

Beckminster 19 July 2020 Zoom

ZOOM SERVICE SUNDAY, 19 July 2020 at 10.00am

Access onto Zoom from 9.45am

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are the body of Christ.
Whether we are gathered in one place
Or dispersed throughout the world.
We are the body of Christ.

HYMN 20 Be Still For the Presence of the Lord

Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found —
we stand on holy ground.
Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight —
our radiant King of light!
Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him —
in faith receive from him.
Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

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PRAYERS

God of grace, we humbly ask that you bless us as we worship in your presence today. We adore you, whose name is love, whose nature is compassion, whose presence is joy, whose Word is truth, whose Spirit is goodness, whose holiness is beauty, whose will is peace, whose service is perfect freedom. To you be all glory and honour through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Loving God, we have sinned against you in what we have thought, said, and done as well as in what we have not thought, said and done. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and turn away from what is wrong. We turn to you and ask your forgiveness.

Silent prayer...

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

READING Jeremiah 33:10-11

¹⁰ Thus says the LORD: In this place of which you say, 'It is a waste without human beings or animals', in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without inhabitants, human or animal, there shall once more be heard ¹¹ the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank-offerings to the house of the LORD:

'Give thanks to the LORD of hosts,
for the LORD is good,
for his steadfast love endures for ever!'

For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD.

REFLECTION

FOR ME ONE OF THE POSITIVES OF THE LAST FEW MONTHS HAS BEEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND WORSHIP VIRTUALLY IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT PLACES EACH SUNDAY. IN ADDITION TO TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE HERE IN WOLVERHAMPTON, I GO TO HASTINGS AND LONDON AS WELL AS THE STATES FROM TIME TO TIME. I AM CURRENTLY FOLLOWING A SERMON SERIES FROM THE CHURCH IN WHICH I GREW UP IN INDIANA. FROM TIME TO TIME I DROP IN ON THE CHURCH IN MICHIGAN WHERE I HEARD THE CALL TO MINISTRY.

THE ONE CONSTANT IN MY SUNDAY TRAVELS HAS BEEN WESLEY'S CHAPEL IN LONDON. LAST SUNDAY THE CHAPEL'S SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER, REV. CANON DR. JENNIFER SMITH, SAID SOMETHING THAT HAS HAD ME THINKING ALL WEEK. 'WHAT WE DO IN WORSHIP IS ESSENTIALLY TAKE OUR QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR WORLD AND OUR EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS OUR GROWING UNDERSTANDING OF WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE

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ARE AND WE TAKE THAT TENSION, THAT GAP, BETWEEN THE WORLD WE HAVE AND THE WORLD AS IT SHOULD BE IN GOD'S EYES AND WE HOLD ALL THIS TOGETHER IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.' JEN SAID THIS AS SHE INTRODUCED THE VIDEO TESTIMONY OF A CHAPEL MEMBER WHO ARRIVED IN ENGLAND FROM THE CARRIBBEAN AS A CHILD IN THE EARLY 60'S. THE TESTIMONY WAS QUITE POWERFUL.

I HAVE ALSO BEEN READING THIS WEEK. OLD TESTAMENT SCHOLAR, WALTER BRUEGGEMANN, WROTE A BOOK IN THE EARLY DAYS OF LOCKDOWN IN THE STATES. HE CALLED HIS BOOK VIRUS AS A SUMMONS TO FAITH, BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS IN A TIME OF LOSS, GRIEF, AND ANXIETY. IT IS NOT AN EASY READ. NOR IS IT EASY TO SUM UP...I AM STILL READING AND PONDERING. TO OVERSIMPLIFY, BRUEGGEMAN TAKES A LOOK AT HOW THE PEOPLE OF GOD RESPOND TO TRAGEDY THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT. HE WRITES ABOUT THE 'TRIAD' OF CALAMATIES: WAR, FAMINE AND PLAGUE. MOSTLY, HE WRITES ABOUT PLAGUE.

I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU JUST ONE THING I LEARNED FROM HIS BOOK SO FAR. IN A CHAPTER HE TITLES 'UNTIL THE DANCE BEGINS AGAIN.' IN THIS CHAPTER HE TAKES A LOOK AT THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH, HENCE TODAY'S VERY SHORT READING. HE TELLS THE STORY OF GERMAN PASTOR MARTIN RINKART. WE KNOW RINKART BECAUSE OF THE HYMN 'NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD' THAT WE SING LUSTILY AT HARVEST TIME. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU BUT I DID NOT KNOW THE STORY BEHIND THE HYMN. RINKART SERVED THE TOWN OF EILENBURG DURING THE THIRTY YEARS WAR 1618-1648. THE TOWN BECAME OVERCROWDED WITH REFUGEES FROM THE SURROUNDING AREA. THE TOWN EXPERIENCED FAMINE AND EPIDEMIC. WAR, FAMINE AND PLAGUE...THE BIBLICAL TRIAD! AT THE BEGINNING OF 1637 THERE WERE FOUR MINISTERS IN EILENBURG. ONE LEFT FOR A HEALTHIER CLIMATE AND RINKART OFFICIATED AT THE FUNERALS OF THE OTHER TWO. HE SOMETIMES HELD 40-50 FUNERALS A DAY. BY THE END OF THE YEAR THE REFUGEES HAD TO

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BE BURIED IN TRENCHES WITHOUT SERVICES. RINKART'S WIFE WAS AMONG THE DEAD. YET RINKART NEVER STOPPED SERVING HIS COMMUNITY IN SELFLESS GIVING AND LOVE. IT IS UNDER THESE CONDITIONS RINKART WROTE 'NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD' AS A TABLE GRACE FOR HIS CHILDREN. DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SEE THE HYMN WITH NEW EYES WHEN WE SING IT IN A FEW MINUTES?

AGAIN AND AGAIN IN THE BOOK, BRUEGGEMANN CALLS US TO TURN TO FAITH...TO GOD IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

BRUEGGEMANN'S BOOK WRITTEN IN MARCH BEFORE GEORGE FLOYD'S TRAGIC DEATH SO THERE ARE NO REFERENCES TO WHAT MIGHT BE TERMED 'THE PLAGUE OF RACISM' IN HIS BOOK. BUT I ALSO READ A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER ONLINE THAT COMES WITH MY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SUBSCRIPTION. THIS WEEK THERE WAS A QUOTE FROM ALICIA GARZA, CO-FOUNDER OF BLACK LIVES MATTER. BLACK LIVES MATTER CAME TO BIRTH IN A FACEBOOK POST ON 13 JULY 2013 IN RESPONSE TO THE ACQUITTAL OF A WHITE MAN FOR THE KILLING OF A BLACK TEENAGER. ALICIA GARZA HAS A FASCINATING STORY WHICH I WON'T GO INTO HERE BUT I ENCOURAGE YOU, IF YOU CAN, TO DO AN ONLINE SEARCH. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC QUOTED GARZA: 'EVERYONE RIGHT NOW IS LONGING FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT, SOMETHING BETTER. IN THE MIDST OF ALL THE GRIEF AND RAGE AND PAIN, THERE'S HOPEFULNESS. THERE IS A LONGING FOR WHO WE CAN BE TOGETHER.'

IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY WE SEEK CERTAINTY. WE ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT THAN THE PEOPLE OF GOD THE PROPHET JEREMIAH WROTE ABOUT. WE ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT THAN THE PEOPLE OF GOD MARTIN RINKART SERVED. WE ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ALL RACES, CREEDS AND ETHNICITIES. WE ALL LONG FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD...A PEACEFUL WORLD...A JUST WORLD. WE TAKE WHAT WE HAVE AND WHAT WE LONG FOR AND WE HOLD IT TOGETHER IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. IT IS IN FAITH...IN GOD THAT WE FIND OUR CERTAINTIES.

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HYMN 81 Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

PRAYER 'Let the Dance Begin...Soon' Walter Brueggemann

(*With apologies to Walter Brueggemann for making some 'cultural' changes to his prayer. His prayer speaks of basketball and baseball and bars.)

We now miss out on so much
the graduation of a granddaughter,
the wedding of a niece,
football,*
cricket,*
the great Easter liturgy,
the day by day interaction on the street.

The virus has imposed a huge silence among us.

It is a silence that evokes loneliness,
and domestic violence,
and job loss,
and the end of life in the pubs,* and on the beach, and in the street.

We wait; we wait in despair, or at least in deep disappointment.

But we may wait differently:
we wait in confident faith;
we wait in eager longing;
we wait on the Lord.

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We wait for the future and against despair,
because we know that you, the God of life, will defeat the force of death.
We know that the Friday execution could not defeat the life lived by Jesus
nor the life lived by his faithful people.
As we wait, we practice our next moves for the coming dance;
it is only a little while... 'yet a little while';
we will *walk* the long walk of obedience;
we will *run* the race of discipleship;
we will *soar* like eagles into God's good future of neighbourliness.
We know that you will overcome the silence... no more than the darkness...
can overcome the Lord of Life. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

With the confidence of the children of God we pray the prayer Jesus taught us...

HYMN 693 Beauty For Brokenness

Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase.

Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for all people,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
his cross for the pain.

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Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned —
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content with
the things that we need.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

CLOSING PRAYER

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THE GRACE