

Teddington Circuit Worship Sheets – Covenant Service

Sunday 3 January 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. It will be helpful to have a copy of the **Methodist Way of Life** Commitment card to hand, as you begin. If you do not have one, go to: www.methodist.org.uk/mwol/ or refer to the Methodist Way of Life section at the back of these sheets.

Call to Worship

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

StF 443 Come let us sing of a wonderful love

Sing/read /pray /the words or listen to it here
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCSx7ZZ3-2I

Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
come and abide,
lifting my life, till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride;
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley (1831-1905)

Let us pray together

Gracious God,

on this day, I and many others seek to renew our covenant with You. Your love is strong and faithful. You never stop loving us. Our love for You is weak and fickle and we often fall short of what we have committed ourselves to be and do. Forgive us for our reluctance to follow Christ, our half-hearted worship, our failures in caring, service and witness, and our unwillingness to challenge injustice. Have mercy on us, O God, and renew in us both the desire and the ability to be people of love.

Thank you for your gracious words:
'Your sins are forgiven'. Amen.

Today's Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Time to Reflect

2020 has gone. Good riddance many will say! In a few days, the Christmas season will also be over. By the 6th January, all the decorations, the tree, the tinsel, and the lights will need to be safely packed away for another (hopefully better) year.

We Christians use a special word for this point in the year, it's Epiphany. It means the appearance of the divine. Funnily enough we seem to be reworking a part of the Christmas story that has featured back when the kids were doing their nativity plays. It's the story that gave us the much-loved carol "We three Kings of Orient are..." Yes, it's the visit of the Magi, the Wise Men.

Now it's possible to poke fun at the way this story is portrayed in nativity plays. We can be very clever and point out that the visitors weren't Kings; they never came to the stable or even the inn; and there's nothing to say that there were three of them.

But no one can blame schoolteachers and Junior church leaders from ensuring that there are as many roles as possible in the Christmas drama. Blending the birth stories from both Luke and Matthew's Gospels does another important job.

When you listen to a long piece of music you often get a “prelude” at the beginning. The prelude gives you a taste of the tunes and melodies in the fuller piece. The birth stories work like that too. Matthew uses the tale of the Magi to link both back to the old book of Isaiah (Isaiah 60:1-6) and forward to the end of his Gospel with the great sending out of disciples to all nations (Matthew 28:18).

Let’s be relaxed about the retelling of this lovely story and maybe concentrate on two elements. Firstly, although Matthew is a bit vague on who the Magi were, one thing is clear they were gentiles. Yes, pagan gentiles searching for a Jewish King. They are representing the universal call to God’s Kingdom.

The second point to note is that the Magi bring four gifts with them. Four gifts? Yes, four, and the fourth is the most important!

The key to understanding this fourth gift is a word that occurs at the beginning of the Bible passage (Matthew 2:1-12), again in the middle and yet again at the end. The word is translated as “pay him homage”.

This is the purpose of the story of the Magi.

In ancient times homage entailed prostrating yourself at the feet of the King. Nowadays, many Bible translations use the word “worship” instead.

Matthew clearly uses a piece of irony when King Herod expresses his desire to pay homage to the baby King.

We see that it is only after the act of worship, only after giving themselves completely to Christ that the Wise men present their material gifts.

So, the fourth gift of worship is really the first gift! And that’s how it should be with us.

You see, the Magi are in the birth story because they represent us. We have our own talents and material gifts for God to use but first we need to give our worship to the one who died for us, redeemed our wrongdoing, saved us so we can have everlasting life.

There’s the equivalent of a guiding star shining just for you. It’s called the Holy Spirit.

Go forward into this new year brothers and sisters and continue to search for Christ. Yes, bring your gifts and talents. And when you meet him, whenever, wherever, quietly start your relationship with him by saying “I have come to worship the King”.

Today, we choose again to trust God, to walk with Jesus and to live in the ways of the kingdom.

Take the Methodist Way of Life Card. (see the last page on these sheets) Before you say the covenant prayer, read through the commitments on the card and reflect on which of these you want to grow in during the coming year.

As far as we are able, with God’s help:

Worship

We will pray daily.

We will worship with others regularly.

We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

Learning and Caring

We will care for ourselves and those around us.

We will learn more about our faith.

We will practise hospitality and generosity.

Service

We will help people in our communities and beyond.

We will care for creation and all God’s gifts.

We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

We will speak of the love of God.

We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus.

We will share our faith with others.

A time of prayer

Take time to sit quietly. Then say the Covenant Prayer aloud:

I am no longer my own but yours.

Your will, not mine, be done in all things,

wherever you may place me,

in all that I do and in all that I may endure;

when there is work for me and when there is none;

when I am troubled and when I am at peace. Your

will be done when I am valued and when I am

disregarded;

when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;

when I have all things, and when I have nothing

I willingly offer all I have and am

to serve you, as and where you choose.

Glorious and blesséd God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are mine and I am yours.

May it be so for ever.

Let this covenant now made on earth

be fulfilled in heaven. Amen

Prayers of intercession

Pray for your church ... that it may be a faithful witness to God's love.

Pray for the church worldwide ...that in word and action it may help people to see God's glory

Pray for the leaders of nations... that they act justly and guide wisely.

Pray for those pushed to the margins of society ...that they and their gifts may be made welcome.

Pray for those in need...especially people we know

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

StF 489 All I once held dear.

You can listen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r8XfE_VNb0. Alternatively, read the words or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live

and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

A prayer of blessing

May the God of heaven and earth bless us and keep us;
may his face shine upon us that we might know
God's peace and live in ways that reflect his love, now
and always. Amen

Original Materials by Roger L Walton
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Local Churches please insert CCLI No here

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.

A Methodist Way of Life

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

Worship

- We will pray daily.
- We will worship with others regularly.
- We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

Learning and Caring

- We will care for ourselves and those around us.
- We will learn more about our faith.
- We will practise hospitality and generosity.

Service

- We will help people in our communities and beyond.
- We will care for creation and all God's gifts.
- We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

- We will speak of the love of God.
- We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus.
- We will share our faith with others.

May we be a blessing within and beyond God's Church, for the transformation of the world.

A Methodist Way of Life encourages us to grow together. Make time to discuss these questions regularly with others.

Worship

- What is the pattern of your prayer life?
- How easy or hard do you find it to pray?
- What has spoken to you recently in worship or in the Bible?
- When, lately, have you felt close to God or distant from God?

Learning and Caring

- How have you practised generosity since we last met?
- How have you shown hospitality to others recently?
- How are you caring for yourself?
- How and what are you learning now?

Service

- How are you seeking to serve others in your communities and beyond?
- What has helped or hindered you in your service of others?
- How are you caring for God's creation?
- How are you using God's gifts (including your financial resources)?
- What issues of injustice are you currently concerned about?
- What are you doing in response?

Evangelism

- When was the last time you were able to talk about God?
- What opportunities to share your faith have there been since we last met?
- How have you responded to opportunities to share your faith?
- Is there anyone you might invite to consider Christian faith?
- How can we support each other in our Way of Life commitments?