

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit  
SERVICE AT HOME:**



**Sunday 10 September 2023**

Prepared by Graham Hepburn

Welcome to this week's service at home, a service for Education Sunday on the theme 'The Armour of Light.'

You may like to have a visual focus of both something you regard as protective, to represent armour and something to represent light - perhaps a candle or other light - to focus your thoughts on during this act of worship.

**Listen, read, pray or sing along**

We begin with the hymn 'Called by Christ to be disciples' (StF 660)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz9giZkaluQ>

Called by Christ to be disciples  
every day in every place,  
we are not to hide as hermits  
but to spread the way of grace;  
citizens of heaven's kingdom,  
though the world is where we live,  
as we serve a faithful Master,  
faithful service may we give,

Richly varied are our pathways,  
many callings we pursue;  
may we use our gifts and talents  
always, Lord, to honour you;  
so in government or commerce,  
college, hospice, farm or home,  
whether volunteers or earning,  
may we see our kingdom come.

Hard decisions may confront us,  
urging us to compromise;  
still obedience is our watchword -

make us strong and make us wise!  
Secular is turned to sacred,  
made our precious offering,  
as our daily lives are fashioned  
in submission to our King.

*Martin Leckebusch (b 1962)*

**Prayers of Praise and Confession**

Our opening prayers, and the Prayer for Teachers at the end of this service, are taken from 'The Greatest Commandment', the 2022/23 Methodist Prayer Handbook.

**Prayer of Praise, (Sally Jones)**

Ever loving, ever loyal, everlasting God,  
You are the source of all our loving,  
you are indescribable beauty,  
you are life itself.

Drawing close to you, we are fed,  
drawing close to you, we are shown what love really is,  
drawing close to you, we are given food to feed others.

May we draw ever closer to you, the source,  
with joy, with energy, with intent,  
for only by experiencing your love can we love your creation,  
only by touching your heart can we find heart for others,  
only by feeling your closeness can we draw close to those who are lost.  
In the security of your love, enable us to love this broken world,

**Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession, (Alison Judd)**

O Lord my God,  
Forgive me when I do not love you wholeheartedly,  
allowing other desires to get in the way;  
when I do not love you with my whole being,  
becoming distracted by petty concerns;  
when I do not love you completely,  
failing to understand the immensity of your divine nature.  
Forgive me when I do not love others as much as I love myself  
when it is just too difficult, or inconvenient, or costly.

Thank you for reminding me that you love me unconditionally so that, empowered by your Holy Spirit, I may share your love with others.

**Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer.**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Bible Reading, Romans 13: 8-14**

#### **Love Fulfills the Law**

**8** Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. **9** The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." **10** Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

#### **The Day Is Near**

**11** And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. **12** The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. **So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.** **13** Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. **14** Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.<sup>[a]</sup>

### **Footnote**

[a] In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.

### **Reflection**

I am sure most of us are familiar with the Christian armour, as detailed in Ephesians 6 verses 10 to 18. But what of the armour of light, as described by Paul in Romans chapter 13, verse 12 from our Bible reading above?

It's a challenging theme for Education Sunday, as Paul draws this contrast between night-time, the deeds of darkness and 'bad' behaviour on the one hand, and daytime, light and 'good' behaviour, as exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ, on the other hand. Perhaps on Education Sunday it is a reminder to us all that we all have responsibility to teach our children and grand-children, or those who we have an influence over, the right way to live, and the difference between right and wrong. It is not just the responsibility of those in education and we have a duty to support them in this and all the many other parts of the difficult work that they do in moulding the minds of the children and young people in their care.

Paul groups together different behaviour patterns which do not always necessarily follow. I can see that carousing and drunkenness can lead in some cases to sexual immorality and debauchery, but dissension and jealousy do not logically follow to me from the previously listed behaviours - when I have seen dissension and jealousy in my working or church life thankfully it hasn't necessarily been associated with carousing or drunkenness etc. No doubt Paul was drawing on his first hand experience or stories that he had been told about the church in Rome, or elsewhere which he believed was a good learning point for the early Roman Christians.

Perhaps dissension and jealousy are the most relevant traits here for Education Sunday. In our age today, with many children and young

people being under the influence of social media and peer pressure, then those negative traits are often caused from online posts. We see jealousy of friends or peers, relationships, body types, and dissension caused by bullying and exclusion of young people from the so called popular groups. As is so often the case, it is amazing that words written so long ago are so up to date and applicable to how we see people living their lives today.

To overcome this, says Paul, put on the armour of light, that is, clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul urges us not to think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh, that is, the sinful state of human beings.

I remember when I was in my twenties once having a discussion with a Jehovah's witness, and they said that they did not approve of discos or night clubs. The person believed 'that' kind of dancing behaviour only led to carousing and debauchery. I believe that what Paul is saying here is not that there is no place in the Christian life for pleasure, or gratification - I hope that we find this in our long term relationships with each other - but that our main aim as Christians is to follow the Christian way of life, as exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should clothe ourselves with our Lord Jesus Christ. This conjures up to me a picture of someone being wrapped up totally in a cloak, a big overcoat which will offer protection and warmth against whatever the world can throw at us. Like a parent wrapping their child in a towel as they take them out of the bath, providing warmth, comfort and security.

When we say that we trust God, we are clothed in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, who enables us to belong to the light and to share it with others. That is our armour and we pray that it will shine and be a light to those around us as we live out our lives in our churches, amongst our families and neighbours.

### **Listen, read, pray or sing along**

We sing the hymn 'The Spirit lives to set us free'(StF 397)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDcbYk-9C-Y>

The Spirit lives to set us free,  
walk, walk in the light;  
He binds us all in unity,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light,  
Walk in the light,  
Walk in the light,  
Walk in the light of the Lord.

Jesus promised life to all,  
walk, walk in the light;  
the dead were wakened by His call,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light....

He died in pain on Calvary,  
walk, walk in the light;  
to save the lost like you and me,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light....

We know His death was not the end,  
walk, walk in the light;  
He gave His Spirit to be our friend,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light....

By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,  
walk, walk in the light;  
the Father's kindness is revealed,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light....

The Spirit lives in you and me,  
walk, walk in the light;  
His light will shine for all to see,  
walk, walk in the light.  
Walk in the light....

*Damian Lundy (1944-1996)*  
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## Prayers of intercession

At the start of a new year at school, college or university, we pray for all teachers and learners.

May they start each day clothed in your light.

May teachers see the needs of each individual and remain patient and insightful and true to their calling. May they find rest and encouragement and chance to stay fresh and keep learning as well as giving. May they know that, even when things seem hard, they are making a lasting difference and giving people the tools to change the world for the better.

Jesus, **clothe them in your light.**

May learners see the opportunities before them and be blessed with teachers who find the right way for them to learn. May they be compassionate and supportive to those who learn alongside them. May they grow in confidence and wisdom as well as just knowledge, and inspire them to use what they learn to help others.

Jesus, **clothe them in your light.**

May we all keep on learning, never resting on our laurels but open to new opportunities, questioning and searching, and seeking to know you more. May we seek out the dark places where your light is needed. Grant us the courage to step forward and make a difference.

Jesus, **clothe us in your light. Amen**

*(Education Sunday Resources, Churches Together in England)*

## A Prayer For Teachers

*(Allan Christie)*

Living Lord, for many of us our ministry is in places of learning. You have challenged us to love our neighbour in places where there can be both the greatest highs and lows. Inspire us each day to love you first and then to love again the reason why we help people of all ages and abilities to grapple with learning objectives.

We pray that you will remind us that it should just be about data, but about leading our learners to the next stage in their journey with you.

Encourage us through your Son that we can explain the most complex things in refreshing ways by taking the time to be in that moment.

**Amen**

## Listen, read, pray or sing along

Our final hymn is 'Christ is the world's light, Christ and none other', (StF 346)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5cHa4\\_Sxkk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5cHa4_Sxkk)

Christ is the world's Light, he and no other;  
born in our darkness, he became our brother.  
If we have seen him, we have seen the  
Father:  
glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Peace, he and no other;  
no man can serve him and despise his brother  
who else unites us, one in God the Father?  
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Life, he and no other;  
sold once for silver, murdered here, our  
Brother -  
he who redeems us, reigns with God the  
Father:  
Glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and no other;  
give God the glory, Spirit, Son and Father;  
give God the glory, God in man my brother:  
glory to God on high.

*Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)*

## Sending and blessing

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and for evermore.

**Amen.**



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