**Sunday 14th June 2020 – Service of Worship**

*(A paper and pen are needed for the service today.)*

**Welcome and opening words**

Welcome to church today! Some words from the Bible:

**“23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. 24 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. 25 For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise.”** (1 Chronicles 16:23-25a – NIV)

Again, I say, Welcome to Church today!

These words from the Bible remind us of why we gather in worship. I say gather because we do, in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, gather together to worship God!

**Song: In Christ Alone**

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| 1.. In Christ alone my hope is found,  He is my light, my strength, my song;  this cornerstone, this solid ground,  firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  What heights of love, what depths of peace,  when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  My comforter, my all in all,  here in the love of Christ I stand. | 2.. In Christ alone - who took on flesh,  fullness of God in helpless Babe!  This gift of love and righteousness,  scorned by the ones he came to save  till on that cross as Jesus died,  the wrath of God was satisfied,  for every sin on Him was laid;  here in the death of Christ I live. |
| 3.. There in the ground his body lay,  light of the world by darkness slain,  then, bursting forth in glorious day,  up from the grave He rose again!  And as he stands in victory  sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  for I am His and He is mine -  bought with the precious blood of Christ. | 4.. No guilt in life, no fear in death,  this is the power of Christ in me;  from life's first cry to final breath,  Jesus commands my destiny.  No power of hell, no scheme of man  can ever pluck me from His hand;  till he returns or calls me home,  here in the power of Christ I'll stand! |
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**Children’s Talk:**

As part of our service today we are going to be thinking in the 2nd reflection about God sending us out! I wonder how many of you have had swimming lessons? I had swimming lessons as a child and whilst my swimming teacher was one of the scariest women I have ever met she didn’t throw us in the deep end in the first lesson expecting us to swim!

We only ventured into the deep end when she knew we could handle not being able to touch the bottom of the pool!

In other words, only when we had the skills to swim in deeper water did she allow us to do so.

Jesus sent out his disciples to work for him. They had skills and gifts that were needed to share the message of Jesus’ love for all people.

Now as can you can see there are 3 or 4 items on the table here….I wonder if you can guess what they are? I will give you a hint….they are items that you may use or things you may be good at!

So this one….what do you think this one is? (answer: a netball) Some people have gifts and skills at sport.

What about this one? (answer: a rolling pin) Some people have gifts and skills at baking/cooking

What about this one? (answer: hammer) Some people have DIY skills.

And finally…this one… (answer: story book. Explain fiction/non-fiction) Now we might not all have sports, baking/cooking skills or DIY skills….but when we are followers of Jesus we all have a story to share.

Our story. Not a story in a book like this book…but our story that we can share with others. And as I lead us in prayer now I want you to think today about people you might be able to share your faith story with!

At the start of the service I invited you to get a piece of paper and a pen/pencil after I have prayed I want you to write down perhaps 5 people who you can share your faith story with and ask God to give you the confidence to do so.

Let us pray….Lord Jesus Christ, help me to share my story with others. That others may want to know you. Give me enough courage and help to do it. Amen.

**Bible Reading: Exodus 19:1-8**

1 In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt-on the very day-they came to the Desert of Sinai. 2 After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. 3 Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of

all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." 7 So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. 8 The people all responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.

Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Reflection: “Chosen” part 1**

*I love the views from the top of a hill! I recall when I was a child when as a family we would go on walks. On Good Friday we would have the “Good Friday hikes” from my home church. I recall one hill from my childhood in the Ribble Valley called Jeffrey Hill. It is no more spectacular than any other hill but it is one I always recall for some reason (perhaps because of a pub nearby that did good food!). Jefferey Hill has a special memory for me as it is the place where I asked Ruth to marry me!!*

*Hills are in many ways places where I always think of God. The views overlooking the valley beneath remind me of God’s creation and God’s goodness.*

Hills/mountains play an important role in Scripture too. The reading we heard a moment ago from Exodus shows us a snapshot of Israel’s story. But this hill/mountain more than any other was a special place for Israel. Mount Sinai was the place where:

\* Moses met God in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-17).   
\* God made His Covenant with Israel (Exodus 19-24).

\* And where Elijah heard God speak in the gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:9b-18).

At this point in Israel’s history this reading comes shortly after Israel were delivered from Egypt in the Exodus. God has a reason for rescuing His chosen people from the Exodus. In verse 3 of our reading we are told that **“Moses went up to God and the LORD called him from the mountain…”** (Exodus 19:3 – NIV)

They (Israel as a nation) were chosen by God, set apart by God to show people how they should live, a nation through which people could approach God freely. The people of Israel were not perfect, but God chose them!

God chose them not because of anything they had said or done. Or because they were special in any way he chose them out of his love and mercy to represent God on earth. Priests were believed to represent God in the Temple. Here God wants Israel to be His “priests” ie representatives on earth.

Let’s not forget the promise to Abraham in Genesis that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5). God is a promise keeper! God knew Israel would do wrong…would stray from Him…but He kept resolute and kept the promise He made to Abraham.

Fast forward 3 or 3 ½ millennia and here we are today sat in our homes watching /reading this reflection. The Church is the continuation of that original promise to Abraham.

For through the pages of the Old Testament we hear of the promised Messiah who we, as Christians, believe is Jesus.

Jesus came and established his church founded on those first men and women of faith (which we will hear more about in our gospel reading shortly).

Today, God has chosen to work through the Christian Church. That is through us. And although we are currently unable to meet in our buildings the Church is still open as we, the people of God, meet to worship week by week either through watching the worship that is being provided and/or by reading the scripts that are being emailed/posted around the Missional Partnership.

*I ‘attended’ a Zoom meeting a week last Tuesday entitled “life after lockdown”. Organised by the Moderator-elect of the Yorkshire Synod - Jamie Kissack. It was a mixture of lay and ordained people from across the 5 most northerly Synods of the URC*

*who met because in some way we have been thinking about the future and what the church in the “new normal” will look like. I am told that the organisers were expecting about 30-40 people, in total 210 people registered to be a part of, and were present at, the meeting.*

*We had times in small groups of 15 as we discussed what God might be teaching us in lockdown and how church will look post lockdown. It was amazing to hear people’s thoughts and hopes for the future.* And though these times are difficult in lockdown and self-isolation, we must never forget that God is still sovereign! God is still on the throne! Nothing will ever change that – no virus, now war, no earthly disaster. And what’s more we are still God’s *chosen* people - the church.

Friends, let us all have ears that are open to God’s Word to us and for us today. As churches we need to be listening for the voice of God as Moses was invited into God’s presence on Mount Sinai as he listened to what God wanted of God’s chosen people. May we, like the people of Israel, respond in the same way as the people of Israel did: **“We will do everything the LORD has said.” (Exodus 19:8 – NIV)** Amen.

Let us pray….

Loving God we praise you for your power and authority. We praise you with our words, our actions and our thoughts. We praise you in song, we praise you in prayer, we praise you in and through the reading and reflecting on Your Word contained in the pages of the Bible. We praise you in upbeat and quiet songs. We praise you in the old as well as the contemporary songs. We praise you in familiar songs and in new. Let every fibre of our being praise and worship You this day and every day! As Your children may we be always listening for the voice of God speaking to us in our daily

lives.

Lord we know our weaknesses and frailty. And we ask for your grace to be poured out upon us as we walk your ways. And follow your paths. We come and say “sorry” for times of weakness when we haven’t said, done or thought things that we should have done and we say, sorry.

We are conscious of times when we have remained silent or not acted when we should have spoken and acted and we say sorry!

In these times of isolation we join together in saying the prayer that Jesus taught those closest to him as we say together:

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

for Thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever and ever.

Amen.

**Song: God forgave my Sin in Jesus name**

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| 1.. God forgave my sin in Jesus' name;  I've been born again in Jesus' name,  and in Jesus' name I come to you  to share His love as He told me to. | *He said, 'Freely, freely you have received,*  *freely, freely give;*  *go in my name*  *and because you believe,*  *others will know that I live.* |
| 2.. All power is given in Jesus' name  in earth and heaven in Jesus' name;  and in Jesus' name I come to you  to share His love as He told me to. | *He said, 'Freely, freely you have received,*  *freely, freely give;*  *go in my name*  *and because you believe,*  *others will know that I live.* |
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**Bible Reading 2: Matthew 9:35-10:8**

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

**Jesus sends out the twelve**

1 He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. 5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Reflection: “Chosen” part 2**

*I don’t know if your experience of PE lessons at school was like mine. That dreaded moment when 2 teams are chosen. If your experience was like mine then the most athletic, gifted, physically fit sport’s boys were chosen to select their teams!*

*They in turn went through the rest of the group picking who they felt were the most sporty and talented! And the rest of us were simply there to make up the numbers!*

Being “chosen” in that context wasn’t the best feeling in the world!!! But being chosen by Jesus is something in a totally different league! Whether you, like me, were one of the last in the pool of “PE talent” to be selected or whether you were the person selecting the teams – God, through Jesus, has chosen and called each one of us into a relationship with Him.

In the Matthew reading we heard a few moments ago we heard the names of the first 12 people Jesus called to be his first disciples. They weren’t all the same. They were called from all walks of life: Some were fishermen, one was a tax collector, another a political activist.

He called rich and poor, educated and uneducated. There isn’t a qualification for entry into the kingdom of God. Jesus calls and Jesus equips! And the Church (the Body of Christ) needs all sorts of people and all sorts of gifts to function.

What Jesus requires is that we are willing to serve him as we preach and proclaim the Good News of Jesus to people. Jesus called to himself (as God did with Moses in the first reading) and gave them great authority to **“drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness”** (Matthew 10:1 - NIV) That is some authority given to these young men of faith.

And in sending them they are to be fully reliant on God for everything! They are not to take extra baggage with them on their way for God will provide for them when they go to share the good news and work the miracles God has empowered them to do.

What are your hopes and dreams post lockdown? What are your hopes for your Church?   
We hear anecdotal evidence of more people engaging with church in this time of lockdown. As services go on the internet people are watching more services. How do we moving forward as people sent by Jesus reach new people in our communities?

What I think is important is that we prayerfully discern with the elders/leadership of our churches about what the priorities should be for our churches now and when we are able to meet again in our church buildings.

If you have not yet looked at, or seen, the paper produced by the URC entitled: “*Ready for “The New Normal*”” (put up an image) then I invite you to read it and explore it. It is available online at the <https://urc.org.uk/latest-news/3452-urc-produces-plan-for-new-normal-post-covid-19>

I have certainly been challenged as a minister in this period of lockdown as I have had to learn new skills of videoing and editing services – how do we reach people who are beyond the walls of our churches who would find it difficult to walk over the threshold of our church buildings and yet they are connecting in new ways with online worship!

And we might say, “we cannot do that” or “we haven’t got the people or the skills”…..

When Jesus sent out the first disciples they didn’t go knowing everything and having been given a bag full of all the things they would need….they were sent knowing that God would go with them and that He would provide and supply their needs.

We, too, as God’s *chosen* people must rely on God who has called us and equipped us to be the people He wants us to be.

Amen.

Let us sing…..

**Song: Here I am wholly available** *(sung left to right)*

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| *Chorus:*  *Here I am, wholly available -*  *as for me I will serve the Lord.* | The fields are white unto harvest  but oh, the labourers are so few;  so, Lord, I give myself to help the reaping,  to gather precious souls unto you. |
| *Chorus:*  *Here I am, wholly available -*  *as for me I will serve the Lord.* | The time is right in the nation  for works of power and authority;  God's looking for a people who are willing  to be counted in His glorious victory. |
| *Chorus:*  *Here I am, wholly available -*  *as for me I will serve the Lord.* | As salt are we ready to savour,  in darkness are we ready to be light?  God's seeking out a very special people  to manifest His truth and His might. |
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**Prayers of Intercession**

We now come to our prayers of intercession. After each prayer focus please join in with the words: “**Hear our prayers Lord, according to Your will**”

Dear Lord, we come to You in prayer, according to Your will, knowing that You hear us.

We pray for our precious world, thanking You for the respite it has been given over these past few months-for the healing that has taken place in the natural world during lockdown. We ask that in the future we may be better stewards of the incredible gift of creation that You have charged us with caring for.

**Hear our prayers Lord, according to Your will.**

We pray for the governments and religious leaders of our world asking that they will work together for the good of all mankind. We pray that they will have the vision and desire to ensure we have a world that is at peace and that is fair and just for all.

**Hear our prayers Lord, according to Your will.**

We pray for the Church across the world and ask that it be Jesus-shaped in all that it does. We pray that You will guide and equip our churches to reach outwards to share our faith with those waiting to hear the good news of the Gospel. We particularly remember those Christians who are persecuted for their faith- who share our faith but not our freedom. Give them strength and peace Lord as they bear their cross in Your name.

**Hear our prayers Lord, according to Your will.**

We pray for those in need: We pray for peace for those affected by war. We pray for an end to poverty and a fair sharing of wealth across the world. We pray for those who are victims of trafficking and abuse and for those who work to help them. We pray for shelter for the homeless and ask that all people across the world have their basic human rights met.

**Hear our prayers Lord, according to Your will.**

We pray for all those who are sick and give thanks for those caring for them. We pray for the bereaved and ask that You will comfort them. We thank you for those who work hard to save lives across the globe- the emergency services and aid workers and charities. We also thank you especially today on World Blood Donor Day for those who donate blood to save the lives of others.

**Hear our prayers Lord, according to Your will.**

We offer all these prayers Lord and those in our hearts in the name of our great intercessor, Your son, Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**

**Closing Song: Go forth and tell**

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| 1.. Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake! God’s saving news to all the nations take:  proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,  that all the world His worthy praise may sing. | 2.. Go forth and tell! God’s love embraces all;  He will in grace respond to all who call:  how shall they call if they have never heard  the gracious invitation of His word? |
| 3.. Go forth and tell! men still in darkness lie;  in wealth or want, in sin they live and die:  give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,  a love like Yours which cares for all mankind. | 4.. Go forth and tell! the doors are open wide:  share God’s good gifts let no one be denied;  live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,  Your ransomed powers for His sole glory use. |
| 5.. Go forth and tell! O Church of God, arise!  Go in the strength which Christ Your Lord supplies;  go till all nations His great name adore  and serve Him, Lord and King for evermore. | James E Seddon (1915 - 1983)  Jubilate Hymns  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

Mention the All Age Service next week and how a pen and paper will be needed by all. It will also be an All Age Father’s Day Service

Mention the Missional Partnership newsletter and any articles people may wish to add into it (please send the information to Richard)

**Final Prayer**

Lord may we, as your children, continue to serve you as we serve others. May we now be filled with the presence and power of God in Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.