

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Service at Home 27 October 2026

prepared by Pat Fry

Invitation

Come, whether you are feeling on top of the world, or downhearted and weary;
enthusiastic, or bored or lonely,
Come to The One who is with us in our joys
and our sorrows,
in silence and in storm,
who offers us grace and peace.
May we know that God's Spirit is with each
one of us. Amen

Our first hymn helps to focus our thoughts

Hymn StF439 Abba Father

<https://youtu.be/oiVrwVV3Liw?si=mXpeRyxxKw4pRVj9>

Abba Father, let me be
yours and yours alone.
May my will for ever be
evermore your own.
Never let my heart grow cold,
never let me go,
Abba, Father , let me be
yours and your alone.

Dave Bilborough b.1965

Prayer of Praise

Eternal God, creator of all things, giver of life,
we praise and worship you.

We thank you that you have always loved the world you have made; and that, however far we stray from you, your love is always there to welcome us home.

We do not deserve your love, but we dare to believe the good news of your mercy declared by our Lord Jesus Christ, whose offering of his life for us and for all people we celebrate whenever we take time to worship

Make us glad and give us joy and peace.

Amen*

Prayer of confession

Gracious God,
sometimes we are bewildered or confused,
Sometimes overcome by weariness or
tedium, sometimes we lose sight of your love
for us, and we find it hard to hold on to faith,
to act in response to your call,
or even discern what your way might be in
our personal circumstances.

We are sad to admit to you and to ourselves
that this is how things are for us sometimes.
In our better moments we are we are really
sorry that we have at times lost sight of your
love.

Help each of us to know that your
understanding and forgiving love reaches
into our darkest times.

Help us to forgive ourselves and each other,
Help us to find stronger faith,
and to be more open to receive from your
Spirit, trusting the love shown by Jesus.
Amen

So we come to Philippians chapter 4. Having
talked about the joy that comes from
knowing God's promise of eternal life, Paul
turns to more personal and practical matters

Reading: Phil 4: 1-6.

Reflection

"My joy and crown" said Paul writing to the church at Philippi. Wow! It must have been a wonderful church for Paul to speak in such glowing terms. The perfect church we might think.

Then we read Paul's appeal to Euodia and Syntyche to be reconciled, and his request to another leader to mediate. So it's not a

perfect church, far from it. It appears that two of its founding leaders have quarrelled.

We don't know why.

Paula Gooder, an eminent Anglican theologian who is an expert in early church matters, has written novels imagining the back story of characters Paul mentions. She imagines these two women running a house church together, but they were very different characters. One loved exuberant worship with lots of loud singing. The other wanted time for quiet reflection and prayer.

Each was so convinced theirs was the only right way that they parted company resentfully, splitting the church into two groups meeting in different places and having no contact, each grumbling about the other.

This may not be what happened, we don't know, but it is the sort of thing that does happen in churches. Paul's letter reminds us there is no such thing on this earth as a perfect church. Because the church is made up of flawed human beings, ordinary people like us. If this were a perfect church I would have been thrown out long ago, and I don't think I would be the only one. Jesus said I come not to call the righteous but to sinners to repentance.

Paul reminds us to value each other in spite of our faults; in spite of the times we fail. We are to help each other, and to appreciate each other's gifts and graces, as we seek to walk together, in the way of Jesus

Hymn StF501: Help us O Lord to learn

<https://youtu.be/x4DrB7q50eY?si=vVTfdBN3YbaZLGxb>

Help us O Lord to learn
the truth your word imparts,
to study that your words may be
inscribed upon our hearts.

Help us O Lord to live
the faith which we proclaim,
that all our thoughts and words and deeds
may glorify your name.

Help us O Lord to teach
The beauty of your ways
That all who seek may find the Christ,
And make a life of praise.

William Watkins Reid b. 1923

Reading: Phil 4 8-14, 21-23

Reflection 2

“Finally: fill your minds with those things that are good and deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honourable.”

Sounds like widely known common sense,
good advice.
Look on the bright side we say.... Every cloud
has a silver lining

It's good for your mental health to focus on
the positive. One of the ten points in the
mental health first aiders course I did,

. . Good advice, so far.

The sort of thing “Life coaches” advise in
magazines. But I remember reading an article
like that which horrified me: the writer said,
“Take plenty of time doing
the things you really enjoy, surround yourself
with people who make you feel happy, keep
your distance from anyone
with a problem.”

But most of us sometimes need support
when trouble comes, and I found myself
questioning, wondering what planet the
writer lived on.

We all at times need a helping hand or a
listening ear to get us through bad times. And
if everyone is totally preoccupied with

enjoying themselves then no-one will be supported when trouble comes.

Paul is certainly not like that unrealistic life coach.

Yes, we do need time to relax, to enjoy what is good, but we close our eyes to real problems at our peril.

Imagine a scene at the bus stop just along the street outside the Arc or the library to many of us. A woman at the bus stop who has been shopping opens her handbag to get out her bus pass. Oh no, she realises her purse is missing. Checks through the bag again, checks her pockets, delves into the shopping but it's not there.

Takes a deep breath to calm herself. Think back ..last shop I went in... Boots... paid by credit card must have had it there.

Went into the church coffee bar, paid cash, must have had it there.

So I need to walk back the way I came, checking the ground in case I dropped it, need to hurry before they lock up at the coffee bar, I hope it's there.

So she starts back anxiously, eyes scanning the ground. A cheerful friend is coming towards her. "Hello, how good to see you, isn't it a beautiful day. Oh, you look a bit down, cheer up it may never happen".

And through gritted teeth she wants to say "It already has, I am trying to deal with it and you are not helping!!"

Paul does not offer empty words like that cheerful insensitive friend.

The people Paul was writing to were worried, anxious, fearing they might be arrested, and, if they refuse to renounce their faith, be taken to a Roman prison

Paul does not offer empty words because Paul himself is experiencing the very thing they fear most. He is not closing his mind to the reality of suffering.

He knows the harsh reality of life in a Roman prison, the uncertainty, the discomfort, the fear.

But his faith in Jesus is so strong that he can find the good in that situation, indeed he has taken the opportunity to bring members of the imperial household to faith, the clue to that is in verse 22 when he sends greetings from the saints in the emperor's household. Paul expresses such an amazingly confident faith.

A confident faith in, the ultimate victory of Jesus, in the ultimate promise of Gods kingdom of peace and love and joy.

He is absolutely certain that wherever, whatever happens Jesus is with him. And so he has a deep sense of peace even in very threatening circumstances.

It is from that deep conviction that he is able to focus on the good, and cope with the bad., and as he focuses on the good, so his faith is strengthened,

Paul in the super league of Christian heroes, by comparison I feel like a bumbling amateur, with just a fingertip hold on the sort of faith he professes, but that finger hold is key.

Taking time to ponder what God has done for us in Jesus can light up our lives.

Paul's letter begins and ends with a focus on the grace of Jesus.

Intercessions

In quiet take a moment to recall something that lifted your spirits this week – it might be

something insignificant if you said it to someone else, but really meant a lot to you.

Now take a moment to give thanks for someone who has helped you

As you have been helped, think of people you know who need your prayers today.

Hold in mind people known to you and take time to focus your thoughts on their need and hold them in prayer.....

May they know the upholding of the Spirit., and the peace that passes understanding

Looking wider take time to pray for our government for wisdom and courage as they grapple with the issues they have to address...

And for ourselves we pray;

Be with us Trinity of Love as we journey through this week and seek to live out our faith in our everyday experience.

The Lord's Prayer

Paul's letter begins and ends with a focus on the grace of Jesus.

We sing again a big hymn of praise, of confident faith

Hymn StF319 Christ triumphant.

<https://youtu.be/MPXSILECWm0?si=9yZgl4-ShWuvCiN2>

Christ triumphant, ever reigning
Saviour, Master King
Lord of Heaven, our lives sustaining.
Hear us as we sing

*Yours the glory and the crown
the high renown, the eternal name.*

Word incarnate, truth revealing
Son of Man on earth
Power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth.

Yours the glory.....

Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated
victim crucified.

Death is through the cross defeated
Sinners justified.

Yours the glory.....

Priestly King, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above !
Sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love.

Yours the glory.....

So our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
Ceaselessly upon you gazing
this shall be our song.

Yours the glory and the crown

Michael Saward b. 1933.

Blessing

The love of the faithful Creator,
the peace of the wounded healer
the joy of the challenging Spirit,
the hope of the Three in One
surround and encourage us
today and forever. Amen**

*Adapted from United Reformed Church
Communion Order3

** The Word in the World Kate McIlhagga
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