

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit

SERVICE AT HOME

Sunday, July 17, 2022

Prepared by the Revd Gareth Hill

Call to Worship

In the darkest valley, at the banquet table;
in the hard work of life, at the moments of ease;
in our day-to-day reality, at times set aside –
like this time, now – for worship, for listening,
for paying attention; with every step we take:
goodness and mercy follow us; our cups
overflow.

Joanna Harader, <https://spaciousfaith.com/>

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

Come, now is the time to worship (StF 24)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USQn4IUmS20>

Come, now is the time to worship.
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship.
Come, just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God,
one day every knee will bow.
Still, the greatest treasure remains for those
who gladly choose you now.

Come, now is the time to worship ...

*Brian Doerksen (b. 1965) Words and Music: © 1998
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1QG. <www.songsolutions.org> Used by permission.
Methodist Church. Singing the Faith . Hymns Ancient &
Modern Ltd. Kindle Edition.*

Prayer

O God, we gather at your waters,
as a hot and bothered crowd gathers on the
beach on a sweltering, summer day.
O God, we drink at your fountain,
as a parched dog laps at the fresh,
running water of a bush creek.

O God, we await your refreshment,
as a tired worker watches for the change of
shift.

Quench our thirst, satisfy our longings.
May we be refreshed and restored in you;
and teach us where to find the bucket and how
to carry it so that we might draw that water for
those who most need it.

*Anita Monro, posted on the **MAD-e-Lena** blog.*

<http://mad-e-lena.blogspot.com/>

Prayer of confession and pardon

How foolish we are to think we can hide our
failings from you, Seeing God.
We treat our bodies as trash cans for junk food,
not as sanctuaries for your Spirit.
We get drunk on the seductions of our society,
while daintily sipping at your living water.
We doze under the tree of temptation, hoping
you won't see us and expect us to get up and
follow Jesus.
Forgive us, our heart's only Hope.
Your grace mends our brokenness,
making us whole;
your compassion removes our sin,
making us new;
your voice speaks tenderly to us,
silencing our pride,
your Love is made human
in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,
redeeming our lives. (*silence*)

In front of us, behind us, to our right,
to our left: look! God is there!
In our past, beside us today, waiting
in the future: look! God is there!
in the shadows, in the light:
look! God is there!
From the top of the mountains,
to the bottom of the seas;
in the morning, in the evening,
in every moment: God is with us, loves us and
forgives us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Thom Shuman, and posted on his [Lectionary Liturgies](#) website

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Acts 16: 1-15

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

Come Lord, to our souls come down (StF493)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f3Bnl9lCro>

Come, Lord, to our souls come down,
through the gospel speaking;
let your words, your cross and crown,
lighten all our seeking.

Drive out darkness from the heart,
banish pride and blindness;
plant in every inward part
truthfulness and kindness.

Eyes be open, spirits stirred,
minds new truth receiving;
stir us, Lord, by your own word;
deepen our believing.

Howard Charles Adie Gaunt (1902–1983)

Sermon – Theme: ‘Come and stay at my house.’

Many communities, including your own, has seen an outpouring of welcome for Ukrainian refugees – mostly women and children – fleeing the Russian invasion while their husbands stay to defend the country.

Donations of food, clothes and other essential supplies have poured into charities for sending to Ukraine or equipping new homes for the refugees.

It's not the only example of hospitality. The British people have shown generosity and welcome to many groups in the past and, hopefully, will continue to do so. Despite some political rhetoric, the default position of most of us is to be kind.

What we need to remember is that open-handed welcome is also a Christian characteristic. How will people encounter Christ in the world unless the Christians in the world

open their hearts – and bank accounts – to those in need?

All of us who follow Christ will have those moments when we can look back and trace God's intervention in our lives – and often it is expressed in the welcome and generosity of Christians living out their call.

Who first invited you to church? Who welcomed you into a new community with a meal?

As a minister, I've had to move around a bit and can recall those people who made sure a cake was available when we moved into a new manse; made sure the decorating was done; gave us a meal on the first night we arrived; tidied up the garden. Manse Stewards can be angels in disguise!

In our main Bible reading today, from the Book of Acts, the faith of a continent begins to change.

There was no synagogue in Philippi but the Jews who lived there, and others, were known to congregate at the city gates, a place for debate. The missionaries head there and during their conversation Lydia, a rich business woman, comes to faith. She is the first recorded conversion in Europe.

Her response gives us a pattern for how we can understand the power of invitation.

Lydia's first thought when she comes to faith is how to keep talking to these people whose intervention has changed her life completely. She wants to hear more, to understand what this new faith means for the future.

Lydia's invitation was: *'If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house.'* Luke says she was persuasive.

At that point she wouldn't have known but there is a parallel in Jesus' ministry. We have it in John 1: 35-46 and I would encourage you to read it now.

It includes a series of invitations:

- Two disciples of John ask Jesus where he is staying and Jesus replies: 'Come, and you will see.'
- Later Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who had followed Jesus, finds his brother and brings him to Jesus.

- The next day, Philip is called to follow Jesus and goes to find his friend, Nathanael. He is sceptical about Jesus being anything special because he comes from Nazareth but Philip says, 'Come and see.'

'Come and see'/'come and stay' - both are invitations to discover more of Jesus.

When John Wesley was quite young, he was approached by someone he described as "a serious man" who gave him some sound advice: "You must find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion."

Lydia realises that she can't live out her new-found faith on her own, so she takes the initiative and invites Paul and his party to spend time with her. She doesn't want solitary religion.

Jesus invited some potential disciples to spend time with him and Philip persuaded Nathanael to give Jesus some time to see whether what he was saying was true.

Churches who major on hospitality can testify that they have been blessed by people joining us; saying they feel welcome and able to stay and contribute to the life of the church.

For Lydia in the Book of Acts, it turned out like this: an invitation to home always means you have to welcome others. Hospitality is a sign of God among us. Hospitality is a sign of our own openness to God.

Changed lives change lives

Lydia became a life-changer because her life had been changed and she recognised she could respond with a full heart.

There were baptisms for her household and her home became both a safe place and somewhere that others could be taught about Jesus. *How do we know that?*

When Paul and Silas came out of prison the first place they went was Lydia's home because they knew their friends would be there. It had already become a centre of hospitality and grace.

If we apply 'come and stay at my house' to the challenge to share the Good News from here to

other places and people, what do we learn from Lydia?

- To be open to God's word and to being changed by it.
- Not to be afraid to share what we have discovered with others.
- That invitation - sometimes even persuasive invitation - is a way that others encounter faith.
- We need a community of faithful Christians to help us grow.
- Jesus believes in hospitality! Amen.

Intercessions

A summer Sunday, and lots of people are just getting up, having a lazy breakfast, getting ready for a day in the garden. Sunday papers, lunch at the pub. Most of them don't even think of coming to church. Lord. We can't have made you very attractive to them or shown the quality of life which would have made them interested to know more. In silence now we think of one person or one family who we know, who we would love to find faith in you. We pray that they might want to know more ... (pause)

Some of our church family are on holiday this week. Benidorm or Bognor, the Lakes or Lanzarote - wherever it is, Father we pray for them. We hold in our minds eye and before you, someone or some couple or family who we know, who are away on holiday. We pray that you will refresh them deep down inside. Give them time to catch up with themselves, space to get life in perspective again, and the stimulus of new things around them. We pray for them now ... (pause)

We recognise that many people we know have not had a holiday in years, some because of a lack of money, others because of poor health. Some we know have no friends or family to travel with. They look on as others celebrate. Give us compassion for the ones who miss out ... (pause)

We know only too well that, even at the height of summer, news doesn't stop happening. This

summer, we see daily examples of inhumanity in Russia's aggression to Ukraine; we witness political sleaze and people desperate to have or hold on to power and the weather reminds us of the awful plight of our planet. At the same time we know that quiet suffering still goes on. Our friend still has terminal cancer; that new mum is barely coping with post-natal depression; our neighbour's child is struggling with depression; someone in our street is still sending in countless job applications and going quietly to the Foodbank ... and across the world 30,000 children a day still die from hunger and disease ... (pause)

Lord we bring all these thoughts and prayers to you this morning. In the middle of all our uncertainty, it is still good to be alive; it's good to have this rhythm of life - Sunday rest, summer break. It's good to be in your presence, bringing everything back to you in this service: every ordinary part of our lives; every ordinary gift we receive from your hands. Take us and bless us, we pray, and change our ordinary time into your extraordinary time.

And in the silence, Lord, we bring our particular needs to you for this coming week ... (pause)

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Bless this summer Sunday. Amen.

Adapted from A Summer Sunday in The Second Intercessions Handbook by John Pritchard (SPCK 2004)

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

Lord, we have come at your own invitation (StF595)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_mKDO0nHSk

This is a communion hymn but the first and last verses are a challenge to be welcomed and to be welcomers.

Lord, we have come at your own invitation, chosen by you, to be counted your friends; yours is the strength that sustains dedication, ours a commitment we know never ends.

Here, at your table, confirm our intention, give it your seal of forgiveness and grace; teach us to serve, without pride or pretension, Lord, in your Kingdom, whatever our place.

When, at your table, each time of returning, vows are renewed and our courage restored, may we increasingly glory in learning all that it means to accept you as Lord.

So, in the world, where each duty assigned us gives us the chance to create or destroy, help us to make those decisions that bind us, Lord, to yourself, in obedience and joy.

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000) Words: © 1979, Stainer & Bell Ltd, 23 Gruneisen Road, London N3 1DZ <www.stainer.co.uk>

Blessing

Go now. Listen for the voice of the Lord and follow wherever it leads.

Do not be dominated by anything.

Allow no room within yourselves for deceit, but offer yourselves as a temple for the Holy Spirit.

May God be with you and speak through you; May Christ Jesus be one with you and raise you to life;

And may the Holy Spirit dwell within you and make you holy.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, In the name of Christ. Amen.

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