

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

SERVICE AT HOME:

Sunday 27 July 2025

Prepared by Graham Hepburn

'It's a when, not an if.' (Isaiah 43 v1-7)

Call to worship

Give us a new heart, O God, free enough to live by faith, brave enough to endure in hope and generous enough to love without limit.

Amen.

El Salvador, source untraced (Day 27, 2024/25 Methodist Prayer Handbook)

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We begin with the hymn of creation, 'Great God, your love has called us here' (StF 499),
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqyAlaNpdVg>

Great God, your love has called us here,
as we, by love for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

We come with self-inflicted pains
of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half-free, half-bound by inner chains,
by social forces swept along,
by powers and systems close confined,
yet seeking hope for humankind.

Great God, in Christ you call our name
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right or claim,
but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.

Then take the towel and break the bread
and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do
while love is making all things new.

Brian Wren (b 1936)

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A prayer of praise (based on Isaiah 43 v1-2)

To God who creates us, glory;
To God who redeems us, glory;
To God who calls us by name, glory;

To the Lord who is with us through waters and floods, praise;

To the Lord who is with us as we pass through fire, praise;

To the Lord the Holy One, who is our Saviour, praise;

To God who has ransomed us, glory;

To God who values us above price, glory;

To God who calls us beyond fear, glory;

To the only wise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be praise and glory,

Now and to the ages of ages. Amen

*(Alan and Clare Amos, IBRA Words For Today, 08/11/2003,
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Prayer

Read again through the words of the first three verses of our first hymn, this time reflectively as a prayer of confession for the hurts we have caused to ourselves and to other people.

A prayer of confession

Lord Jesus, each week as we come before you again you accept us again, as we offer you our service with a towel at our feet, and allowing us to partake of your body in the Sacrament of bread and wine.

Turn us again from guilt and despair, and in your compassionate love, we ask again that you set us free, your life to live, your joy to share.

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.

Isaiah 43 v 1-7, 'Israel's only Saviour'

But now, this is what the Lord says – he who
created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:

'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have
summoned you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with
you; and when you pass through the rivers, they
will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be
burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
your Saviour;

I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in
your stead.

Since you are precious and honoured in my
sight, and because I love you, I will give people in
exchange for you, nations in exchange for your
life.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring
your children from the east and gather you from
the west.

I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the
south, "Do not hold them back."

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from
the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by
my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I
formed and made.'

Reflection

It's a when, not an if.

Isaiah doesn't pretend things are all going to be
fine. He doesn't gloss over the reality of suffering
or couch it in the language of 'maybe', but instead
he calls it as it is. When you pass through the
waters, and when you walk through the fire.

'When you pass through the waters, I will be with
you; and when you pass through the rivers, they
will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be
burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.'

When.

Sometimes as Christians we have been made to
feel as though if we believe, everything will be
good. We will be healed, we will have enough
money, we will be free of all the things that bind
us. And then, if these things don't happen, we feel
that we are somehow failing God.

*Liz Carter is an author, poet, and editor living
with long terms disabling illness. As a disabled
person, she has sometimes been told that she
doesn't have enough faith. So, it is a relief for her
to read words such as these, words that admit to
the struggles we will all go through. It's a relief to
see the stark honesty written across them:
sometimes things are going to be overwhelming.
But....

But. The 'but' is even more important than the
'when' because it is where we find comfort. The
waters may almost swallow us up, the fire may
almost consume us, but God is there in the waves
and there in the flames, walking with us and
keeping us from being overcome.

We are called by name, and we belong to God. We
are precious and honoured in his sight. God's
heart has always been for restoration, and we can
take hold of that here and now, even if it feels as
though we are on the edge of drowning or being
burned by the fire. So today, take hold of one
truth: God walks with you.

Fire and Water. Isaiah uses these two elements to
illustrate our times of deepest struggle. But as
Christians, we can think forward to what these
two elements symbolise to us in the New
Testament. The waters of baptism, that we do not
just rise up from the waters, but we are born again
as new people.

The fire of the Holy Spirit, the power and presence
of our Lord Jesus Christ, in our hearts, souls and
lives today.

Picture Jesus standing in front of you and calling
you by name. His voice is under and bursting with
love. How do you respond?

Let us pray

Lord, thank you for calling me by name, that you are with me in the fire, and I am not overcome. Help me to hold on to you and to praise you through my storms. **Amen**

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We share the hymn based on Psalm 23, 'The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want' (StF 481)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrS0VXOOepc>

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

Refrain: And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

Refrain

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Refrain

Stuart Townend, (b1963)

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<tym@kingsway.co.uk>

Prayers of intercession

We bring our prayers for the Methodist Fellowship around the world.

On Day 27 in the Methodist Prayer Handbook, we are asked to pray for the **United Methodist Church (UMC) in Central and Southern Europe.**

Merciful God, we pray for the community of faith in Albania - for the concerns of those who are

already part of it, in particular that more people come to know Christ.

Merciful God, the church in Austria has embarked on a path of change. We pray you will courage to approach others openly, to meet people where they are, and to let go of the familiar in order to make room for new paths of your grace.

Merciful God, help Czechia to grow in healthy values, in compassion for the weak, and in respect for the environment.

Merciful God, we give thanks for the commitment of the many church members in the **United Methodist Church of France**, for their witness and service. Thank you for the life of local churches and for help in balancing their finances. We ask that You will call new people to become pastors.

Merciful God, we give thanks for the various camps organised by the **UMC In Hungary**. We give praise for the mission opportunities that allow the church to reach out to so many families. We ask that You will take care of families who are suffering financially by helping them to cover their basic needs.

Amen

We pray for ourselves, remembering the words we have share today from Isaiah, knowing that we will face times when we pass through waters, and have to walk through fire. We give thanks for the assurance that you walk this path with us, that we know that you are with us, and your rod and staff protect and comfort us at all times. That we know that Jesus your Son walked this path too, and walks alongside us in our pilgrimage of faith as we follow in your way.

Amen

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

If you give your weekly offering through an envelope scheme or in cash, please set it aside, and pray with those who give using Standing orders.

Gracious God, accept these gifts, our money, and all our offerings, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

Our final hymn is 'Beauty for brokenness, (StF 693)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5_TVy2gHRg

Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in Your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.

Refrain

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
His cross for the pain.

Refrain

Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned –
our future, our dreams.

Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content
with the things that we need.

Refrain

Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until Your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of Your ways,
seek Your salvation
and bring You their praise.

Refrain, Repeated

Graham Kendrick, (b1950) © 1993 Make Way Music

A sending out prayer

You are the One, the Holy One,
who looks on all you have made, with love.
You gaze at me, and your faithful kindness
overwhelms me.
I fall silent before you, my words stalling,
as my heart breaks open and pours out my thanks,
my delight in you.
The more I gaze back at you,
the more I see through your eyes;
I am born again in your devotion to your creation.
Let my words fall before you,
but grant me the words and the acts of love
you long for me to have for your world.
Amen.

*Kerry Tankard, District Chair, Yorkshire West District.
(Day 27, 2024/25 Methodist Prayer Handbook)*

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*Liz Carter is the author of 'Catching Commitment'(2018), 'Treasure in Dark Places'(2020), 'Valuable'(2023) and 'The Newland Trilogy'(2023).