



The **Methodist Church**

Orpington and Chislehurst Circuit

ORDER OF CIRCUIT SERVICE-

10th May 2020 by *John Sennett with  
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CALL TO WORSHIP:

Jesus said, I am the Way – come!

Jesus said, I am the Way and the Truth – come  
and receive.

Jesus said, I am the Way, and the Truth and the  
Life - come, receive, and respond.

**THEME: Almost all the gospel is  
become more like Christ.**

We are facing a pandemic problem. It is therefore  
helpful to turn to the psalms. Our first hymn is  
based on Psalm 100 and in present circumstances  
it is relevant that the first line begins 'All people  
that on earth do dwell'. . . .  
so let us now go to Hymn No. 1.

**FIRST HYMN StF 1- All people that on  
earth do dwell**

- 1 All people that on earth do dwell,  
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:  
him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell;  
come ye before him and rejoice.
- 2 The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;  
without our aid he did us make:  
we are his folk, he doth us feed;  
and for his sheep he doth us take
- 3 O enter then his gates with praise;  
approach with joy his courts unto;  
praise, laud, and bless his name always,  
for it is seemly so to do.
- 4 For why, the Lord our God is good;  
his mercy is for ever sure;

his truth at all times firmly stood,  
and shall from age to age endure.

- 5 To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
the God whom heaven and earth adore,  
from earth and from the angel host  
be praise and glory evermore.

William Kethe (d. 1594)

**PRAYER OF ADORATION AND  
CONFESSION:**

*God is love,  
And where true love it  
God himself is there.*

Loving Father, be with us now, renewing us with  
your creative love.

Loving Son, be with us now, bringing forgiveness  
through your saving love.

Loving Spirit, be with us now, strengthening us  
with your sustaining love.

Loving God, Father, Son, and Spirit, as we  
worship, may we be built up in love.

Merciful God, we confess that we find it difficult  
to live Christian lives. We are full of good  
intentions but are easily swayed from doing and  
saying what we know we should. We are  
distracted by busyness and self-interest,  
handicapped by lack of confidence, and  
insensitive to others. We feel wretched before  
you, loving Parent. Our sin makes us feel  
worthless.

Help us to turn our minds away from ourselves  
and our inadequacies and to focus on you and  
your forgiving and accepting love, for only you  
have the power to make us holy. And you,  
almighty God, will do it.

Thanks be to God.

## FIRST READING: 1 Peter chapter 2, vs 2-10.

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

‘See, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’

To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

‘The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the very head of the corner’,  
and

‘A stone that makes them stumble,  
and a rock that makes them fall.’

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God’s people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.

### COMMENT:

Peter uses two metaphors in writing to new Christian churches. First he likens their members to new born infants longing for spiritual milk for their salvation, infants helpless and utterly reliant on help from other people and God. Many of us are elderly. We can no longer do the things we used to do when we were younger. We may have been tempted in those days to rely on our own strength and abilities and not on God’s. It rarely worked well. Now we are more easily able to accept God’s graceful leadership. We may not have mastered the digital world, but we are more open to God. Illness and other infirmities or simply old age can force us to acknowledge that we are partially or wholly dependent to other

people- family, nursing staff- for example, and the grace of God. “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” Sadly, many elderly people live alone without any help and have to battle on as best they can. Their awful situation is a challenge to us all.

Peter’s second metaphor describes the church as a strong stone, a key stone that holds everything together. In China there are many “Living Stone” churches whose members are facing persecution. From verse nine of the reading he turns from buildings to the people who, strong in their faith, worship in them. He describes faithful congregations in Anatolia and the Near East as “God’s own people.” In verse 10 he writes, “Once you were no people, but now you are God’s people.” What a transformation God’s grace has achieved! He can achieve this for us if we will let him. Too often we leave him standing at the door of our hearts patiently waiting for us to open up to Him. We can explore this further in the gospel reading.

## SECOND HYMN Stf 478 Thank you God.

- 1 Thank you, O God, for the time that is now,  
for all the newness your minutes allow,  
make us alert with your presence of mind  
to fears and longings that move humankind.
- 2 Thank you, O God, for the time that is past,  
for all the values and thoughts that will last.  
May we all stagnant tradition ignore,  
leaving behind things that matter no more.
- 3 Thank you for hopes of the day that will come,  
for all the change that will happen in time;  
God, for the future our spirits prepare,  
hallow our doubts and redeem us from fear.
- 4 Make us afraid of the thoughts that delay,  
faithful in all the affairs of today;  
keep us, Creator, from playing it safe,  
thank you that now is the time of our life!

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

## SECOND READING: John Chapter 14, vs1-14.

### Jesus the Way to the Father

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

### COMMENT

The secret of Jesus's remarkable gifts- his understanding of people, his miracles for example, was his intimacy with his Father and his complete obedience to Him. "Not my will but yours be done be done, his words in his agony in Gethsemane."

Jesus issued his great commandment in answer to the scribes who asked him which was the most important commandment? "It is hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one. And you should love our God

with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength. The second is this, you should love your neighbour as yourself." His audience could not fail to notice, and so should we, how much longer and more detailed is the first commandment than the second. Why was this? We can infer from the difference that Jesus regarded loving his Father with all we've got was much more important of the two and was utterly vital if we were to carry out the second commandment effectively. This point is really important.

Henri Nouwen a great spiritual writer and a lecturer in worldwide demand, wrote this in his book "The way of the heart," "The prayer of the heart is the way that allows us to see more clearly not only our needy, anxious selves, but also the caring face of our compassionate God. When our vision of God remains clear and sharp, it will be possible to move into our tumultuous world with our heart at rest. This restful heart will attract those who are groping to find a way through life. When we have found our rest in God it will be visible where ever we go. Before we speak any words the Spirit of God praying in us will make His presence known and gather the people we meet into a new body, the body of Christ himself." So we can really love our neighbours as ourselves. It does demand a disciplined approach to our spiritual life. We must work at it by our prayers and meditations on God and by searching the gospels. If we can be sure of God's love for ourselves, we can offer that remarkable love to our neighbours. The second great commandment is an order, an order we must obey.

So how can we know God? Answer, through our knowledge of his son. He asked Philip, "Do you not believe that I and the Father are one? Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father". As a modern theologian puts it, "There is nothing un Christ like in God the Father.

In chapter 17 John writes of a further commandment to his disciples as he was about to be taken from them. "Love one another as I have loved you". A tall order, but we have available to us all the resources of the Holy Spirit, all his gifts to help us and every good action we take comes from the grace of God himself. We do not have to

rely on ourselves which brings us back to Peter's first metaphor, to helpless babes. Amen

## REFLECTION:

### A PERSONAL PRAYER - STILL ME

In the turmoil of this complicated life, Lord

STILL ME

Return me for a moment

To the silence at my heart

Draw forth

From my still pool of inner quiet

Your overflowing love.

STILL ME Lord

STILL ME

Anew

## PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

God, your love – gentle, immense, unconditional – arcs a rainbow of grace to shelter us all and creates a space of belonging and healing.

Your love – grounded in reality, accustomed to suffering – welcomes the excluded, tends hidden bruises, binds wounds and remakes lives and community.

Apart from alerting you to the start of Christian Aid week today, I am leaving you to choose what you wish to pray for. It will give you an opportunity to contribute to the service.

### And the Lord's Prayer.....

## HYMN StF 470 Lord for the years .....

1 Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

2 Lord, for that word, the Word of life which  
fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us,  
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

3 Lord, for our land, in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

4 Lord, for our world; when we disown and  
doubt him,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

5 Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake  
us,  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;  
past put behind us, for the future take us,  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

## PRAYER AND BLESSING:

Almighty God, together we have been in your presence.

We have sung your praises, sought your mercy,  
heard your word and asked for your aid.

God, may the astonishing truth of your love, your wide span of hope, dawn afresh in our hearts and turn us inside out as we act on your call to your compassion.

Renew our faith and courage that we may live as people transformed by the gospel and inspired by the limitless horizons of your Spirit. Amen.

“May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us this day and for ever more.”