

**A service for 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2022 (StF)**

**Call to Worship: Psalm 103 verses 1 to 4**

Praise the LORD, my soul! All my being, praise his holy name! Praise the LORD, my soul, and do not forget how kind he is. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He keeps me from the grave and blesses me with love and mercy. Amen.

*Our opening hymn was written by Marty Haugen, a liturgical composer and musical performer from Minnesota. He is composer-in-residence at Mayflower Community Congregational Church in Minneapolis. The house in this hymn is Mother Church, a community, rather than a building. Hymn number 409, 'Let us build a house where love can dwell,'*

**1. Let us build a house where love can dwell**

**And all can safely live,**

**A place where saints and children tell**

**How hearts learn to forgive.**

**Built of hopes and dreams and visions,**

**Rock of faith and vault of grace;**

**Here the love of Christ shall end divisions: *Chorus***

*All are welcome,*

*All are welcome,*

*All are welcome in this place.*

**2. Let us build a house where prophets speak,**

**And words are strong and true,**

**Where all God's children dare to seek**

**To dream God's reign anew.**

**Here the cross shall stand as witness**

**And of symbol of God's grace;**

**Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: *Chorus***

**3. Let us build a house where love is found**

**In water, wine and wheat:**

**A banquet hall on holy ground**

**Where peace and justice meet.**

**Here the love of God, through Jesus,**

**Is revealed in time and space;**

**As we share in Christ the feast that frees us: *Chorus***

**4. Let us build a house where hands will reach**

**Beyond the wood and stone**

**To heal and strengthen, serve and teach,**

**And live the Word they've known.**

**Here the outcast and the stranger**

**Bear the image of God's face; / Let us bring an end to fear and danger: *Chorus***

**5. Let us build a house where all are named,**

**Their songs and visions heard**

**And loved and treasured, taught and claimed**

**As words within the Word.**

**Built of tears and cries and laughter,**

**Prayers of faith and songs of grace,**

**Let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: *Chorus*      © Marty Haugen (born 1950)**

***Let us pray.***

O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens and you have taught young children to tell of your strength and glory, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you. When we look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars you set in place, we are filled with awe.

When we look at the world around us, with the beauty and wonders of nature, we are filled with awe, for you have made eco-systems to maintain life in all its fullness here on earth. As we consider how you ordained that we should be stewards of the planet, we are awed that you love us so much that you honour us so, despite our manifold failings.

As we come to worship you this morning, we remember that you are here with us, not only now but at all times and have always tried to draw us close to you. You love us so much that after both the Law and prophetic teachings failed to make us live as you want us to, you came into the world as Christ Jesus, to share our lives and experiences, to bring us Good News of Salvation, but also to suffer an awful death at Calvary to break Satan's hold over us. By raising him from the tomb, you opened heaven's gates and through his grace alone, we now have the free offer of eternal life.

Lord of all, our heavenly Father, we worship and adore your Holy Name. Hear us as we pray to you in faith, sing your praise with gratitude, and listen to your word with eagerness in the beautiful name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

***Let us set ourselves right with our Lord by confessing and seeking forgiveness of our sins. When I say, 'Lord, in your mercy,' please respond with 'Hear our prayer'.***

Merciful God, we confess our failure to live as you want us to, for we do not always love and serve you wholeheartedly and sometimes disregard your call to care for others in Jesus' name, although we often try to excuse our faithlessness and disobedience. In a time of reflection we bring to mind occasions when we have failed to love our neighbours as we love ourselves, when we have been self-centred, rather than Christ-centred.

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

Lord of righteousness, help us turn away from wrongdoing and back to you.

Warm and soften our hearts and guide us with your truth. Bring us into the light of your love as we seek your forgiveness, so our lives reflect the victory Jesus has won over sin and death, allowing us to play our part in building your kingdom here.

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

Gracious God, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. His gracious word declares that our sins are forgiven. Therefore, fit us to love and serve both you and our neighbours as you call us to, in Jesus' beautiful name. Amen.

***As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:***

**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 second hymn was written and composed by New Zealander Richard Gillard. It took him more than a year to complete, for he wrote the first verse in 1976 and the remainder in 1977. I think it was worth the wait! We shall sing hymn number 611, 'Brother, sister, let me serve you'.*

**1. Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
Let me be as Christ to you:  
Pray that I may have the grace to  
Let you be my servant, too.**

**2. We are pilgrims on a journey,  
And companions on the road;  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load.**

**3. I will hold the Christ-light for you  
In the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
Speak the peace you long to hear.**

**4. I will weep when you are weeping:  
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
Till we've seen this journey through.**

**5. When we sing to God in heaven,  
We shall find such harmony;  
Born of all we've known together  
Of Christ's love and agony.**

**6. Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
Let me be as Christ to you:  
Pray that I may have the grace to  
Let you be my servant, too.**

*Richard Gillard © 1977 Scripture in Song*

***In our prayers of intercession, we bring our concern for people nearby and far away unto the Lord. I am going to use terms Jews use to address the Lord, with their meanings. Let us pray.***

Loving God, although the world in which we live is wonderful and self-sustaining, the news in our Media speaks of its brokenness and is often so gloomy it daunts our spirits.

Nevertheless, we believe that all things are possible for you, so whilst we offer ourselves to do what we can to ensure the wellbeing of our neighbours, we turn to you in situations that are beyond our power, asking that you will reach out in mercy to rectify the results of mankind's cruelty, folly, exploitation and indifference which result in so much suffering around the world.

**Adonai Shalom**, Lord of peace, we grieve about the number of conflicts around the world, especially at present, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Teach the leaders of all nations to negotiate and compromise when disputes arise, rather than resorting to war. Mould their hearts so they seek justice and mercy in their dealings so that lasting peace can be built on solid foundations.

In your mercy Lord, may a negotiated peace that enables Ukraine to continue as a sovereign democracy be established soon. Grant President Zelenskyy and his advisors, the armed forces and militia, the steadfast courage and equipment to resist Russia's might and frustrate the Kremlin's plans. Merciful God, hear our prayer for civilians, mainly women, children, the elderly and disabled, who are trapped in cities that are being bombarded by Russian forces. Enfold them in your care that they may be comforted and protected. Remember, too, Ukrainian refugees, who are fleeing to friendly countries. Grant then a warm welcome and hospitality that will ease their distress.

**Jehovah Jireh**, Lord who provides our needs, we pray for organizations like the Disasters Emergency Committee, All We Can and Christian Aid that are working to provide desperately-needed aid to famine-stricken Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen. We ask that Governments who are opposed to the Taliban can nevertheless find it in their hearts to offer aid to ordinary Afghans. We pray, too, that the blockade of grain and oil in Ukraine will be lifted swiftly to ease their plight.

We remember people in this country who are struggling to live as the cost of energy, fuel and food increases to record levels and we thank you for food banks and for other organisations which help the poor. May the Government, business leaders, charities and local councils find ways of helping all who are finding it difficult to manage.

**JHWH Rapha**, God of healing, hear our prayer for neighbours who are sick in body, mind or spirit; those who are in any kind of need or trouble; neighbours who are living with depression or whose relationships have broken down and everybody who mourns the loss of somebody dear, particularly those who have been unable to mark their loved-one's passing because of restrictions at funerals and gatherings. Heavenly Father, in a time of silent reflection, we offer you names of people for whom we are especially concerned.

.....  
Lord, help us to offer them both practical support and friendship, but warm them with your love which offers comfort, healing, courage and peace that passes all understanding.

**Adonai**, Great Lord, we pray for our church, all churches in our Circuit and, indeed, for the World Church, as we emerge from the dark shadow of Coronavirus. Renew and invigorate our calling as we seek new ways to serve our communities. Teach us to speak of the grace and glory of Christ Jesus with one voice and serve him in unity of mission and may the Spirit of truth and love empower us to bear the gospel light to this suffering and sin-darkened world.

**Abba**, Heavenly Father, bless us, our friends and our families. Keep us safe in your care and help us to share the abundance of your love with our neighbours, so our lives bring you honour through Christ Jesus our Lord and friend. Amen.

### **Our Gospel reading is Luke chapter 10 verses 38 to 42**

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked,

"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Amen.

*We continue our worship as we sing a hymn written in 1972 by an American, Karen Lafferty, during a personal financial crisis when she learned to trust in God's provision and grace. Hymn number 254, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God'.*

**1. Seek ye first the kingdom of God,  
And his righteousness,  
And all these things shall be added unto you;**

**Allelu– , Alleluia: Chorus:**

*Alleluia, Alleluia,*

*Alleluia, Allelu–, Alleluia!*

**2. Ask, and it shall be given unto you;  
Seek, and ye shall find;  
Knock, and the door shall be opened unto you;**

**Allelu– , Alleluia: Chorus:**

**3. Man shall not live by bread alone,  
But by every word  
That proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;**

**Allelu– , Alleluia: Chorus:**

© Karen Lafferty

**Sermon:** *“You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed.”* Luke 10:41 – 42  
I have a souvenir from when I was a sixteen-year-old cadet and went on a gliding course at RAF Cosford. It is a piece of my instructor's plywood seat which, though already cracked, finally collapsed during a particularly heavy landing during a rainstorm. The gliders were open-cockpit, with doped canvas over a wooden framework. There are lots of things to keep in mind when you land a glider: your airspeed; keeping the wings level; using the rudder to fly straight; making sure there is no obstruction in your path – oh, and to round out when you are about six feet from the ground. The crosswind and rain gave me even more to think about, but I remembered everything – except the bit about rounding out! The glider bounced about ten feet into the air and, though I managed to regain control and land, the language used by the instructor left me in no doubt of his displeasure. When he had calmed down and had some splinters removed from his posterior he told me where I was going wrong – I was trying to concentrate on every detail rather than on the one important thing: to return the glider to the earth gently by rounding out in time!

In our gospel account, we have two sisters, Mary and Martha – whose brother was Lazarus and who lived in Bethany, according to John. Martha was the elder sister, for it was her house. The family knew, loved and supported Jesus, offering him hospitality as he travelled to Jerusalem. Now when Luke's account said that Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, he was understating the case, for not only was it necessary to make sure that the house was clean and to cook the food, but Martha had to fulfil the many hygiene and food laws laid down in the Torah. Whilst it is evident that, as Abraham had for his visitors, so Martha wanted to do something special for Jesus, but she tried too hard, as a result of which she had no time to share his company and teaching. That is why she complained, **“Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!”**

Jesus appreciated her hospitality, but he refused to tell off the single-minded Mary, who sat at his feet listening to him. Gently, he told Martha, **“Martha, Martha! You are**

**worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.”**

There is no reason to suppose that he always favoured Mary, but in this case frantic activity was no substitute for listening to Jesus with all one's heart and mind and soul and strength. Jesus does not expect our service to be perfect; he loves us as we are and he wants us to make time for him. All of us need to make time to reflect and to listen to Christ. We cannot do so if we are always rushing round, distracted by duties that we think are important, but which are not.

In my role as Chaplain at Bridge Court I have to fight the temptation to be on the go all the time, for example, running the Early-Bird Club, being involved in activities, leading singalongs, having conversations with residents, staff and families, helping at lunchtimes – even helping to maintain our raised gardens. I was told by a chaplaincy advisor that I needed to **do** less and **be** more, but only recognised the disadvantage of being governed by the Protestant work ethic when a resident asked if she could have a chat. I readily agreed, but was humbled when she said it was really good of me, because I always seemed so busy: I realised that my efforts to do as much as possible for the home were actually a hindrance, because that resident felt that by talking to me she was diverting me from something more important. I made it clear to her that if she, or anyone else wants to talk with me, I'll make myself available, the rest of my business is not as important as an individual's need. Now, I try to concentrate on just being available by pottering about the lounges for as long as I can, so people can just talk with me. Mind you, my resolve to be, rather than doing, is often frustrated by residents demanding to know when we're going to have a singalong, or poetry-reading, or a quiz! Nevertheless, I hope the balance is just about right now.

I wonder if you fall into the same trap as me, either individually or as a church? Are we trying to do too much and thereby doing it less well than we ought to? Are we Martha's, dashing round, trying to do everything perfectly, or are we more relaxed in our relationship with Jesus? Do we make enough time, not just to talk to Jesus, but to listen to his call? After all, society faces many new challenges because of the effects of the Pandemic. . The Church is going to have to adapt if we're to support people broken by last two years: those suffering from anxiety and depression; loneliness; fear and isolation; debt; broken relationships and child poverty, especially when school holidays are often a time of hunger if they rely on free meals. Is there anything new we can offer, possibly working with other churches or organisations? Are we too busy to hear Jesus' call? As with me sixty years ago, are we going to fly into the ground because we are trying too hard?

In **Matthew's** gospel, Jesus told his followers, **“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.”**

Jesus does not expect us to wear out ourselves trying to be perfect – as Martha was doing in her strict observance of hospitality. He wants us to love one another and to love God. In order to achieve this, we need to make time for ourselves, to enjoy fellowship with one another and with our Lord. ***Remember, our works cannot save us, but our faith does and Christ Jesus is the source of our faith and our salvation. Take time to listen to him and to our neighbours. 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 our communities as the pandemic morphs into endemic and we learn to live with coronavirus and its consequences. Hymn number 664, 'Lord, you call us to your service'.*

**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.