

**A service for 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 (StF)**

**Call to worship: Psalm 138 verses 4 and 5**

May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth. May they sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great. Amen.

*Our opening hymn was written in 1979 to celebrate the bi-centenary of John Wesley's preaching in Paradise Square, Sheffield. There is little unusual about a commemorative hymn, but both words and melody of this one were composed during a train journey between London and Chesterfield and it was inspired by the opening of the 1933 "Methodist Hymn Book", which reads 'Methodism was born in song. Charles Wesley wrote the first hymns of the Evangelical Revival during the great Whitsuntide of 1738 when his brother and he were "filled with the Spirit," and from that time onwards the Methodists have never ceased to sing.' The author, Revd. Brian Hoare was New Testament Tutor at Cliff College and in 1979 he was serving as a member of the main committee that created "Hymns and Psalms". Enough said; we shall sing hymn number 21, 'Born in song'.*

**1. Born in song!**

**God's people have always been singing.**

**Born in song!**

**Hearts and voices raised.**

**So today we worship together;**

**God alone is worthy to be praised.**

**2. Praise to God!**

**For he is the one who has made us.**

**Praise to God!**

**We his image bear.**

**Heaven and earth are full of his glory;**

**Let creation praise him everywhere.**

**3. Christ is King!**

**He left all the glory of heaven.**

**Christ is King!**

**Born to share in our pain;**

**Crucified, for sinners atoning,**

**Risen, exalted, soon to come again.**

**4. Sing the song!**

**God's Spirit is poured out among us.**

**Sing the song!**

**He has made us anew.**

**Every member part of the Body;**

**Given his power, his will to seek and do.**

**5. Tell the world!**

**All power to Jesus is given.**

**Tell the world!**

**He is with us always.**

**Spread the word, that all may receive him;  
Every tongue confess and sing his praise.**

**6. Then the end!**

**Christ Jesus shall reign in his glory.**

**Then the end**

**Of all earthly days.**

**Yet above the song will continue;**

**All his people still shall sing his praise.**

© *Brian Hoare (born 1935)*

***Let us pray***

Lord of life, how majestic is your name in all the universe! Your glory shines throughout the earth. When we look at the wonders of your creation, which you spoke into being, the beauty of earth, sea and sky, the vastness of space and consider the ecosystems that maintain life, we are astounded not only by the height, depth and breadth of your might and wisdom, but that you should care for feeble, sinful human beings. Yet you have given us stewardship over this planet and seek to draw us ever-closer as your earthly children.

When we resisted your holy will, you came to us as Christ Jesus, whose life, death and resurrection, not only revealed your true nature and showed us how you want us to live, but broke the hold of sin and death and offers us everlasting life. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Amen.

***Let us offer a prayer of thanksgiving and confession to the Lord. When I say, 'Lord, in your mercy', please reply, 'Hear our prayer'.***

Heavenly Father, we offer thanks for the many blessings we receive from you, day by day: for the many good things we enjoy; for people who have blessed us by their example and loving-care, but most of all that you love us even at our worst, when we are loveless and unlovable.

***'Lord, in your mercy' ..... 'Hear our prayer'.***

Merciful Lord, pardon us when we don't love our neighbours as we love ourselves and for times when we see neighbours in need or distress but don't help them. Forgive us, too, for our failure commit ourselves to you and to serve you whole-heartedly. Help us to change our ways, so that our lives become Christ-centred, not self-centred.

***'Lord, in your mercy', please reply, 'Hear our prayer'.***

Gracious and faithful God, we believe that you have heard our prayer and have not only forgiven us, but you call us to follow you once more, unburdened by guilt. Therefore, Lord, as you offer us a fresh start, fill us now with the power of the Holy Spirit to love and serve both you and our neighbours faithfully and joyfully in the blessed name of Christ Jesus our Lord and Friend. Amen.

***We shall say the prayer our Lord taught his disciples:***

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

***Our next hymn was written by Daniel Schutte in 1981. He was born in Wisconsin, USA, in 1947 and became a Jesuit in the same year that he published this hymn.***

***He entered parish ministry in Milwaukee serving as director of music at Immaculate Heart of Mary and then Our Lady of Lourdes parishes and is a***

*prolific hymn-writer for the Catholic Church. Hymn number 663, 'I, the Lord of sea and sky,'*

**1. I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry;  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
My hand will save.**

**I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
I will speak my word to them.**

**Whom shall I send? *Chorus:***

***Here I am, Lord.***

***Is it I, Lord?***

***I have heard you calling in the night.***

***I will go, Lord,***

***If you lead me;***

***I will hold your people in my heart.***

**2. I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain;  
I have wept for love of them –  
They turn away.**

**I will break their hearts of stone,  
Give them hearts for love alone;  
I will speak my word to them.**

**Whom shall I send? *Chorus:***

**3. I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame,  
I will set a feast for them –  
My hand will save.**

**Finest bread I will provide  
Till their hearts are satisfied;  
I will give my life to them.**

**Whom shall I send? *Chorus:***

© 1991 Daniel L. Schutte & New Dawn Music

***We come now to our prayers of intercession. Let us pray.***

Sovereign God, you bless us with your love, so, we turn to you, asking you to help us to act as your earthly hands by helping neighbours who are in need or any kind of trouble. Although our own powers are limited and at times the brokenness of our world threatens to overwhelm us, we are not afraid to ask you to reach out to inspire people with power and influence who can heal the suffering we see around us, for we know that to you all things are possible.

Lord, we are aware of the brokenness of this beautiful, yet fragile world and so we ask you help us to play what part we can, however small, to build a better world by seeking justice for all, by campaigning to end poverty here and abroad, by sharing the earth's resources instead of fighting over them and by learning to co-operate with one another, accepting and even celebrating our differences, rather than being divided by them.

Lord, this week we have commemorated the eightieth anniversary liberation of Auschwitz which revealed the horrors of the Holocaust in which more than six million

people were murdered, mainly Jews but also gypsies, handicapped, Jehovah's Witnesses and other people whose beliefs, politics, lifestyles and gender led them to Nazi concentration camps. We have not learned, for there have been acts of genocide since in Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, besides the terrible loss of life in the Gaza conflict, whether or not that constitutes a genocide. We continue to grieve about the war in Ukraine and civil conflicts in Sudan and Somalia. Teach us to recognize our common humanity and your love for all. Guide the leaders of the nations to govern with compassion and justice, to learn to negotiate and compromise when disputes arise, so that peace is established on earth. May we mirror what we ask by learning to live harmoniously with our neighbours.

In the name of Jesus, the Lord of wholeness and wellbeing, hear our prayer for people in our community who are ill in body, mind or spirit, for those who are brought low by loneliness, trouble, or need and for everybody who is mourning the loss of somebody dear to them. In a time of silence, we bring to mind those who are in special need of your care and, as we name them before you, we are confident you will know their needs and will reach out to them: .....  
Lord, help us to offer them practical support and friendship as well as sympathy, but may the warmth of your love grant them healing, courage, comfort, hope and transcending peace.

Holy God, we pray for our church, churches in our district and, indeed, for the World Church as we face the challenges of bringing good news to an increasingly secular and hostile world. Unite us in love and outreach, so we may reveal Christ's kingdom by words and deeds of love.

Creator God, the wildfires in California, arctic conditions in central and eastern states of the USA, super-storms in Ireland, Scotland and parts of Europe provide clear evidence of global warming, with super-storms, floods and wildfires occurring elsewhere, too. May we play our part in reducing the harm we are doing the planet, by polluting less, recycling more and using only the earth's resources we actually need. Help us pass on a healthier world to forthcoming generations by making our own sacrifices for their sakes.

Abba, Father God, look upon us, our families and our friends with compassion. Keep us safe and guide us in your holy ways. Above all, may we share the abundance of the love you give us with both friend and stranger in the glorious name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

*We continue our worship with a hymn written by John Bell and Graham Maule of the Iona Community. They often set hymns to Scots ballad tunes, in this case "Kelvingrove". We shall sing number 673, 'Will you come and follow me,'*

**1. Will you come and follow me**

**If I but call your name?**

**Will you go where you don't know**

**And never be the same?**

**Will you let my love be shown,**

**Will you let my name be known,**

**Will you let my life be grown**

**In you, and you in me?**

**2. Will you leave yourself behind**

**If I but call your name?**

**Will you care for cruel and kind**

**And never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
Should your life attract or scare,  
Will you let me answer prayer  
In you, and you in me?**

**3. Will you let the blinded see  
If I but call your name?  
Will you set the pris'ners free,  
And never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean  
And do such as this unseen,  
And admit to what I mean  
In you, and you in me?**

**4. Will you love the 'you' you hide  
If I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside,  
And never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
To reshape the world around  
Through my sight and touch and sound / In you, and you in me?**

**5. Lord, your summons echoes true  
When you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you,  
And never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
Where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus, I'll move and live and grow  
In you, and you in me.**

*© John Bell & Graham Maule WGRG (1987)*

**The Old Testament reading is Isaiah chapter 6 verses 1 to 8**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. Round him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. They were calling out to each other:

"Holy, holy, holy! The LORD Almighty is holy! His glory fills the world."

The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself was filled with smoke. I said,

"There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes, I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!"

Then one of the creatures flew down to me, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with the burning coal and said,

"This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven."

Then I heard the Lord say,

"Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?" I answered,

"I will go! Send me!" Amen.

## **Our Gospel reading is Luke chapter 5 verses 1 to 11**

One day Jesus was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret while the people pushed their way up to him to listen to the word of God. He saw two boats pulled up on the beach; the fishermen had left them and were washing the nets. Jesus got into one of the boats—it belonged to Simon—and asked him to push off a little from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowd.

When he finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Push the boat out further to the deep water, and you and your partners let down your nets for a catch.”

“Master,” Simon answered, “we worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

They let them down and caught such a large number of fish that the nets were about to break. So they motioned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats so full of fish that the boats were about to sink. When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell on his knees before Jesus and said,

“Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!”

He and the others with him were all amazed at the large number of fish they had caught. The same was true of Simon’s partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” They pulled the boats up on the beach, left everything, and followed Jesus. Amen.

*We sing a hymn written by Cecil Frances Alexander, the wife of a Nineteenth Century Irish bishop of Derry and Raphoe. She was a devoted Sunday School teacher and founded a school for deaf children. Hymn number 250, ‘Jesus calls us! O’er the tumult’.*

**1. Jesus calls us! O’er the tumult**

**Of our life’s wild restless sea,  
Day by day His clear voice soundeth,  
Saying, “Christian, follow me.”**

**2. As of old apostles heard it**

**By the Galilean lake  
Turned from home and toil and kindred,  
Leaving all for His dear sake.**

**3. Jesus calls us from the worship**

**Of the vain world’s golden store:  
From each idol that would keep us,  
Saying, “Christian, love me more.”**

**4. In our joys and in our sorrows,**

**Days of toil, and hours of ease,  
Still He calls, in cares and pleasures,  
“Christian, love me more than these.”**

**5. Jesus calls us! By Thy mercies,**

**Saviour, may we hear Thy call,  
Give our hearts to Thine obedience,  
Serve and love Thee best of all.**

© Cecil Frances Alexander (1818 – 1895)

**Address: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” Luke 5:10**

**Address: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” Luke 5:10**

The passage describing the call of Isaiah is not intended to be literal, but is a metaphor about God’s grandeur and holiness. God’s presence not only filled the temple – his presumed dwelling-place – but the cries of ‘**Quadosh! Quadosh! Quadosh Adonai!**’ ‘**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!**’ by the seraphim made the whole building shake and smoke. I use the word ‘seraphim’, instead of angels because ‘seraph’ in Hebrew means ‘burning being’ as well as noble or holy and that matches Isaiah’s description. The Lord’s holiness overwhelmed Isaiah, as he bewailed his inadequacy and impurity, besides the impurity of the people among whom he lived. The seraph who touched his lips with a glowing coal from the altar symbolised Isaiah’s purification, allowing him to answer God’s call to serve as a prophet. And serve he did, for this Isaiah – and there were probably at least three who proclaimed in his name – continued his ministry for forty years.

Luke’s account of how Jesus called his first disciples provides us with an insight into the nature of being called and has elements that I recognise in my own call to preach. Luke tells us that Jesus was almost forced into the waters of **Lake Gennesaret**, otherwise the **Sea of Galilee**, by a large crowd that wanted to hear him preach. Jesus noticed two fishing boats at the water’s edge and decided to proclaim the Good News from a floating pulpit, so he asked Simon Peter if he could use his boat as his preaching post. Simon and his fellow fishermen agreed, for they were washing their nets after a signally unsuccessful night’s fishing on the lake and probably felt that they needed to have their spirits raised. Moreover, Jesus had recently healed Simon’s mother-in-law, so Simon was almost certainly curious about him. Clearly, he hoped to find out more about Jesus.

Our Lord preached from Simon’s boat, which was close to the shore. It is noteworthy that he preached sitting down, not because he was afraid of tipping Simon’s boat over, but because Hebrew preachers sat when they spoke the word of God and stood when they read the Scriptures. Once he had finished preaching, Jesus directed Simon to put out into deep water and to lower their nets to catch fish. As an experienced fisherman, Simon knew he could expect to catch nothing in daylight, so he said, “**Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.**” The Greek word, translated as ‘**Master**’, is ‘**Epistata**’, and is a term of respect, though not comparable with ‘**Rabbi**’. In other words, Simon recognised Jesus’ authority, but lowered the net only to oblige him, rather than expecting that Nazarene carpenter to be able to show him how to do his job. However, as a result of obeying Jesus, Simon saw his nets begin to tear, such was the number of fish they had caught. Indeed, when James and John went to share the load, both boats were so full that they were in danger of sinking!

Simon was filled with such awe that he fell onto his knees before the Lord and pleaded, “**Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!**” Like Isaiah in the temple, Simon felt lost, inadequate and fearful in the presence of somebody who was clearly more than a wise man, for such a catch heralded Jesus’ divinity. He no longer used **Epistata**, but **Kyrios**, which is used for a supreme authority, or even God. As with Isaiah, Simon was put at his ease and called to serve the Lord, though in Simon’s case there was no touching of his lips with a live coal, but instead Jesus’ injunction, “**Do not be afraid,**” followed by his commission, “**From now on you will be catching people.**” Having responded to the invitation to serve the Lord, both Isaiah and Simon Peter wholeheartedly committed themselves to their new life.

My experiences have taught me to listen to and answer Christ's call, even if it seems beyond my ability or is outside my comfort zone. I firmly believe that Jesus calls each of us in some capacity: not only as a preacher, or musician, a steward, treasurer but as a welcomer, or visitor of people who are lonely, sick or bereaved. Nothing we offer to or do for Christ is too small or insignificant to be unnoticed by him and everything we do helps build his kingdom in love. Is anybody here experiencing a call to serve the Lord in any way whatsoever? If you feel a call to serve, don't try to justify why you are unsuitable, or too busy: offer yourself in Christ's service and explore your calling. After all, God who gave his Only Beloved Son to redeem sinners like us at such a terrible cost is hardly likely to let us down when we try to do his will and share both his love and Good News. Trust and obey the Lord, for you will be amazed at what his grace will let us do in his holy name. Amen.

*We close our worship with a hymn by Jacqueline Jones that challenges us. Jacqui is a contemporary Christian singer-songwriter, originally from South Africa, who was based in the UK for 5 years and now lives in Christchurch, NZ as a vicar's wife! Hymn number 662, 'Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?'*

**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? *Chorus:***

***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 turning violent? *Chorus:***

**3. In your city streets will you 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? *Chorus:***

**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? *Chorus:***

***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

***Benediction***

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and for evermore. Amen.**