

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit:
Worship at Home – 2 May 2021

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever you are sharing in this act of worship, you are welcome.

This week's service is using material from the Easter Offering service for 2021 with some adaptations for local use. The service theme is "Into All The World."

A Call to Worship: the beginning of Psalm 67
May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

Hymn:

Lord, your church on earth is seeking
your renewal from above:
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accents of your love.
We will heed your great commission
sending us to every place-
'Go, baptise, fulfil my mission;
serve with love and share my grace!'

You release us from our bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin;
give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within.
Light for darkness, joy for sorrow,
love for hatred, peace for strife
these and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.

In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely live,
we will show the saviour's pity
and his longing to forgive.
In all lands and with all races
we will serve, and seek to bring
all the world to render praises
Christ, to you, redeemer king.

Prayers of Adoration and Thanksgiving:

Let us offer our praise and thanks to God: Father,
Son and Holy Spirit.

Lord God, as we gather here in your presence, we give you glory and honour and lift up your holy name. We bless you for all that you are and all that you have done and continue to do amongst us.

Thank you for the journeys that have led us to this time and place and the way you continue to call people to be reconciled to you. We thank you that you have a plan and purpose for each of us and that you call us to offer our lives in your service.

We are thankful for your promise that you will never leave us nor forsake us and will be with us until the end of the age. Thank you that you are with us by the power of the Holy Spirit and pray that through this act of worship we will draw closer to you and be better equipped to serve you in all our journeying. Amen.

A prayer of confession:

Lord Jesus Christ, you summon us to follow you day by day,
yet we confess that we have not always been obedient to your call.
Lord of the journey, forgive us and help us to follow you.

Lord, forgive us when we have not walked the path to which we are called and help us to be obedient to your call on our lives as we seek to fulfil your good, pleasing and perfect will for us. Thank you that you have promised in your word that if we confess our sin, you are faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
Amen.

As we open up the Scripture, think about a journey you have made and a time you've been asked to go somewhere which seemed really impossible to even think about.

Genesis 12: 1 – 5

The Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing. I will bless those
who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

Matthew 28: 16 – 20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Hymn:

We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God.
(Repeat)

We are marching, marching,
We are marching, marching,
We are marching in the light of God.
(Repeat)

We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God,
(Repeat)

We are living, living,
We are living, living,
We are living in the love of God,
(Repeat)

We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God,

(Repeat)
We are moving, moving,
We are moving, moving,
We are moving in the power of God.
(Repeat)

Reflection

For five years from 1986 to 1991 I worked in what is now Methodist Church House in London, but back then it was called Mission House, the headquarters of the Methodist Missionary Society. On the walls of the many floors were paintings of missionaries, and in the vast Committee Room A, huge boards telling us where they went and how long they served. Some of them didn't last very long, but they went out believing they were called to go out into all the world. Those of us who worked for the Overseas Division of the Methodist Church got to know the story of the Rev Thomas Coke. Coke was a friend and colleague of John Wesley, and he had a passion to take the good news of Jesus beyond our shores. In 1786, he set sail bound for Newfoundland, but blown off course, found harbour in Antigua on Christmas Day. There he discovered and preached to a congregation of 1,000 people at a society started in 1760 by Nathaniel Gilbert amongst the slaves on his plantation. Coke took the exciting story back to Britain and this marked the start of Methodist mission overseas.

He had a vision of a mission to Asia and set sail for what was then Ceylon, but died in his cabin in 1814 and was buried at sea. Coke brought to Methodism a world vision and, following his death there was a huge expansion of mission to take the good news of Jesus across the world.

How good are we at going out? Earlier in the pandemic we were told to stay local. People were fined for going too far for a picnic or for chips at the seaside. Now we are desperate to go out! But what about going out to somewhere new and challenging as part of our discipleship? We read the command of Jesus to his friends, his last words to them on earth, to go out and be his people and we think that's a good idea, but when it comes to it we'd rather stay where we know it's safe. One of our six cats, Alice, eyes up the front door with excitement and sometimes she escapes into the world outside. But once she's out having

explored under the ramp or round the car, she then decides it's horrible and wants to come back in. I wonder if we are like her.

Going into all the world isn't an optional extra. Pilgrimage is at the heart of Christian calling, indeed at the heart of all the world faiths. Sometimes there is no other choice but to go. There is in people compelled to go somewhere a passion, an excitement, and a purpose. In others there is a need to journey into something deeply wrong to try and change it.

Dorothy Ripley was born in Whitby in 1767 to Methodist parents. Under the influence of John Wesley and his group of travelling women preachers, she became an evangelist and felt called to travel to the USA in 1801 to preach against slavery. She gained an audience with the President, Thomas Jefferson, and received his permission to minister to slaves, to preach to their owners and to found a school for freed slaves. She became the first woman to preach inside the Capitol building and received the "approbation" of the President for her work. Dorothy ministered to many men and women in prison and particularly to African slaves. She faced hostility as a woman preacher but with perseverance often won over her opponents through her preaching. She travelled thousands of miles in the USA and Britain attending camp meetings with other travelling evangelists. She died in Virginia in 1831, aged 64.

Both Thomas Coke and Dorothy Ripley maybe knew the story of Abram, recorded in Genesis 12. He was a wealthy man and well known in Haran where he lived and yet he gave everything up to go to a country he'd never heard of because he believed his God was calling him to go. To his friends it was utter madness, yet his faith is the supreme example of blessing through obedience and trust. The letter to the Hebrews says he went out not knowing whither he went, and he went out to search for the city whose builder and maker is God. God said go and Abram went. It's an amazing piece of Scripture!

What about us? Are we as confident about going out as Thomas Coke or Dorothy Ripley or the patriarch Abram? Or are we like Alice the Abyssinian cat thinking it might be a good idea

but trying it wanting to do a runner back inside or panicking because outside in the world is just horrible? When you are accredited as local preacher in the Methodist Church you receive a letter of encouragement from the President of Conference which is read out in the accreditation service.

In 1990, the President was John Vincent. He wrote this "for every word you preach in church, preach two outside of it." Where are we called to go and what's our world?

I've just come across a lovely book called "Dallowgill through the ages." In it is the story of the local preacher Carter Watson of Greygarth. In the First World War he saw friends either side of him killed in a trench and he was sure he was spared for a purpose. Throughout his life he tried to set a Christian example to all he came in contact with. He could be heard across the valley singing hymns going to work on his motorbike. One day when his bike clutch must have been slipping, he pushed it up Swetton Bank, mounted it at the top, and rode off singing the hymn "Ride on, ride on in majesty." His going out into his world changed people.

I wrote down a phrase someone said at a recent Synod. "We believe God is present in all places, with all people, and waits to be discovered." How fabulous is that? As we remember those serving in the world Church, as we remember all those who went out in the past and still go out today, I pray in our worrying about how we keep the church going we might find some energy to step outside again. "Go into all the world and make disciples."

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for those who journey in our world. For those who have travelled far from home to bring the light of Jesus... For those who have been forced to leave their homes because of conflict, economic need or natural disasters.

Lord in your mercy:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have journeyed to the United Kingdom from other parts of the world... For those who seek to help people settle into their new environment... We pray that we will always offer a welcome to those who move

amongst us... We pray for our leaders locally and nationally that they will govern with wisdom and compassion.

Lord in your mercy:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for our Christian sisters and brothers who are persecuted for their faith – especially in countries where persecution is severe... We pray for those forced to flee from persecution and those who are separated from their loved ones.

Lord in your mercy:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for those in our community... We pray that as your Church we will be salt and light as we reach out to our neighbours with your love. We pray for the various businesses, community groups and organisations represented in our area.

Lord in your mercy:
Hear our prayer.

We pray for individuals known to us who journey through difficult times... For those who find the path of life to be rocky, lonely or frightening. May we show your love to those around us and walk the road with them in prayer and practical support.

We thank you that you hear and answer our prayers both spoken and unspoken. We lift all our prayers to you now in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

(Use whichever version is most familiar to you).

Hymn:

Captain of Israel's host, and guide
of all who seek the land above,
beneath your shadow we abide,
the cloud of your protecting love;
our strength, your grace; our rule, your word:
our end, the glory of the Lord.

By your unerring Spirit led,
we shall not in the desert stray;
we shall not full direction need,
nor miss our providential way;
as far from danger as from fear, while love,
almighty love, is near.

As we leave this place to continue our journey with God, hear the words of Jesus:
"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20 (NRSV)