

## A service for 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2025

### Call to Worship: Psalm 111 verses 1 to 3

Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. Amen.

*Our opening hymn reminds us of our need for the light of God's love to guide our discipleship. It was written by Bernadette Farrell, a gifted Roman Catholic hymn-writer, a social activist from West Yorkshire, who was the first Deputy Director of Citizens UK and whose hymns span all denominations. We shall sing hymn number 706, 'Longing for light, we wait in darkness,'*

**1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness,**

**Longing for truth, we turn to you.**

**Make us your own, your holy people,**

**Light for the world to see. *Chorus:***

*Christ, be our Light!*

*Shine in our hearts,*

*Shine through the darkness.*

*Christ be our Light!*

*Shine in your Church gathered today.*

**2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.**

**Longing for hope, many despair.**

**Your word alone has power to save us.**

**Make us your living voice. *Chorus:***

**3. Longing for food, many are hungry.**

**Longing for water, many still thirst.**

**Make us your bread, broken for others,**

**Shared until all are fed. *Chorus:***

**4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.**

**Longing for warmth, many are cold.**

**Make us your building, sheltering others,**

**Walls made of living stone. *Chorus:***

**5. Many the gifts, many the people,**

**Many the hearts that yearn to belong.**

**Let us be servants to one another,**

**Making your kingdom come. *Chorus:***

© Bernadette Farrell {1957---}

***Let us pray.***

Heavenly Father, Word of life, you brought our universe into being and sustain it with your love. Your glory is revealed both in the vastness of space with its myriad suns, planets and moons, besides the beauty and complexity of life on this planet. In the light of your wisdom, might and holiness, we are amazed that you care for flawed human beings so much that you took human form and lived among us as Christ Jesus, revealing your boundless love by his life, death and resurrection. Amazing God, take away all anxieties and distractions so we can pray to you in faith, sing our hymns of praise joyfully and both understand and respond to your holy word.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the many blessings we have received from you: for all the good things that we enjoy, for challenges that have tested us and shaped our character and for people who have cared for us, guided and inspired us. Above all else, thank you for Jesus, who broke the power of sin and death, and offers us new life at the end of our earthly days.

Merciful God, despite Jesus' example and teaching, we confess that we have sinned against you and other people by what we have said or done. Moreover, we don't always help neighbours who are in difficulty, or distress, yet we try to excuse our heartlessness, though our guilt is before us. Lord, we are truly sorry and turn away from what is wrong, asking your forgiveness in Jesus' name.

God of grace, we believe you have heard and answered our prayer, pardoning us for our sins and offering us a fresh opportunity to renew our discipleship. Therefore, Lord, fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit, so hereafter we may serve both you and our neighbours faithfully and joyfully, in Jesus' beautiful name. Amen.

***We shall say the Lord's Prayer***

**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.**

*Charlotte Elliott was of a remarkable breed of Victorian women, who spent from 1821 until 1871 virtually house-bound, yet wielded great influence from her sick-bed. In 1831, Rev. Henry Elliott, Charlotte's brother enlisted the help of the household to run a bazaar to raise funds for his school at St. Mary's for the daughters of impoverished clergymen. Everybody except Charlotte, threw themselves into the task with enthusiasm, but it was a time when she was feeling particularly weak - physically, not mentally. Thus frustrated, she found herself unable to sleep as she wondered about her spiritual condition. However, the following day, she wrote our next hymn by considering her own weakness and unworthiness in the light of Jesus' love and offer of salvation. Her sister-in-law saw the sheet and asked if she might have a copy. The rest is really history. Hymn number 556, 'Just as I am, without one plea'*

**1. Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**2. Just as I am, though tossed about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings and fears, within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**3. Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**4. Just as I am, thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because thy promise I believe,**

**O Lamb of God, I come!**

**5. Just as I am – thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down –  
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come!**

**6. Just as I am, of that free love  
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,  
Here for a season, then above,  
O Lamb of God, I come!**

© Charlotte Elliott {1789 – 1871}

***We shall now bring our concerns for other people to the Lord our God. I am basing the intercessions on hymn 629 by Colin Fergusson.***

**God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,  
for life at times seems far too dark for me,  
and my belief becomes more insecure,  
when worldly cares produce uncertainty.**

Heavenly Father, your generous, constant love is evident in the wonders and beauty of this self-sustaining world, the blessings we receive from you day by day and knowing that you have redeemed us through Christ Jesus. We ought to be joyful, yet all too often our spirits are cast down because of the we see and hear about so much suffering in this broken world, much of which is the result of human greed, pride, foolishness and indifference. Where we are able, use us as your earthly hands. Grant us compassion, courage, wisdom and steadfastness when we serve others in Jesus' name, but where we can't make as much difference as we'd like, we ask you to do so, for all things are possible to you.

**God of my hope, I offer you my fear,  
when I am scared by my anxiety,  
when all I hear is suffering and woe,  
in all my shadows you will walk with me.**

Gracious God, hear our prayer for an end to wars and strife which mar so many countries around the world, especially conflicts in Ukraine and the Holy Land, but also in Myanmar, Congo, Sudan and Somalia. We pray for an end to the immense destruction, suffering, injuries and deaths that result from our inability to co-exist peacefully with our neighbours. Lord, teach world leaders to negotiate and compromise in order to avoid taking up arms and help this country to listen to and discuss opinions that are challenging, rather than growing ever more polarized by shutting them off. Remind us of our common humanity and that Christ died to save everybody, not only people who share our viewpoint.

**God of my joy, I offer you my grief,  
when I sink down in sadness or despair,  
when in depression I cannot be touched,  
I pray in all my depths to find you there.**

Generous God, we pray for organizations like the Disasters Emergency Committee, All We Can and Christian Aid that are working to provide desperately-needed aid to the Developing World.

We pray, too, for people in this country who are struggling to live as the cost of energy, fuel and food increases to levels where some will need to choose between heating their homes and eating. We thank you for food banks and for other

organisations which help the poor and pray that we may be able to offer support to our less fortunate neighbours.

**God of my love, I offer you my pain,  
when I'm alone and feel nobody cares,  
in aching age or in rejected youth,  
you bear my cross and dry my human tears.**

Lord of healing and wellbeing, hear our prayer for neighbours who are ill, or in any kind of need or trouble. Remember neighbours who living with anxiety or depression, or whose relationships have broken down and, particularly, all who mourn the loss of somebody dear. Empower us to offer them practical support and friendship, by serving as your earthly hands.

**God of my life, I offer you my dreams,  
light in the darkness where I hide from view,  
light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,  
light in my life and all my life in you.**

Lord, we pray for our church, churches in our Circuit and, indeed, for the World Church. Inspire us to serve you in love and unity, so we reveal the love of Christ Jesus in our acts of grace as well as in words. May his love shine through lives as we seek to respond to his call, not only this week but throughout our lives.

Abba, Father God, Bless us, our families and friends. Inspire us to keep Christ at the centre of our lives, so we share the abundance of your love with both friends and stranger, in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Our Gospel reading is Luke chapter 17 verses 11 to 19**

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When he saw them, he said,  
"Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked,  
"Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." Amen.

*We shall sing a hymn by John Bell and Graham Maule of the Iona Community. Many of their hymns are set to Scots ballad melodies and this is no exception, for it is sung to 'Ye banks and braes o' bonny Doon'. Hymn number 655, 'We cannot measure how you heal'.*

**1. We cannot measure how you heal  
Or answer every sufferer's prayer,  
Yet we believe your grace responds  
Where faith and doubt unite to care.  
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,  
Survive to hold and heal and warn,  
To carry all through death to life  
And cradle children yet unborn.**

**2. The pain that will not go away,**

The guilt that clings from things long past,  
The fear of what the future holds,  
Are present as if meant to last.  
But present, too, is love which tends  
The hurt we never hoped to find,  
The private agonies inside,  
The memories that haunt the mind.

3. So some have come who need your help  
And some have come to make amends  
As hands which shaped and saved the world  
Are present in the touch of friends.  
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here  
To mend the body, mind and soul,  
To disentangle peace from pain  
And make your broken people whole.

© John Bell (b. 1949) & Graham Maule (B. 1958)

**Sermon: “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” Luke 17:19**

Despite widely published reports of some erratic aspects of the Princess Diana’s life, I have a cherished, abiding memory of her greeting and hugging AIDs victims at a time when everyone was terrified that any contact might result in infection and those acts of loving-kindness make up for any of her faults. After all, in most respects people who live with HIV / AIDs are still, in effect, the lepers of the Twenty-First Century, yet think back five years and the way we shunned other people out of fear of contracting COVID19.

Luke reading deals with Jesus healing ten lepers somewhere between the borders of Galilee and Samaria. At those times, leprosy could mean skin complaints rather than the disease we call leprosy. Nevertheless, those afflicted were condemned as unclean, forced to live apart from others in their community and were not allowed even to travel on the roadway, where they might meet clean people. They had to shout warnings to anyone passing closely, could have no contact with non-lepers and were barred from any kind of synagogue or temple worship in Judea.

When Jesus encountered the ten lepers, he seemed not to have noticed them as they stood at a distance and asked him to take pity on them. The Hebrew word they would have used is **raham**, which has its equivalent in the Greek **agape**. As well as pity, both mean boundless, everlasting love – effectively the love of God. When he heard their pleas, he did not reach out to heal them, but told them, **“Go and let the priests examine you.”** By doing so, Jesus challenged their faith, for there was no obvious healing until they set out to find a priest, who could declare them clean. Had they not been free of their skin complaints when they arrived before the priest, they would have been in serious trouble, so the ten must have trusted the Lord and, because of their faith, they were healed. It is noteworthy that in this instance of healing Jesus did not physically handle the lepers. Instead, each was healed by faithfully doing what he was told. It may remind us of how Naaman was healed when he obeyed Elisha without the prophet even coming to the door of his house, let alone touching him. Instead, he directed a servant to tell Naaman to bathe in the River Jordan. Naaman obeyed and was healed.

It is clear from Luke’s account that Jesus did not discriminate between the lepers, for one of them was a Samaritan, a traditional enemy of Jews. Samaritans would spit whenever they used the word ‘**Jew**’, whilst a Jew would consider himself or herself made ceremonially unclean if even the shadow of a Samaritan fell across them.

Nevertheless, Jesus healed all of them. It is worth noting that the nine Jews, in their degradation and misery, accepted their fellow-sufferer, irrespective of his origins, yet the Samaritan was doubly despised by Jewish society: both as a leper and because of his nationality. He was at the very bottom of the social heap. However, even before he reached the priest, the Samaritan believed that he was healed and he was the only one to return to Jesus.

Notice the Lord's surprise that only the Samaritan came back to praise God, so he sent the man on his way with the blessing, **"Get up and go, your faith has made you well."** In other words, the Samaritan was restored to spiritual as well as physical wholeness.

Both stories show God's grace extended not only to foreigners, but to traditional enemies, too. Moreover, the Samaritan was made whole in body, had his faith restored and gave thanks to God. Interestingly, the chosen people, the nine leprous Jews, went on their way without a thought of thanking Jesus, or of praising God. You could argue that they took God's **raham**, his **loving-kindness**, for granted, but whilst it is correct to presume that God is love, no one likes to be taken for granted. Just as taking a wife, or husband for granted is an effective way of ensuring that there will be strife in that marriage, so taking God for granted will weaken our relationship with him. Never be sparing with praise and thanks for the good things God does, because our prayers of gratitude are just as important as our prayers for help and guidance.

One of today's greatest challenges is increasing polarization of our society with the growth of 'cancel culture', not only on political grounds but on a host of issues: faith; gender issues; race; culture; diversity; immigration and lifestyles. Increasingly, those who hold controversial opinions are barred from speaking on the Media and at universities, rather than having their views aired and challenged in public. By being driven underground, conspiracy theorists go unchallenged and spread their poison, as was reported in the press about a mother who encouraged her daughter to refuse cancer treatment in favour of alternative therapies. The daughter died. I do not advocate a free-for-all that allows anyone to break the law by what they say, but I believe 'cancel culture' sows division, rather than promoting unity and effectively makes 'lepers' of people with whom we strongly disagree.

The conflict in the Holy Land is not a monochrome situation, but has left its mark in this country. Many people are protesting about what is happening in Palestine since the attack by Hamas on a music festival in Palestine, two years ago, massacring more than a thousand Jews and seizing of two hundred and forty hostages, some of whom are still being held captive. Israel's response has killed nearly 70000, most of whom are civilians, reduced the Gaza Strip to a virtual wasteland and made the lives of Palestinians living there unbearable. Both sides, Hamas, the IDF and Knesset have been accused of war-crimes, so neither side has clean hands and finding a just solution is mind-bogglingly complex. Last week's attack on a synagogue in Heaton Park, Manchester and an arson attack on a mosque are yet more horrors that have followed that attack. The attacker at the synagogue was killed, but that will be of little consolation to the congregation which was celebrating Yom Kippur, the most sacred Jewish festival and pro- Palestinian protests at several universities the following day won't have helped ease tensions, either.

We must not take the freedom we enjoy for granted, but ought to work bring unity, rather than sowing division. Our reading showed Jesus offering grace and healing to a traditional enemy, whose physical condition separated him from his friends and family, because he saw him as an individual with a need, not as 'the enemy'. The message of

parable of the Good Samaritan is reflected in the healing of that Samaritan leper. Jesus died at Calvary, for our spiritual condition – our sinfulness – which separated us from a right relationship with God the Father. Christ died to offer everybody salvation through faith, not an elite few.

Lord, grant us the faith to show our neighbours the same kind of love, especially those whose opinions and lifestyles offend us, for this what our Methodist forebears did in the godless communities they brought to know and love Christ. If we let see Jesus' grace shining through our words and deeds, trust among us and neighbours can be cemented, new relationships formed and God glorified. Amen.

*Our closing hymn was written by Marjorie Dobson, a Methodist local preacher, who came from Country Durham. She was born in 1940 and became a local preacher when she was twenty. Her writings reflect her concern for those who feel disconnected from faith by their image of the church as being outdated and irrelevant in the Twenty-First Century. Reflect on her words and consider how we can serve Jesus as he calls us to – possibly in new ways. Hymn number 664, 'Lord, you call us to your service'. Hopefully, it will be sung to 'Angel Voices'.*

**1. Lord, you call us to your service,  
Each in our own way.  
Some to loving, caring, healing;  
Some to preach, or pray;  
Some to work with quiet learning,  
Truth discerning,  
Day by day.**

**2. Life for us is always changing  
In the work we share.  
Christian love adds new dimensions  
To the way we care.  
For we know that you could lead us,  
As you need us,  
Anywhere.**

**3. Seeing life from your perspective  
Makes your challenge plain,  
As your heart is grieving over  
Those who live in pain.  
Teach us how, by our compassion,  
You may fashion  
Hope again.**

**4. Lord, we set our human limits  
On the work we do.  
Send us your directing Spirit,  
Pour your power through,  
That we may be free in living  
And in giving  
All for you.**

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***Benediction***

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