

Prayers of Intercession

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

We pray for all who serve in our communities – those seen and unseen who make life good for others. Those who service the drains, repair the lights and empty the litter bins. Those who administer payroll, answer telephone help lines and enable action. People who respond in emergencies on our streets, coasts and fells. Those who ensure we have electricity and clean water in our homes.

Our lives depend each day on so many unseen servants, but all are seen by you. We offer them in prayer, naming any we know, but mindful of many more who we do not meet and cannot name and yet who make our lives good by their daily activities.

We pray for your church throughout the world, called to serve as your living body in a time of global concerns for health, wealth, planet and justice. May we serve you with courage and dignity listening always to your voice above all others.

We pray for ourselves. Take our hands and words today and bless them to your service that we may truly serve you with gladness.

We draw our prayers together in the words Jesus taught:

Our Father, who art in heaven... Amen

Closing Hymn: StF 699 **God of justice, Saviour to all.**

Blessing: Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. **Amen.** Jude 24-25a

^a *New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

Worship at Home 11 July 2021 Darlington District

Methodist Way of Life: 2 – Service

If you have your Methodist Way of Life commitment card this week we are focusing on the sections headed 'Service'

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.

Call to worship: Psalm 86: 4-5^a

Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

Opening Hymn: H&P 46 **What shall I do my God to love**
StF 699 **God of justice, Saviour to all**

We join together in prayer

Eternal God, creator of the universe, omnipotent power, glorious and mighty one. We give you our praise and worship as we meet today.

Saviour Jesus, you said you had come to serve not to be served. You even knelt to wash the disciples' feet. Your life is our example. Give us courage and wisdom to follow your ways today.

Sister Spirit, breathe life into our bodies today. Fill us with your power and guide us in all we say and do this week. Filled with your wisdom may each word and act reflect God's goodness in our world.

A prayer of Confession:

Source of all love forgive the times when I have acted out of self-interest, spoken without thought for the impact on others, and when I have favoured revenge over reconciliation. Forgive me and cleanse me of all wrongdoing.

In love the Father says: "Go in peace your sins are forgiven." **Amen.**

Reading: [Luke 10: 25-37](#) The Good Samaritan

Reflection : _To help us think about this theme of service I could have chosen so many passages from scripture: the prophets' repeated pleas for justice and inclusion of the excluded; the encouragements to live out our faith in the New Testament letters: gospel passages highlighting the way Jesus responds to need or how he speaks of how we should care for others. But, I am going to take it that we all know that service of others is a given. You don't need another sermon telling you why you should serve! So, I'm going to take this passage from the Gospel that helps us think about what should drive or motivate us, and to think about who we should serve. And as I hope we shall discover, those questions and answers are actually closely linked.

Jesus tells the parable of 'The Good Samaritan' because of its context. Here we see a teacher of the law, an educated man who should have known the answer to his question, come and ask Jesus about life. Their initial exchange confirms what the man knows, love God and love neighbour and you will discover abundant, wonderful, joyous life, for now and for eternity. It is the man's supplementary question that leads to the familiar story.

"Who is my neighbour?" Is he really asking 'who is *not* my neighbour?' Who can I *not* love? If we're honest, we all ask this question on some level, consciously or sub-consciously. We see people in need of help, people we could serve, and we all make judgements about where to put our energy, resources and service. In other words, we all make judgements about who is worthy of our love when perhaps we ought to be looking in a mirror. As we are loved so should we love, it is for God to judge with grace and love.

So, Jesus tells a story you know well. It's a story about a foreigner, an outsider who goes above and beyond. He is the one who serves. He is the one who demonstrates what it is to love your neighbour. Jesus concludes, "go and do likewise". There is an implied question 'who will *you* do this to?' Whose neighbour are *you*?

Hymn: StF 662 **Have you heard God's voice... will you walk the path**

The story was told in the context of the man asking what he needed to do to have eternal and abundant life, and when Jesus asked him what he thought, he said to *love God* and *love neighbour*.

You see, it's no coincidence that those two commands appear together, because they belong together. Service starts with loving and seeking God. The more we allow ourselves to be transformed by God's love, then the more we will love our neighbour.

And, who is my neighbour? Who can I serve? The answer is anyone, because God loves anyone and everyone - it is our inbuilt human judgement that often hinders a Godly response. To overcome this our driving force must be the lived reality and depths of God's love.

Now I want to acknowledge that it isn't easy and I want to finish by saying I don't want you to feel guilty today. I don't want this to be a sermon where you go away feeling that you have to do more. We can't respond to everything and everyone. We can't serve on every occasion, but we have to acknowledge that we can do something.

Whatever it is that you are passionate about, whatever it is that God lays on your heart, that might be the place to start. You can still pray for the things you cannot give time and energy to, and trust that God might have laid that service on someone else's heart.

When it comes to serving our question should never be, 'what's the minimum I can give?' because that question comes from the same place as the question, 'who is my neighbour?' Instead, when we feel moved by love to respond, we need to do so as generously as we are able.

So I encourage each and every one of us to be a people who seek to do the things that keep us grounded and rooted in God's love, so that we may discover a deeper, less judgmental, love for our neighbour. And when we do respond with loving service may it be done with the generosity of our time, our resources, our energy and our money. In the knowledge that loving and serving our neighbour truly glorifies and serves God. Amen

The reflection was adapted from a service prepared by Rev Jona Sewell.