
Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.
- ⁷ He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 20 : 1 - 16

The parable of the workers in the vineyard

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the market-place doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, "You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." ⁵ So they went.

'He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?"

⁷ "Because no one has hired us," they answered.

'He said to them, "You also go and work in my vineyard."

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first."

⁹ The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² "These who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "and you have made them equal to

us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.”

¹³ ‘But he answered one of them, “I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵ Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?”

¹⁶ ‘So the last will be first, and the first will be last.’

Reflection The Gospel latecomers

The world of the Gospel is peopled with life’s latecomers, who find themselves with some form of disability. They are the physically damaged, the psychologically damaged, the spiritually damaged, the economically damaged. They are the prodigal sons, the outcasts, the overlooked, the ones people think they can safely ignore or shun. They are found in the midst of the Gospel because they are in the midst of life. Jesus has a clear prejudice in their favour, not least because he teaches us what we keep unlearning: that God’s ways are not our ways, that God does not work from the arithmetic of the calculator but from the fullness of a divine heart.

In today’s Gospel Jesus gives us a marvellous insight into the wisdom of reversal which is at the heart of the kingdom. A landowner goes to the marketplace at dawn to hire casual labour to work in his vineyard. This still takes place today, in Egypt the men wait on the corner of the village hoping that someone will hire them – they wait from early morning till dark and the wage is not known until they have finished working. In our story the landowner arranges to pay them the average daily wage, one denarius. He hires other labourers at nine in the morning, noon and mid-afternoon. About five o’clock, an hour before work ends at sunset, he hires the last group of workers. At six o’clock the fun starts: the first to be paid are the last to arrive, and they are given a full day’s wage. Those who worked from dawn to sunset receive no more than those who put in only an hour’s work in the cool of the evening. The landowner’s generosity to the latecomers aggrieves the early starters, even though they are paid the agreed sum. So the landowner confronts them with the question: “Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?”

We are invited to consider the generosity of God, a generosity that makes other people furious. God is a generous God and Jesus was challenging the Pharisees’ complaint of his generous treatment of sinners, the latecomers, whom he treats with the same mercy as he has for those who have borne the burden of the Law.

What is the most recent act of generosity that you have witnessed? Did it make you feel guilty or pleased? Freddie was always generous and would give away our last penny to buy someone a meal. We were at the checkout one day when a young couple in front didn’t have enough money to pay for their purchase, so Freddie paid. We had a strict rule, we never gave money but would buy food. When we got back to the car I challenged him, it wasn’t food he had paid for but 4 cans of beer. His answer, they were university students and he remembered what it was like when you couldn’t afford a treat and he wanted them to have a treat.

We may not understand God’s generosity but he certainly is generous and he offers us the grace that we cannot buy. Do we allow God the freedom to do things the divine way, or do we get furious when God diverts from our way of operating? If we resent God’s freedom to show mercy to whom God pleases, not only do we repeat the grumble of the labourers in the parable, but we forget how we ourselves benefit from God’s mercy.

Hymn: StF 565 Only by grace we can enter
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv72Q23llp0>

Only by grace can we enter,
only by grace can we stand ;
not by our human endeavour,
but by the blood of the Lamb.
Into your presence you call us,
you call us to come.
Into your presence you draw us,
and now by your grace we come,
now by your grace we come.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions,
who would stand ?
Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
by the blood of the Lamb.
Lord, if you mark our transgressions,
who would stand ?
Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
by the blood of the Lamb.

Only by grace can we enter ... Gerrit Gustafson

Prayers of intercession

Generous God, you call all to work for your Kingdom.
Give your Church grace to rejoice when anyone joins in this ministry.
Striving side by side, we rejoice in your service.

Lord of faith and truth
We bless you holy name.

Generous God, you challenge the limits of our employment terms with your justice.
Strengthen the conditions of service that enhance our humanity.
Direct us to view one another as more than economic units.

Lord of faith and truth
We bless you holy name.

Generous God, you are the giver of gifts and source of our talents.
Turn drudgery into a vehicle of your divine glory.
Transform our labours to reflect your creating presence.

Lord of faith and truth
We bless you holy name.

Generous God, you bless us beyond the limitations of our physical condition.
Open our eyes to the mystery of your love in our human weakness.
Give us thankful hearts for your redeeming love.

Lord of faith and truth
We bless you holy name.

Generous God, you hold before us wages beyond our deserving.
Grant your eternal gift to those released from their labours.
Give us faith to desire our ultimate home with you.

Lord of faith and truth
We bless you holy name.

We bring our prayers in Jesus' name. Amen

Together we say **Our Father who art ...**

Blessing of our gifts

Loving God,
you owe us nothing, yet you give us so much.
We owe you everything, yet we give you so little.
Forgive us the feebleness of our response,
and teach us to give without reserve,
not simply our money but our talents,
our love, and our service,
each offered to you in the name of Jesus Christ
Amen

Hymn: StF 507 O for a heart to praise

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

- 1 O for a heart to praise my God,
a heart from sin set free,
a heart that always feels thy blood
so freely spilt for me ;
- 2 A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
my great Redeemer's throne,
where only Christ is heard to speak,
where Jesus reigns alone ;
- 3 A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
believing, true, and clean ;
which neither life nor death can part
from him that dwells within ;
- 4 A heart in every thought renewed,
and full of love divine ;
perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
a copy, Lord, of thine !
- 5 Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart ;
come quickly from above,
write thy new name upon my heart,
thy new, best name of love.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

A prayer of dismissal

Go out from here
as workers in God's upside-down kingdom,
where the last are first and the first are last,
where needs are met in miraculous ways,
and there is grace enough for all!

Grace

We say together...

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all forever more. Amen.

Some prayers taken from:-
www.faithandworship.com
Intercession years ABC Ian Black

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