

**Ash Wednesday: 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. You may find it helpful to find a pebble or stone to use during our prayers. Similarly see if you still have a palm cross from last year, or any cross (even crossed kitchen knives would do) place the cross where you can see it during this time of worship. A more penitential liturgy can be found in the Worship Book p141

**Opening Prayer**

God of truth and holiness,  
as I settle down to worship  
on this first day of Lent, may I  
know your holiness and  
be enlightened by your Spirit,  
so that I may in truth join with all the saints  
in praise and penitence. Amen

**Hymn: 507 O for a heart to praise my God**

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

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

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;

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,  
my great Redeemer's throne,  
where only Christ is heard to speak,  
where Jesus reigns alone;

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,  
believing, true, and clean;  
which neither life nor death can part  
from him that dwells within;

A heart in every thought renewed,  
and full of love divine;  
perfect, and right, and pure, and good,  
a copy, Lord, of thine!

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)*

Let us pray together....

Almighty God, creator of all  
and lover of all you have made,  
we come to worship you.  
Expand our ideas of holiness, and remind us that  
we are made in your image,  
holy and good.

Drive from our hearts all that is mean and petty,  
all that is not good.

On this the first day of Lent we come with the  
matters that trouble our conscience: things we  
have done or said that did not reflect your  
goodness in Jesus.

Things we could have done but chose not to.  
Acts of generosity we selfishly refused to do, or  
to receive.

Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners, wash me clean.  
Holy Spirit, burn away the dross in my life.  
Heavenly Father, assure me not only of your  
loving welcome for repentant prodigals,  
but also of your strength to help me through this  
Lent.

Speak to me now through your Holy Word, that  
by the Living Word I may be challenged and  
encouraged, in Jesus my Saviour. Amen

**Today's Reading from the Old Testament**  
**Isaiah 58:1-11**

**Today's Gospel Reading:**  
**Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21**

## Time to Reflect

Ash Wednesday can be an uncomfortable time in worship. Our readings bring us up short – like the questions on our “Methodist Way of Life” commitment cards. Sometimes we are called by God to go back to basics. So some questions for us to reflect on from our readings:

- When have I “pointed the finger”?
- When do I “quarrel and fight”?
- How do I deceive myself and serve my own interest?
- When have I “hidden from other people’s needs”?

This Lent what is the fast that the Lord requires of me? Might it be a fast

- From consumerism?
- From planet-damaging activities?
- From self-obsession?

Where is my treasure? What does my heart return to morning by morning? Night by night? Do I speak of good, or of evil?

And lest we forget to hope - a quote from the alternative OT reading

“Return to the Lord, your God, **for God is gracious and merciful**, slow to anger and **abounding in steadfast love.**” (Joel 2:13)

Take a time to sit quietly, holding your stone and looking on the cross.

Remember God’s promise in Ezekiel 36:26 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

## A time of prayer

God of the whole world, hear me as I offer my prayers with the whole Church and guide my prayers that through my words and by my deeds your will may be done.

I pray with Methodists around the Connexion using our Prayer Handbook.

On day 17 we pray with the Church of North India and the Church of South India. Thank you for their ecumenical witness to the unity of us all in Christ. May they be a rebuke to any desire to assert my denomination over any other.

We pray for the Lincolnshire District, and I pray for my own District and Circuit.

I thank you for the fellowship I have experienced through my local Methodist Church, and I pray now

for people known to me through that church, especially .....

Through my words and by my deeds may your will be done.

I pray for the world around me, especially for the people I have seen on my TV screen.

Holding my stone, I remember those who would throw stones at others, metaphorical and real. You remind me that true religion is both a thing of the heart, between each person and you, but also a thing of community. I pray for those who build community – neighbours who call on me, or who I can phone and support. I pray too for those who struggle with financial issues, especially during this pandemic. Through my words and by my deeds may your will be done.

And as I look on my cross, I remember those who are carrying the burden of suffering today. You knew unfair suffering on your cross Lord Jesus, so you can help us bear our burdens. Help me today with my burden, be it loneliness, illness or something else. Speak to me of your love that overcomes evil, of your hope that gives endurance. Through my words and by my deeds may your will be done.

And I remember those who have died, especially those known to me. I name them now..... May the hope of resurrection comfort those who mourn, and the circle of fellowship warm those in the grip of grief, even as my hand has warmed this stone. Lord in your mercy: Hear my prayer. Amen

## The Lord’s Prayer

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to** Beauty for brokenness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqDOXfj9W0w>

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind**

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!

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.

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.

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

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)*

### **A prayer of blessing**

May the Lord of the dance,  
with you in the somber days of Lent,  
bless your Lenten discipline with grace  
and bring you resurrection and hope in the  
strange blessings of Gethsemane and Calvary,  
in God's Holy Name, Amen

Original Materials by Phil Challis

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We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to provide these resources until the end of August 2021.

Isaiah 58:1-12

58 Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.

2 Yet day after day they seek me  
and delight to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that practised  
righteousness

and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgements,  
they delight to draw near to God.

3 'Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?'

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-  
day,

and oppress all your workers.

4 Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight  
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today  
will not make your voice heard on high.

5 Is such the fast that I choose,  
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,  
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,  
a day acceptable to the Lord?

6 Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,

to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,

and to break every yoke?

7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;

your vindicator\* shall go before you,  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,  
10 if you offer your food to the hungry

and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.  
11 The Lord will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

1 'Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.\*

5 'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.\*

16 'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.\*

19 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust\* consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust\* consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.