

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

WORSHIP AT HOME 7 June 2026

prepared by Elizabeth Britton

Methodist Homes Sunday – The second cup

Call to worship

Romans 12.5 – ‘So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others’

MHA Sunday is a time for churches and faith groups to reflect on how we are called to notice, care for and walk alongside those who may otherwise be overlooked. Let us consider MHA’s work through its Community Service, Care Homes and Retirement Living schemes. This year our focus is on loneliness and isolation, not only as personal experiences but as injustices that call for a shared response. The Second Cup appeal reflects the quiet but powerful impact of companionship in later life.

Read, listen to or sing StF 409

All are welcome

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPOJ3HXAoHo>

- 1 Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.
- 2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
- 3 Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

4 Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

5 Let us a build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

Marty Haugen (b. 1950)

Meet Mary in the **MHA Sunday video Second Cup**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVyVI3oniKA>

Read Luke 14. 15-23

The Second Cup – make it matter

Jesus tells a story at a dinner party where everyone listening to him knows exactly who should be there, and who should not. His story quietly offends every assumption in the room. At first it sounds like a story about hospitality – about a generous host and a great banquet. Just as the listeners are beginning to imagine full tables and overflowing cups it becomes clear that this is not a comfortable story at all but one that unsettles the listeners because it exposes the invisible rules by which they live – who gets an invitation, who is expected, who is overlooked?

Jesus tells the story in a place where everyone believes the table plan makes sense, but he tells it precisely to show them that it does not. Invitations are sent out, food is prepared, the table is laid, then the excuses begin. One person has property to attend to, another has business commitments and another has other priorities. These excuses are not shocking. The problem is not hostility – it is distraction, comfort or busyness.

The host is angry, not because his pride is wounded but because he refuses to accept an empty table. In this story, absence is the scandal. The banquet has been prepared for people and when the expected

guests won't come, the invitation goes wider. The host sends his servants out into the streets and lanes of the town and then even further until the table is full. In this story, absence is never treated as normal.

This is where the parable turns towards us, because the question it raises isn't simply 'Who is welcome in God's kingdom?' it's 'Who is missing?' And more uncomfortably, 'Whose absence have we learned to accept?'

In 1st century Palestine there were people who were routinely left out – the poor, the disabled, those who did not fit the social or religious expectations of the time. Their absence from the table was normalized. Jesus refuses to accept that normal.

Absence is rarely accidental. It is shaped by loss, exclusion and neglect, as people are quietly pushed to the edges. When people are pushed from our shared life without anyone noticing, something has already gone wrong. The kingdom of God is not simply about gathering those who already belong. It's about noticing who is not there, and refusing to let that absence be the end of the story.

Today one of the most normalised absences is the loneliness of people in later life. Loneliness in later life is rarely dramatic, it grows through bereavement, declining health, reduced mobility, limited income and shrinking confidence. In England today over 3 million people say that they feel lonely often or always. It is not a marginal issue. It is a quiet reality for millions of lives largely out of sight. Loneliness is the experience of days without meaningful conversation; of being known once and no longer; of sensing that your presence or absence would make little difference. This is why loneliness is a matter of justice.

The most important thing about the parable is not who refuses the invitation, it is what the host does next. He doesn't cancel the banquet. He doesn't lower his expectations. He sends his servants out to fill his banquet table. It's an active, deliberate and persistent welcome.

Jesus does not wait for people to find their way in. Jesus goes looking. The kingdom of God advances not by accident but by invitation.

The problem of loneliness and exclusion is not met with explanation or sympathy alone but with

movement, with action, with people willing to be sent. God's response to empty seats is not resignation, it is commissioning. God's hospitality continues wherever someone is willing to pour a second cup. At this table there is the cup set before us and the cup we choose to share.

In the parable the servants are sent out to make the invitation real. They bring the promise of the banquet to those who had assumed it was not meant for them. That is where MHA stands in this story, responding to this commissioning of God. Across our care homes, retirement living schemes and community services MHA works to create community where isolation has taken hold, and connection where loneliness has become normal. One expression of this is the befriending service. Through regular phone calls and visits, volunteers offer presence, attention and relationship.

One person who has an MHA befriender says 'I love the calls from my volunteer. We hit it off from the start. She's given me confidence to go out again and meet my friend for coffee once a week. I look forward to the calls and so does she.'

It is more than companionship. It is dignity being restored and life widening again. Alongside this, MHA chaplains work in care homes and retirement living centres offering pastoral presence, noticing who is struggling and helping to ensure that no one is left unseen at the edges of community life. It is the servant stepping out again saying: there is room at the table, a generous invitation which continues to be offered, to keep reaching those who have not yet heard.

The befriending, chaplaincy and community life of MHA are the ways the invitation continues to be carried to people who would otherwise remain unseen. This work relies on shared commitment. For some, responding to this invitation will mean becoming a volunteer with MHA's befriending service, continuing to say to people in later life: you matter, and you have a place in this world. Some respond by praying – holding before God those who feel lonely and those who go out week by week carrying the invitation. And some do this by giving financially as a way of ensuring that the invitation keeps being offered and that the table remains open to those who have stopped expecting a place.

The banquet in Jesus' parable ends with fullness – a table crowded with unexpected guests; people who did not expect to be there, discovering that the invitation was real after all. This is the vision of the kingdom Jesus offers, a community of welcome, defined by grace. At the table there are two cups, the cup poured for us and the cup that says there is room at this table for you too. May we be people willing to share that second cup, willing to pray, to give and to serve so that the invitation keeps being offered.

Read, listen to or sing StF 255

The Kingdom of God is justice and joy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ej0XkhaiVls>

- 1 The kingdom of God
is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.
- 2 The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed,
the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.
- 3 The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice,
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross,
our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.
- 4 God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole;
the heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory
to God all in all!

Bryn Rees (1911-1983)

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

Creator God, we pray for all those throughout the world who feel abandoned, isolated and lonely. We ask that community may be built up in all places, that people might reach out to those who are alone and welcome them in. We look to the example set by Jesus, and ask that people of faith in all places might work together to draw all people into fellowship, putting your love into practice.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the church, here and throughout the world, giving thanks for our church family and the fellowship it gives. Help us to see those in our midst who feel alone, and to reach out to them. Help us to make your church ever more closely resemble your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Loving God, we pray for all who feel alone this day in our own nation. May they know your love, and may we reach out to them in fellowship and compassion. We pray for all those that are waiting to be matched with a befriender and ask that they may feel supported in this time of waiting. We pray for those who don't know what support is available, that they might find the people and services that can best help them. We pray for volunteers, present and future, giving thanks for their generosity and care.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We hold before you all who live or work in MHA's Retirement Living schemes and Care Homes, and their families and friends. We pray for those who have recently moved into an MHA setting. We give thanks for the fellowship found there and pray for anyone who is feeling alone or isolated; for those struggling with bereavement or ill health. We ask that they may find new connections and new ways to live life in all its fullness. We give thanks for the work of volunteers in MHA and ask your continued blessing upon them. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for all those that are unwell at this time, at home or in hospital, and for those that care for them. (If relevant, insert prayers here for those to be remembered by name) We hold before you too, those whose earthly life is drawing to its close, that they

may know your peace and may be surrounded by love.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for those whose loneliness is rooted in bereavement, that your promise of comfort to those who mourn may be fulfilled. May their happy memories in time outweigh their grief, and may they find hope in you. We call to mind those that we have loved and see no longer, giving thanks for all they gave to our lives.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

Almighty God, as we pray for fellowship and friendship for all who feel alone, inspire us anew to play our part in driving loneliness from our communities. Help us to speak out against those structures and systems that increase isolation and reduce connection. Nudge us to see those times and places where we can reach out to someone who would otherwise be alone and help us always to be mindful of those who we might fail to see.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We offer these prayers through our friend and Saviour, Jesus Christ. **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 StF403

<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)

Final prayer

May God walk with us on our life's journey
and send us friends to share with along the way,
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with us all, evermore. **Amen**

Resources:

mha.org.uk/Sunday

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