

This short act of worship has been produced for our churches to worship together at home. We hope you may spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

## **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

### **Call to worship**

Wherever we worship, whether alone or with others; whether in chapel, at home or elsewhere; whether we are full of joy or overwhelmed by fear and despair; we are thankful that we worship together as a community of Christ. Amen.

### **Hymn 503 (StF): Love divine**

Sing/ read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here <https://youtu.be/sw5ZCZeS32M>

*Charles Wesley (1707-1788)*

### **Prayers of adoration, thanks and confession**

We pray together

Holy God,  
creator of all things and source of all holiness,  
we praise you for all that you provide for us  
materially and spiritually;  
we give thanks for the gift of your Son, Jesus  
Christ, who showed to us that perfect example of  
human love;  
we praise you for your Holy Spirit, who empowers  
us to share that love with others.  
We give thanks for our local Christian  
communities and the worldwide church to which  
we belong; may we praise you with one voice.  
God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;  
accept our praise and adoration. Amen.

We confess our sins to God.

### *Silence*

We confess that we have not loved you with heart, soul and mind. We have failed to love our neighbours as ourselves. Help us to become the loving people you want us to be. Amen.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.  
This is his gracious word:  
"Your sins are forgiven."  
Amen. Thanks be to God.

### **Today's Reading from the Old Testament**

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18

### **Today's Gospel Reading** Matthew 22:34-46

### **Time to Reflect**

The BBC's Question Time, for me, is compulsive viewing, even though I often find it infuriating when the politicians avoid answering questions by skirting round the issue or answering a question that wasn't asked. I'm sure I'm not alone in my frustration!

Many questions have been on our minds throughout the Covid-19 crisis. Would fewer lives have been lost if lockdown measures were introduced sooner? Were care homes, including MHA facilities, dealt with properly? Could more lives have been saved if...? All of these are difficult to answer. One slip of the tongue from a politician could lead to political trouble. No wonder they are reluctant to give a straight answer! In no way do I defend politicians, but concede that journalists' questions are often loaded to trip them up. This is nothing new. In the gospel reading, Jesus is asked a loaded question in similarly politically-charged times, not by a journalist but a lawyer.

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" *Matt. 22:36*

This question is dynamite. Jesus is being asked to make a judgement on which of God's commandments, written in the laws of Moses, is greatest. This is like asking a politician which law

of the land is the most important. Imagine the field day the tabloid press would have!

I dare say that the lawyer was very pleased with his question, certain he had Jesus trapped. There was no answer he could give that would not land him in deep trouble.

How wrong could he be? Rather than picking out two of the laws, Jesus expertly sums up the whole of God's law: love God and neighbour. This answer silences the lawyer and the pharisees, as there is nothing for them to argue with.

We may argue over points of doctrine and practice within Methodism and across denominations. It would be so much better if our primary motivation was always to simply love God and neighbour. The church and the world would certainly be better places and, as Charles Wesley writes, 'the joy of heaven' would 'to earth come down'.

Forget the difficult questions, focus instead on Christ's simple answer – love! Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind; and love your neighbour as yourself. Amen.

Take a time to sit quietly

### **Prayers of intercession**

Loving God,  
as we mediate on Christ's commandment to love,  
we pray for the church throughout the world;  
for justice and peace between and within nations;  
for political leaders and all in authority;  
for the communities in which we live;  
for people who suffer in any way;  
and for all those on our minds today.

### *Silence*

May the presence of your love be felt in every situation.

We give thanks for those who have died, especially those who have lived in the love of Christ.  
May we be united with them in your eternal kingdom. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father...

**Hymn 615 (StF): Let love be real, in giving and receiving.** Listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/SkBAXZw5NxU> read the words

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,  
without the need to manage and to own;  
a haven free from posing and pretending,  
where every weakness may be safely known.  
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,  
give me your love wherever we may go.

As God loves us, so let us love each other:  
with no demands, just open hands and space  
to grow.

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,  
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;  
that helps us face the risk of truly living,  
and makes us brave to be what we might be.  
Give me your strength when all my words are  
weakness;  
give me your love in spite of all you know.

Let love be real, with no manipulation,  
no secret wish to harness or control;  
let us accept each other's incompleteness,  
and share the joy of learning to be whole.  
Give me your hope through dreams and  
disappointments;  
give me your trust when all my failings show.

*Michael Forster (b. 1946)*

### **A prayer of blessing**

May everything we do be guided by the law of  
Christ's love; and now may the blessing of God:  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us  
this day and forevermore. Amen.

Original Materials by Tom Ferguson

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