



worship@home

Sunday 10th September 2023

Ordinary 23



Call to worship

Come before the Lord and listen.
Do not be afraid, but do not be cowardly either.
Let us seek God's grace to be faithful and firm
in search of truth and unity – for that is our calling.

StF 28: Jesus calls us here to meet him

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ModYoPReYYw>

- 1 Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise ;
praise the Son who calls us friends ;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.
- 2 Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story ;
tell his tales that all may hear ;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.
- 3 Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are ;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger ;
join the hands of age and youth ;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

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

A Prayer of Praise

God of integrity and wisdom,
you are the source of peace and the healer of conflicts
within ourselves and our families,
within our community and our country,
within the nations of the world;
so, we praise you for caring when we hurt one
another,
for grieving when we are divided,
for rejoicing when we are reconciled to one another
and to you,
and for inspiring us to be the best we can be.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

A Prayer of Confession

God of truth and integrity,
we ask your forgiveness for the times
when we avoid conflict to preserve popularity
and to avoid being challenged or criticised.
Free us from fear and enable us to do conflict well.
We are sorry when we don't listen to those around us
when they challenge our actions, our words, our
complacency.
Free us from pride and enable us to do conflict well.
We are sorry when, as a church, we collude with that
which is wrong
and compromise when we should convict or speak
out.

Free us from falsehood and enable us to do conflict well.

We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

God of peace, your forgiveness makes us one and
cleanses us from all our mistakes,
wiping away our excuses, our justifications,
our grudges, our mistakes.
Thank you for the cross of Christ,
through which hope, reconciliation and new
beginnings flourish,
and help us to be brave in our communications,
wise in our discernment and faithful to you.
Amen.

Epistle: Romans 13:8-14

Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

Reflection

A food bank moved on to the church premises after a disagreement with its original Local Authority landlord. It brought with it many of its original volunteers, who were adamant that moving to church premises did not mean they wanted to be associated with the church's Christian mission to the local community. They were not believers and could be put in a false position.

The hosting church felt that one of its core missional purposes in the local community was to feed the hungry, look out for the poor, and share what it had. To deny that these were 'Gospel purposes' would put the church community in a false position.

The result was an atmosphere of mutual suspicion, even hostility – especially among the more vocal on either side of this division. Happily, there were also moderate voices on both sides, carefully mapping the areas of disagreement. An ethos of seeking the rights of the marginalised and unfortunate, and giving freely of their time and money, could be agreed by all – whatever imperative lay behind it. And, it emerged, neither side had any intention of bullying or harassing anyone about their beliefs – least of all those whose dire needs brought them to seek food and supplies.

In time, and at the church's expense, some additional items were made available at various times: Easter eggs including the Easter Story, Christmas cards with an invitation to a carol or nativity service. Importantly, these were an option not a condition for taking food parcels, and not forced on people by being put into every bag. Few turned down Easter eggs or Christmas cards; some accepted the invitations or expressed interest in doing so! And all who came had a genuine free choice. Is this, perhaps, an object lesson in putting into practice the approach to conflict recommended by Jesus?

Prayers of intercession

Eternal, ever-living God,
we pray for those who this day need our prayers:
those we see around us...
those we have left at home...
family and friends near and far...
strangers and communities we will never meet or know,
but whose peril we hear of and see on our screens...
those whose life is ebbing away
consumed by old age, frailty, illness or neglect...
those who grieve deeply for lives and loves lost...
those who cause grief and chaos in society
and who live seemingly with different values from ours,
for them and their victims and their families...
those who are forgotten, unnoticed, unloved,
unmissed...
Lord God, in your abundance of mercy,
hear these and all our prayers.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father...

StF 700: God weeps

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ3f0NdHbBc>

- 1 God weeps
at love withheld,
at strength misused,
at children's innocence abused,
and till we change the way we love,
God weeps.
- 2 God bleeds
at anger's fist,
at trust betrayed,
at women battered and afraid,
and till we change the way we win,
God bleeds.
- 3 God cries
at hungry mouths,
at running sores,
at creatures dying without cause,
and till we change the way we care,
God cries.
- 4 God waits
for stones to melt,
for peace to seed,
for hearts to hold each other's need,
and till we understand the Christ,
God waits.

Shirley Erena Murray (*b.* 1931)

A Prayer of Blessing

God's light guide you,
God's hand support you,
God's love surround you:
and the blessing of God,
Creator, Reconciler and Sustainer,
be with you and those you love.

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