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BIG CHURCH SING AT HOME

HARVEST FESTIVAL - 4th October 2020

A short act of worship for use in peoples homes while churches are closed.

A Free resource part funded by



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For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource>

Call to worship

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Praise the Lord with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
Sing to him a new song;
play skilfully, and shout for joy.

For the word of the Lord is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.
The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.
Amen.¹

Hymn: 123 STF – Come you thankful people come - [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

Here we are Lord, your thankful people.
We come, grateful for all we have received.
Even amongst this strangest of harvest season, and with all our grief and loss and frustration, we come to give thanks for what we have received.

Here we are Lord, a people in need of forgiveness.
We come, knowing we have not always got it right and we have not earned our place at your harvest-supper table.
But we come all the same, knowing that you are a God of grace and you accept us just as we are.
We come, come Lord Jesus.

Here we are Lord, come amongst us by your grace,
Come amongst us by your Spirit,
As we worship, move us, transform us and inspire us to do your will.

Amen.²

We will now say the Lord's Prayer

¹ Psalm 33:1-5

² Taken from John Birch – A Harvest Liturgy

Readings: Psalm 112 - [Click for Reading](#)

John 6:1-15 - [Click for Reading](#)

Reflections on the readings

[Today's harvest festival reflection is provided by All We Can – the Methodist relief and development agency. [You can find a video version of this sermon here](#)]

Harvest is a season of change, and today we have a Gospel of change at the heart of our harvest festival.

In John 6, there is this moment when Jesus is preaching, and then suddenly there are lots of people listening, gathered around. And with this gathering comes a practical need: there are lots of hungry people. All We Can is committed to meeting the practical needs of people around the world – are their ways your church could be meeting practical needs of the people in your communities and beyond? Who is going hungry?

And so Philip comes to the Lord, practical, urgent and anxious: 'where are we going to buy bread for all these people?' Philip is one of those people who is carrying the clipboard to the demonstration, isn't he? The spreadsheet-disciple. Thinking practically and making a list. For much of human history, we have thought about international development (and perhaps all 'charitable work') in the way that Philip thinks about it here: how much money do we need to meet the need? This is the model many of us default to when we want to support the very poorest people in our communities, and the world.

Then, in the story, we get the Jesus moment. Jesus inverts Philip's model on its head. Jesus asks, 'what have they already got?'

Instead of us, coming into their context, pretending we have the ideas and that it is up to us to come up with the solutions to their practical needs – why don't we ask them if they have ideas, resources or materials they'd like to use? Any food they would like to share?

And the little boy, the illustration of so many Sunday school sermons, steps forward with his offer of his loaves and fish. And the miracle happens. A miracle of generosity – where suddenly everyone is sharing their food and all fed. Everyone is satisfied. There is plenty left over – twelve baskets, in fact.

The boy offers something very ordinary, and in Jesus' hands it is changed into something extraordinary.

What about us? What do we have to share?

And what about our communities, the people we are trying to 'reach', the people who live around our churches, the very people of whom we often ask: 'why don't they come to our services'. What do they have to share? Have we asked? Perhaps we

shouldn't assume we have all the answers to other people's problems. Perhaps we shouldn't assume that we are somehow 'in', and they are somehow 'out'.

The loaves and fish, something ordinary, in Jesus' hand's becoming extraordinary.

So, to finish, we will just think about one more ordinary thing: the bicycle. This harvest, at All We Can, 'change begins with a bicycle'. For us here in the UK, we probably think of a bike as very ordinary, or something that we have lying around in the shed, perhaps underused...

In Uganda, All We Can's work is enabling the ordinary bicycle to become something extraordinary – to become a tool for transformation. In poor, rural villages like Butagaya in Uganda, people often live a long way from the facilities they need, including the local schools. They don't have any access to a motor vehicle, and public transport is either non-existent or unsafe.

In that context, the bicycle is an ordinary, simple thing, that brings transformation. All We Can is working with a local organisation in Uganda to enable young people in these poor communities to access bicycles and use them to get to school, to invest in their own future, to break the cycle of poverty...

Will you stand alongside them, presenting what you have – something ordinary – and seeing it become extraordinary?

[At this point, you may wish to play the video – [All We Can – Change Begins with a Bicycle](#)].

And what about you? What do you have, what does each of us have, that we could place in the hands of the master today? What gifts, ideas, energy, time could we offer to Jesus – and see our ordinary day-to-day lives become something extraordinary?

You can support All We Can's Change Begins with a Bicycle campaign at allwecan.org.uk/bike

Let's close with The Message translation of Romans 12:

“So here is what I want you to do, God helping you: take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.”

Amen.³

Prayers of intercession

Heavenly Father,

We pray for the students and teachers in our communities.

³ Reflection provided by All We Can

We bring before you the children who will be able to access education because of the extraordinary gift of a bike.

Lord of transformation,

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

We pray for those who are living in poverty in our midst. We pray that the work of All We Can and their partners would break the cycle of poverty in Uganda and bring change.

Lord of transformation,

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Help us all to fulfil our God-given potential. May these bikes be a starting point for children to live life to the maximum and see their hopes and dreams become a reality.

Lord of transformation,

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

We pray for our heads of government and those in positions of power. We ask for them to be motivated to eradicate injustice and inequality.

Lord of transformation,

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

[An opportunity to pray for those dealing with illness from amongst your congregation]

We thank you for the NHS and the amazing staff that keep it running. We pray for communities like around the world where access to healthcare is difficult and limited.

Lord of transformation,

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

We thank you for the opportunity to keep learning and growing. We pray for the young people in Uganda learning to be bike mechanics and pray that these skills will help sustain them and give them security.

Lord of transformation,

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary

Amen.⁴

Hymn: 345 STF – And can it be that I should gain - [YouTube](#)

⁴ Prayers of intercession by All We Can

Blessing

Go in peace, and serve the Lord.

Go in love, and seek a better world where we see the ordinary transformed into the extraordinary, in Jesus' name.

Go in grace, and know that the God of the harvest goes with you.

Amen.⁵

⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker