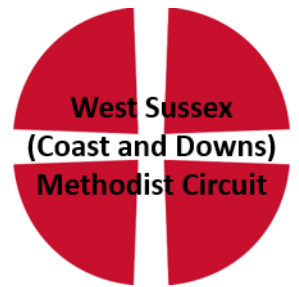


Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

August 2021



Worshipping Together is a worship resource from the circuit to you, created by local preachers, ministers and worship leaders from across the circuit.

We invite you to use this resource at a time that suits you, in whatever way works for you, to spend time with God knowing that you are **Worshipping Together** with others across the circuit family.

This month **Worshipping Together** takes a new style, comprising one act of worship for the month, along with a different set reading for each week. Each reading is accompanied by a short piece of commentary and reflection that is shared as a starting point for your own reflections. As you worship and draw closer to God, may God draw close to you, speak to you and journey with you beyond the words of these pages, strengthened by the ever present Holy Spirit.



Share these resources with others to use in their own way as we worship and grow together despite the pandemic.

Also available at: www.westsussexcoastanddownscircuit.co.uk

As you prepare to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. As you prepare, become aware of God's already present presence.

Gathering Scripture: Psalm 33:1-5¹

- ¹ Let the godly sing for joy to the Lord;
it is fitting for the pure to praise him.
- ² Praise the Lord with melodies on the lyre;
make music for him on the ten-stringed harp.
- ³ Sing a new song of praise to him;
play skillfully on the harp, and sing with joy.
- ⁴ For the word of the Lord holds true,
and we can trust everything he does.
- ⁵ He loves whatever is just and good;
the unfailing love of the Lord fills the earth.



Sing the following hymn of praise, or a favourite of your own:

Praise my Soul the King of heaven²

1. Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like thee his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

2. Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress;
praise him, still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

3. Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows.

4. Angels in the height, adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace

¹ New Living Translation

² Praise my Soul by Henry Francis Lyte, StF83

Prayers of adoration & confession³

Loving God, we know that you are always there
your loving arms welcoming us,
so as we set aside this time for worship,
we thank you that you are with us.
We thank you that you dwell amongst us,
in our neighbourhood, our homes and in our hearts.



We thank you for your gentleness and compassion,
and for the ways that you have guided us.
We thank you for giving us light, when we are in darkness,
for giving us hope, when everything seems hopeless to us
and for your love, a love far beyond any measure.

We acknowledge that you have provided us with the bread of life,
and have ensured that we have air to breathe,
and food and water, minerals and materials, we need to survive.

We praise you for all the talents and skills you have bestowed on us,
and the friendship and support of those around us.
Most of all, we thank you for the teaching of Jesus,
how he used stories and imagery, such as a loaf of bread,
to tell us of your love and the way we should live our lives.

But we confess O God, that we have not always been a good example of what a
Christian should be. We have been overwhelmed by our own problems and
forgotten to look out and care for others. We have been consumed by everything
that is negative in our lives and lost sight of the positives which surround us.

We have lost sight of the signs of your love.

Forgive us..... Lord, we ask that, through
your love for us, you will restore our focus on
you. Help us to listen and hear your voice
and feel your love all around us in the sure
knowledge of your forgiveness. **Amen**



³ prayer by Malcolm Lindo

Below are readings and reflections for each week through August. This month we journey through John 6:22-59, which in John's story follows the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus walking on water.

The reflections are mere starting points, and you are encouraged to ponder and pray through and beyond what is written, as you listen and respond to God.

Week beginning Sunday 1st August

Reading: John 6:22-24

The gospel tells us how the crowd who had the day before feasted on loaves and fish (John 6:1-15), work out where they think Jesus has gone and now head across the lake, to look for Jesus.

As we read on in chapter 6, the question of why they seek Jesus comes to light, v28 seems to suggest the people sought Jesus because they wanted the power and ability to do the miracle Jesus had done. If we are open to it, this passage raises a challenge to us to reflect ourselves – what reason do we seek Jesus?

Reflect: Where do you go looking for Jesus?

In what way are you seeking Jesus today?

How is God speaking to you through these verses?

Act: Keep your eyes open for Jesus this week, and make a note of where and how you find him.



Week beginning Sunday 8th August

Reading: John 6:25-34

The crowd ask Jesus why he is where they find him. In their conversation the crowd want to know how they can do the miracle of feeding many with little for themselves. Jesus encourages the crowd not to seek material food, but to seek the spiritual food that comes through knowing Jesus and believing in God.

Jesus reminds the crowd of the story of the Israelites receiving bread from heaven (Exodus 16), calling them to remember that Father God provides for the needs of his people. Sometimes in our Christian faith, being reminded of the simple truths of who God is to us as individuals and as Christian communities can be valuable in helping us keep our focus on holy living in a complicated world.

Reflect:

What spiritual food sustains your faith in God?

Have you ever found Jesus in an unexpected place? What did it teach you?

How have you experienced God providing your daily needs?

Act: Think about your daily and weekly habits, what is sustaining you and your faith? What other habits could you nurture to further aid your faith?

Week beginning Sunday 15th August

Reading: John 6:35-40

Jesus says he is the bread of life, who satisfies all who hunger and believe. Yet Jesus challenges the crowd on their faith: 'you have seen me and yet you do not believe'. So Jesus declares to the crowd that God has sent him, to live among them and reveal truth, that they may believe and find eternal life.

Reflect:

How have you 'seen' Jesus in your life?

Why do you think believing is so important for a relationship with God?

What does 'finding eternal life' mean to you?

Act: Share with somebody how you have seen Jesus in your life.

Week beginning Sunday 22nd August

Reading: John 6:41-51

Jesus is questioned; he is a Jew born of Joseph, how can he have come from heaven? Jesus responds challenging those of question to stop trying to scientifically explain and understand everything, because it is not by understanding, but by believing despite not understanding, that we receive eternal life.

Reflect:

Are there things about faith that you struggle not understanding?

How have you embraced believing despite not having all the answers?

What is spiritual bread to you? How do you feast on the bread of life – Jesus?

For the week: Pray about those things you struggle not understanding, asking how God can help you work through them.



Week beginning Sunday 29th August

Reading: John 6:52-59

Some of the people have not understood Jesus, so they ask him more questions. Jesus explains what he means again; 'those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.' (v56). Jesus goes on to say he doesn't speak of physical bread, but that which comes from heaven; Christ himself.

Reflect:

How do you express your abiding in Christ?

Where can you recognise Christ abiding in you?

For your life and spirituality, what is the significance of communion for you?

How does this passage impact your thinking?

Act: Pray for 5 people you know who have not put their faith in God.

Hymn for Reflection: Food to pilgrims given, StF584⁴

1. Food to pilgrims given, strength upon the way;
bread come down from heaven — Christ is ours today!
Feed us now, O Lord, with this holy food —
let your kingdom come, O Lord, let your kingdom come;
let your kingdom come, O Lord, let your kingdom come.

2. Streams of grace are flowing — life from death for me;
truth and goodness growing for eternity.
Cleanse my soul, O Lord, with your precious blood —
let your will be done, O Lord, let your will be done;
let your will be done, O Lord, let your will be done.

3. I receive your blessing — Jesus, king divine;
all your love confessing in this bread and wine.
Send me out, O Lord, holy, pure and good,
till the world is won, O Lord, till the world is won;
till the world is won, O Lord, till the world is won.



RESPONDING

Prayers for others⁵

Lord you have said you will hear us as we bring our concerns to you in prayer.

We pray for our world:

We think of countries suffering from dictatorial or corrupt regimes;

Myanmar, North Korea, Tigray, Brazil, South Africa and Hong Kong...

for world leaders, that they will serve to maintain peace, unity and prevent famine and disease spreading through the world. We pray for the reversal of damage to the environment, wildlife, and through climate change.

We pray for our country:

for the economic and social challenges caused or intensified through the pandemic. Help us not to forget the many needs in our communities, despite our being a rich country. We pray against greed, and for a fair and just rebuilding.

For the challenges of migration, and for our leaders as they work out what needs to be done to make our country secure for everyone.

Be with all people and help us all to learn how to share and rebuild together.

We pray for our friends and neighbours:

We bring to you the names of those we know to be in need at this time

⁴ Food to pilgrims by Geon-yong Lee, © Mrs B Perry / Jubilate Hymns, StF584

⁵ Prayers by Lynne James

May they feel your loving arms around them and know that they are not alone. Show us how we can be good friends to them and how to ease their pain.

We pray for ourselves:

Help us to live our lives with your Holy Spirit, knowing that you are always with us and love us even when we fail you. Help through our actions, words and attitudes to reveal your steadfast love to those who do not yet know you.

Strengthen us to better hear your voice, so that we might be more obedient.

As children of God we ask all this and more in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who leads us to know you, our loving parent God, and creator of all things. **Amen.**

We pray together... Our Father in heaven.....

Sing the following hymn, or a favourite of your own: Love Divine⁶

1. Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

2. Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never, never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

3. Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Closing Prayer⁷

Bread of life, hope for the world,
in our weakness be our strength,
in our pain be our comfort,

in our despair be our hope, in our joys be our fulfilment;

in our coming and our going be our way, our guide and our Lord. **Amen**



Acknowledgements

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⁶ Love Divine by Charles Wesley, StF503

⁷ Adapted from 500 more Prayers for All Occasions, p315, #332