

## **Methodist Homes Sunday - Befriending**

### **Opening prayer**

'Earth's crammed with heaven, and every  
common bush afire with God'

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Let us worship our Creator God,  
who has given us the miracle of life and sustains  
us through the sacred rhythms of planet Earth.  
Here we are, Creator God, Lord and Spirit,  
standing before you, grounded on the earth,  
our hands stretched high like a tree.  
You fill us with amazement, wonderful God.  
Loving God, as we worship in your name this day,  
open our mouths to praise your name,  
open our ears to hear your word  
and open our eyes to see where you are at work  
in your people, your church and your world.

**Amen**

This year the MHA Sunday service is based on the  
Parable of the mustard seed. MHA's befriending  
service connects a volunteer with an older person  
for regular conversation and companionship. A  
conversation with a volunteer befriender is a  
small act that makes a big impact, just like the  
mustard seed.

### **Read, listen to or sing StF 403**

<https://youtu.be/mcKhsuTyXxM>

1 God is love: his the care,  
tending each, everywhere.  
God is love -- all is there!  
Jesus came to show him,  
that we all might know him:  
Sing aloud, loud, loud!  
Sing aloud, loud, loud!  
God is good!  
God is truth!  
God is beauty! Praise him!

2 None can see God above;  
neighbours here we can love;  
thus may we Godward move,  
finding him in others,  
sisters all, and brothers:

3 Jesus came, lived and died  
for our sake, crucified,  
rose again, glorified;  
he was born to save us  
by the truth he gave us:

4 To our Lord praise we sing --  
light and life, friend and king,  
coming down love to bring,  
pattern for our duty,  
showing God in beauty:  
Sing aloud, loud, loud!  
Sing aloud, loud, loud!  
God is good!  
God is truth!  
God is beauty! Praise him  
Percy Dearmer (1867-1936)

### **Prayer of praise**

God of mystery, Sower, Saviour, Spirit,  
We worship you, and we ask you to give us:  
eyes to notice where the seeds of your kingdom  
are growing,  
courage to show them to others,  
faith enough to help nurture them,  
and a heart that delights in their harvest.

God of grace and growth, you have called us  
to plant the seeds of your kingdom  
in the fields of your world  
and to trust you for their developing and  
flourishing – **and so we praise you.**

For the abundance of your creativity;  
for the transforming nature of your Spirit;  
for the power of small beginnings;  
for the mystery of hidden growth;  
for the harvest we are invited to delight in:  
**We praise you.**

Living God, from a mustard seed to a tree,  
from **I** to **we**, in you we grow.  
In the mystery of the unseen,  
from brown field to green, in you we grow.  
By faith and not by sight, by day and by night  
in you we grow.  
Forgiven and freed, through word and deed,  
in you we grow.  
As we sow and reap, as we laugh and weep,  
in you we grow.  
May your kingdom come, Father, Spirit, Son,  
as in you we grow. **Amen**

## Dot and Grace's Story

Following the pandemic and the loss of her husband and sister, Dot confided in her family, who live further away, about feeling lonely. With support, Dot applied to MHA's telephone befriending service where she was later introduced to Grace.

Similar to Dot, the pandemic resonated with Grace and brought up memories of her own grandparents. Grace decided she wanted to spend some of her time volunteering, with the aim of finding a new friend and that is exactly what she found in Dot.

After being carefully matched by MHA's befriending team, a weekly half-hour telephone conversation soon turned into regular texts checking in on one another, as family members would, which is what the pair now refer to each other as.

### MHA Sunday video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w8nb2mMNOo>



## Read, listen to or sing StF619

<https://youtu.be/TtPAEbDLR00>

- 1 Thanks for friends who keep on loving,  
finding ways to help us grow,  
celebrating our achievements,  
sharing in our pain and woe.  
God is glimpsed where love is faithful:  
mirrored here in time and space.  
Thanks to God for friends who love us:  
Christ revealed in every face.
- 2 Other people help to shape us  
when they take the time to share  
words of wisdom, honest actions  
through our journey in God's care.  
In our faithful, honest learning  
we discover things unknown.  
Thanks to God for friends who teach us:  
seeking talent yet ungrown.
- 3 When we find our friendships challenged  
through mistakes and different views,  
we discover deeper living  
as the love of God renews.  
For in Christ we see forgiveness;  
know a strength still to embrace.  
Thanks to God for friends who keep us:  
making real the gift of grace.
- 4 Praise to God for this great gifting  
of relationship and friend:  
imaging divine relating;  
found in heaven with no end.  
Bless us Maker, Word and Spirit  
as companions on the way.  
Thanks to God for friends who help us  
to fulfil our lives each day.

Gary Hopkins (b.1984)

**Read** Mark 4. 30-32

### Reflection

I can remember as a child growing mustard and cress seed on blotting paper. It germinated easily and you could soon harvest it with scissors for an egg and cress sandwich. The mustard seed in today's Bible reading is a different variety. Black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) was grown widely in first century Palestine for the seeds as a spice and the leaves for eating. Jesus uses this familiar plant to illustrate how the Kingdom of Heaven can grow from small beginnings to a structure that can

support community life. Black mustard has the tiniest of seeds which quickly grow into bushes big enough for birds to nest in. In our own lives, a small seed or germ of faith can grow to move mountains as it says in Matthew 17.20.

Dot and her befriender Grace grew so close to be like family through MHA's Befriending scheme. The aim of the Befriending service is to reduce social isolation and loneliness in older people, who can be particularly at risk. Loneliness is an issue for many people, especially those in later life who find themselves living alone; having someone to talk to can make a real difference. Befriending can help a person feel seen and heard. The Befriending team says 'When we introduce someone to a befriender we often hear it's just knowing that someone is thinking of them that makes such a difference. Dot and Grace's friendship grew from a weekly telephone call to more frequent messages and then meeting in person. The befriending relationship allows the older person a chance to give back; it's a mutual relationship in which each gives and receives support, advice, wisdom and fun. The act of kindness of giving time to another person to just listen, can bring great fruit to both parties.

You may think that befriending is something in which you would like to be involved. Maybe you are lonely and would like to be linked with someone who would be in touch regularly. Or maybe you feel you could be a befriender. Either way our local MHA Communities Centre at the United Church in Jewry Street would be pleased to hear from you and will put you in touch with the Befriending team.

The lesson for us all from the parable of the mustard seed is that everyone is welcome in God's kingdom, no matter how small or insignificant you feel, and together we can blossom and grow into a force for good, here, in God's world, wherever we are. Remember mustard seeds are tiny but sprout quickly when nurtured to soon become a fruitful field. We can each play our own small part, and together share God's love with those we meet.

Jonathan Nowell writes in a hymn 'We are people whose life comes from you, Jesus. We need to carry your will in our heart. We need your

purpose as our inspiration. We need your courage; each day a new start. Help us to see your people's needs. Breathe into our words and deeds, and plant in us your grain of mustard seed.' *Singing the Faith* 515 v3.

### **MHA 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hymn**

We thank you for the vision of Christians years ago  
who gathered there at Ryelands  
with seeds of faith to sow.  
For eighty years we've planted,  
and still we find it's true:  
we're blessed to be a blessing:  
there's joy in serving you.

We've built and knit and crafted,  
we've sought to serve your truth,  
we've gardened and we've hosted:  
our homes are living proof!  
With love, we've signed the contracts,  
we've welcomed those in need;  
we've served our hungry neighbours  
and loved in word and deed.

We've talked and we have listened  
to those who feel alone.  
We've watched as friendship blossoms  
through time shared on the phone.  
In giving time we've seen how often love's returned  
and through small acts of kindness,  
we've grown and laughed and learned.

We've laughed when times were joyful,  
we've prayed when times were tough,  
and always we've been thankful:  
your grace, Lord is enough.  
At table we've been nourished;  
and somehow found new life.  
We've practiced loving-kindness  
and shared the peace of Christ.

God, by your Spirit lead us  
and bless us from above:  
give strength to onward journey  
in faith and hope and love,  
so future generations may build on what we tell,  
that special care enables us all to live life well.

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### **Offertory Prayer**

Lord, accept the gifts we give, our regular offering  
for the work of the Church and Circuit, donations  
we make to charities like Methodist Homes, and  
our gifts of time and energy as we walk in your  
way.

**Amen**

## Intercessions

Loving God, we give you thanks for the work of MHA; for the staff and volunteers who give to others with such dedication, for the members and residents who form the heart of our MHA family and for all people who support our work through prayer, financial support and encouragement. We ask your blessing on all those who make up the MHA family.

**Jesus, friend and redeemer, hear our prayer**

We pray for all those who live or work in MHA care homes across the country. May those living with dementia know your peace. We pray for our retirement living communities where friendships are formed. We pray for our Communities schemes, especially our local one at the United Church Winchester.

**Jesus, friend and redeemer, hear our prayer**

We pray for befrienders across the United Kingdom, and for those who receive their calls, and ask that all who give and receive in this way may find the friendship, joy and laughter of true connection. Bless all who work in the MHA befriending team, as they seek to support, encourage and match people.

**Jesus, friend and redeemer, hear our prayer.**

Loving God, as we thank you for the Methodist Church, for MHA and for the connections between them, we ask your continued blessing upon us all, that we may grow together in faith and love. **Amen**

## 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.  
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**

**Read, listen to or sing StF664**

<https://youtu.be/MtsubiBA78s>

- 1 Lord, you call us to your service,  
each in our own way;  
some to caring, loving, 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.

Marjorie Dobson (1940)

## Final prayer

May our small acts of care grow by God's Spirit  
to encompass all who need fellowship,  
friendship or love;  
may our small gifts of time be used fruitfully,  
blossoming into more than we expect or hope,  
and may our small acts of faith be rewarded  
in ways that surprise and delight us.  
And may the blessing of the God of love,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us, and all  
those we care for, now and forever.

**Amen**

Resources:  
[mha.org.uk/Sunday](http://mha.org.uk/Sunday)  
[rootsforchurches.com](http://rootsforchurches.com)

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