

Prayers for our churches, our world, our neighbourhood and ourselves

Let us pray:

Loving Lord we ask you for your mercy and great love as we pray for others. We pray for those who are lost and bewildered, wondering what they should do next and which way to go. May we reach out to guide them to you with kindness and empathy.

We pray for those who are needy for food, for love, for freedom from cruelty and fear. We pray for those who are mourning the loss of loved ones from Covid-19 or those lost in dementia, which has cruelly robbed them and their families of the person they were and their love.

We pray for churches preparing to open again and youth organisations whose members have been at home for the last few months as the leaders prepare to start again. We pray for preachers and ministers preparing to get back in the pulpit. Lord, give them the words that their congregations need.

Lastly, we pray for ourselves, that we will have our shoes on. Forgive us for all that is not of you and renew our fervour and our willingness to be your messengers again.

Lord, hear our prayer and let our cry come to you. Amen.

Hymn: Give me the faith which can remove [StF 661/H&P 767](#)

Benediction and Commitment

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and for ever. Amen

Prepared by Margaret Beck, Local Preacher.

Darlington District Sharing Worship at Home Sunday 16th August 2020

Opening: [Romans 10: 14-15](#).

But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed?
And how can they believe if they have not heard the message?

Hymn: My heart is full of Christ StF 506 / H&P 799

If you have internet access you can find the words [here](#) and a recording of the tune [here](#).

Prayers of Confession and Thanksgiving

Almighty and most merciful Father, we are aware that we have erred and strayed like lost sheep, putting too much emphasis on our own will and the desires of our own hearts, and have offended against the way you have taught us to go and ways you would have us follow. We have left undone the things we should have done and done those we know were wrong and so we ask for your forgiveness and mercy.

You have promised those who confess their faults will be restored in your love and compassion, for which we praise you and delight in your forgiveness, as we begin again a new week in your service. Please renew in us a clean heart and a renewed love for you, that we might faithfully follow our shepherd, your son, Jesus Christ, totally and reverently, as we should.

It has been and will be for a while yet a strange time with the virus, so we need you now as ever, as we try to cope with so many rules and regulations to follow to be safe, and help those who are needy. Hear our prayer and let our cry come unto you, for we ask it in the name of Jesus, our loving Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Bible Reading: [Luke 15: 11-32](#)



Reflection

Shoes were an important part of people's dress, even part of the armour of the soldier in Bible times. [Ephesians 6](#) talks of "The armour of God", including shoes.

We all know that the paths of the Bible times were dusty and stony and could cause injury to the feet of travellers of the day. That was why a host would summon a servant to bring water and a towel to wash and refresh the guests' or travellers' feet. The footwear would be leather sandals, which would let in the dust and debris; this could injure and bruise the feet.

[Song of Songs 7](#) says, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes." In Exodus, before the great escape of Israel from Egypt, God ordered them to eat the great feast with their shoes on, so that they would be ready to go as soon as the word was given.

I believe that God is telling us to be ready with our shoes on when his call is received. We are living in strange times with Covid-19 and some are still not allowed out; some are still shielding from fear of contracting Covid-19.

We now have talk of opening churches but there are spikes occurring and new lockdowns being instigated, so we are having Zoom meetings to discuss how we can go forward and embrace the new normal. We must all pray for the right decisions, so we can indeed move forward but with our shoes on prepared to go.

How can we move forward if we are not ready? In Exodus, Moses was commanded to take off his shoes because he was on holy ground. When we think that Moses had been walking with the sheep through countryside and by water, so they could find refreshment, so his feet and shoes would be dusty, dirty and perhaps muddy but everything needed to be clean, leaving the dirty and soiled behind to move on minus the trappings, fresh and clean. We too need to follow God's bidding without fear, but ready and willing with our shoes on.

When my older daughter was leaving home to do her nurse training, we went on holiday to Morocco and, after arriving at the hotel, we saw lots of shoes in the basement. I thought it was a church, but no, it was a disco. They were dancing with bare feet.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, when he returned he was greeted with a robe, a ring and shoes to give him status. And, of course, they killed the fatted calf that the father had saved for this event because he knew his son would come back.

This story tells us that, whatever we do, however far we go, God will forgive us and provide us with all we need in his wonderful love.

I wonder if you know that when Boaz fell in love with Ruth and wanted to marry her, he had to meet a male of his family at the gates of the city and give him his shoe in order to offer him the chance of taking Ruth as his wife. Boaz was relieved that the man returned his shoe, so he was free to marry her himself. [Ruth 3:12-4:9](#).



Have you got your shoes on?

Are we prepared to go with God and move forward with him to do his bidding?

"How beautiful are thy feet with shoes on." Can we hear God saying that to us?