

Prayers of Intercession

Father God, source of all love, we bring our prayers before you for your world.

We pray for all in caring roles – those caring for family members, those offering nursing and residential care, those giving a word of encouragement in a school, workplace or social setting. We pray for those who share your love at the margins of our society.

We pray for all who educate, nurture and encourage. Those who recognise the gifts in others and enable them to flourish. We thank you for the ability to learn something new at every stage in life and we rejoice in those whose vocations enable us to learn through art, music, words and sciences. Thank you for those in the church who enable us to learn more of you by their lives, teaching and actions.

In this global pandemic we thank you for scientists who have developed new vaccines, for analysts who have identified and traced the new variants, for journalists who have told the stories and for the caring medics, nurses and staff teams who have watched over individual patients in their care.

Creator God, We pray for ourselves. Open our eyes to see you in new ways, in the tiniest details and in the mind-boggling enormity of your universe. In this moment as we pause to pray asking 'who is it you place on our hearts for our prayer and care today?'

After a period of silent listening to God we say together

Our Father, who art in heaven... Amen

Closing Hymn: StF 615 **Let love be real in giving and receiving.**

Blessing: We go to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, committed to learning more of that love day by day, and revealing it in our care for neighbours near and far. **Amen.**

Acknowledgements: Inspiration for this service was taken from the service prepared for the Newcastle West Circuit by Rev Colin Barrick.

Worship at Home 4 July 2021 Darlington District

Methodist Way of Life: 1 – Learning & Caring

This month our worship sheets explore A Methodist Way of Life, which helps us to live out Our Calling in practical and thoughtful ways. You may have received a Way of Life commitment card with this sheet and we encourage you to look at the commitments and questions each week.¹

Invitation to worship:

Jesus was asked:

'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?'

He said in reply:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

[Matthew 22: 36-39](#)

Opening Hymn: H&P 220 / StF 403 **God is love: his the care**

We join together in prayer

Jesus you are the greatest teacher. You are compassion in action. As we come to you in worship today we give you the honour, the glory and the praise. We come with thanksgiving and joy in the knowledge of all you have done for us. We are so blessed to have your example as we learn more about the Father and as we live out our calling to care for others and for all creation around us.

As we pray and look to your example we know that we fall short of our calling to reflect your love to the world. We have not always loved you, cared for our neighbours or been good stewards of your world. Forgive our failings. Help us now to begin afresh today.

When we confess our sins Jesus promised the slate would be wiped clean. We rise forgiven to go in peace. **Amen**

¹ Commitment cards are available free from [Methodist Publishing](#) If you have access to the internet you can find more resources for a Methodist Way of Life on <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/>.

Introduction:

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

This statement sets out Our Calling as Methodist people, and of course is not exclusive to those of us who call ourselves Methodist. How do we put such a call into practice? A Methodist Way of Life is being developed to help us to answer this question. On the Methodist church website it gives a brief explanation:

A Methodist way of life is a way of living. It is how we try to live our lives in response to God's love, made known to us In Jesus. Like the early Christians ([Acts 2: 42-47](#)) we seek to express what it means to follow Jesus in the regular, practical actions of worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.

Each week in July we are looking at how we respond to God's love through the four windows of those four practical actions.

Reflection:

Our call to worship reminded us of the familiar command from Jesus to love God and to love our neighbour. We hear this again in our reading from [1 John 4: 7-21](#)

John reminds us that we love because God first loved us. It is only when we continue to learn about God's amazing, gracious and infinite love that we can begin to reflect that love in our care for others.

John Wesley acknowledged that it is tough to love others, yet he still set out a high standard to aim for:

loving God he/she "Loves their neighbours as themselves"; they love everyone as their own soul. They love their enemies, Yes, and the enemies of God. And if it be not in their power to "do good to those who hate them" yet they cease not to "pray for them," For, they "are pure in heart" and love has purified their heart from envy, malice, wrath and unkind temper... and, "put on mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, long-suffering... they "love not the world, nor any of the things of the world"; but "all their

desire is to God and the remembrance of His name." [John Wesley *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*]

Wesley reminds us that even when we cannot offer practical care to others, we can pray for them – we don't even need to like them!

We do not need to do this alone! Learning and Caring are both activities which flourish in the company of others. Caring for the planet we learn from others, learning from each other we see new perspectives, can articulate our own insights and experiences, and are held to account for our own actions.

Wesley instigated the system of small group accountability which was firmly established in early Methodism. The support and encouragement of a small group of known and trusted fellow disciples helps us to grow and not to give up when times get tough or other priorities intervene. We are encouraged to use A Methodist Way of Life with others. Even in lockdown we have found ways to continue in fellowship – walking together, by phone, zooming, letters... *Who could you explore A Methodist Way of Life with?*

Under learning and caring we are encouraged to consider how

- we will care for ourselves and others.
- we will learn more about our faith.
- we will practice hospitality and generosity.

Notice the challenge to care for ourselves. We cannot care for others when we are empty and exhausted. When our own learning stops, what we can share with others is diminished. As we leave lockdown a national mental health crisis has been predicted – are we, the Church, fit and healthy to give support or are we exhausted?

Pause for reflection:

- How are you growing in your faith?
- How do you encourage others by offering care and helping them to grow?
- How do you offer hospitality and generosity?
- Who can you meet with to talk about A Methodist Way of Life?