

Darlington District Worship Sunday 28th June 2020



Prayers

Lord, I will trust you,
help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with you.

Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You
to be stronger than each storm in me?

I determine amidst all uncertainty
always to trust.

I choose to live beyond regret,
and let You recreate my life.

I believe You will make a way for me
and provide for me, if only I trust You.

I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times are still in Your hand.

I will believe You for my future,
Chapter by Chapter, until all the story is written.

Hymn: [StF 563](#) / [H&P 704](#) **O Jesus I Have Promised**

The Blessing

Go with confidence into the days ahead, trusting in God's
unfailing love and faithfulness.

God will not abandon you, for you are the work of his hands –
His own creation – and His love endures forever.

So go in joy to love and serve the Lord!

Irenaeus, Declaration of faith and Blessing taken from (Aidan Readings / Small Boat, Great Big Sea Communion / Blessings) from Northumbria Community's *Celtic Daily Prayer* published by Collins. Used with permission.

Service sheet written by Rev Paul Beetham

Wesley Rule of Life

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

Hymn: [StF 544](#) **As The Deer Pants** / [H&P 416](#) **As Pants The Hart**

This Sunday is Conference Sunday, normally a hugely busy and eventful occasion. It begins the Representative Session of Conference and is full of greetings and catching up. Our Ordinands both Presbyteral and Diaconal are received into full Connexion on this day and ordained as they continue their Ministry with that very powerful affirmation of their calling by the Church.

This will not be happening this year because of the pandemic and a much reduced virtual Conference will happen dealing with that business that cannot be postponed. We should remember in our prayers those who had expected to meet in person and in particular those for whom ordination must be postponed.

Prayers

Almighty God,
you raised up your servants, John and Charles Wesley,
to proclaim anew the gift of redemption
and the life of holiness.
Pure out your Spirit, and revive your work among us;
that inspired by the same faith,
and upheld by the same grace in word and sacrament,
we and all your children may be made one
in the unity of your Church on earth,
even as in the heaven we are made one in you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

We pray for our Conference, the Presidents and Vice-Presidents and all those who carry the burden of leadership in our Church. Inspire them and give them your gift of wisdom as they seek your will at this difficult time.

We pray for those who have been awaiting ordination and ask that your will confirm their ministries by your spirit.

We thank you for your constant presence throughout our history. You were with those who preceded us in the difficulties and crises of their time and you are with us today. Wherever we are we are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Lord's Prayer **Our Father...**

A brother asked one of the Elders: 'There are two brothers of whom one remains praying in his cell, fasting six days at a time and doing a great deal of penance. The other takes care of the sick. Which one's work is more pleasing to God?'

The Elder replied: 'If that brother who fasts six days at a time were to hang himself up by the nose – he could not equal the one who cares for the sick.'
(*Irenaeus*)

Hymn: [StF 545 / H&P 378](#) **Be Thou My Vision**

Reading: [Ruth 1:16-18](#); [Ruth 3](#)
[Matthew 20:1-16](#)

The Wesley Rule of Life (above) is an expansion traditionally passed down by Methodists of Wesley's three general rules for Methodist Societies (1743) "First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind. Secondly, by doing good, by being merciful after (your) power. Thirdly, by attending on all the ordinances of God."

The Old Testament book being studied for Bible month is that of Ruth. The Rabbinic tradition characterises the book of Ruth with the Hebrew word *chesed*. This is a loyalty and a faithfulness which goes beyond duty and a

commitment to care which is greater than could be expected or required. It is deeper than generosity because it is open ended and not limited to a single or several actions. It relates to our understanding of grace which is an unearned gift and perhaps might be closely aligned with the New Testament Greek word *agape*. We normally translate *agape* as love but I often think that friendship is more accurate.

The name Ruth is probably derived from the word for friend and companion and she shows a devotion and care for Naomi which is beyond anything that could or would have been expected of her. There is no criticism of Orpah, Naomi's other widowed daughter-in-law who has fulfilled her obligations to Naomi and as would have been expected returns to her own family. Ruth however devotes herself to Naomi and in so doing transforms her situation.

Naomi's life has been changed beyond recognition. In events that mirror the book of Job she loses her husband and sons and would have been destitute were it not for Ruth. Ruth does not follow her own interests and security but gives all that up to share her mother-in-law's desperate situation and Naomi afterwards refers to her not as daughter-in-law but as daughter. There seems little hope for either of them but their devotion is unbreakable.

Chesed makes another appearance in the story when Boaz who has no obligation at all to Ruth goes out of his way to ensure her welfare when she desperately seeks to glean from his fields. She has no right to expect his protection but it is given generously.

This is a story of transforming love beginning with death and ending with new life. *Chesed* has changed despair to hope and given a future where there appeared to be none.

Over the last few weeks we have seen many examples of people showing devotion which goes beyond their duty and transforming people's lives, often at great cost. Like Naomi we have seen life change dramatically and unexpectedly and like her might be tempted to despair. She changes her name from pleasantness to bitterness but her salvation is in Ruth's devotion. Just as it had changed one way unexpectedly so her life changed again. Ruth bears a son and gives that son to Naomi and there is a future. So for us there will be a future and God's love is transformative as he gives himself beyond all expectation in Jesus Christ.

Hymn: [StF 561 / H&P 684](#) **Now I Have Found The Ground**