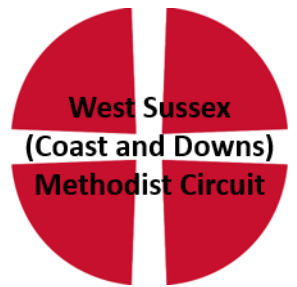


Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

July 2021



Worshipping Together is an offering from the circuit to you, and has been collated by local preachers, ministers and worship leaders from across the circuit.

If you are well enough, we invite you use this resource each week, at a time to suit you, and spend a few moments with God, knowing that you are **Worshipping Together** with other people who are also sharing in this act of worship with you.

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

In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you.



Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:3-6

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

Gathering Words: Psalm 24:3-5

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully. They will receive their blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation.

Song, Pray and Praise: God whose almighty word²

1. God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight,
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

2. Christ, you have come to bring
on your redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
O to all humankind
let there be light!

3. Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy Dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light!

4. Blessèd and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide
let there be light!

Prayers of praise and thanks

Lord we give you thanks that at last we can see the light at the end of this dark time in our lives. We praise you as you bless us with your peace and calm after the turmoil of Covid. At last we can hug our families again and once more enjoy the simple things we did not recognise as being precious until they were removed from our reach.

¹ Worship prepared by Lynne James

² God, whose almighty word by John Marriot, StF106

Help us now to continue to appreciate the wonderful world you have built for us and show us how best to protect it. We know that we have often done things in the wrong way, Lord, but show us now how to do things right. Point us to the example of Jesus and show us how to use that to serve you through our lives.

May we be your devoted servants as you continue to be our great protector and friend. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

RECEIVING

Reading: Mark 6:14-29

This Herod is not the same one who killed the little boys in Bethlehem. That was his father, Herod the Great, who was so cruel that he killed off several of his own sons when he thought they were becoming rivals for power. This Herod is Antipas, a much weaker character who became Tetrarch of Galilee in 4BC and ruled until AD39 when he was sacked by the emperor and went into exile himself.

Antipas had a problem with his first wife, sending her back to her father when he decided that he preferred his brother Philip's wife Herodias. This might have been no more than a script for a typical soap if the father concerned hadn't also been a king with a large army with nothing much to do. He waged war against Antipas and defeated him. As if this didn't give poor Antipas enough trouble, he had to cope with John the Baptist. To the Jews it was a terrible sin to marry your brother's wife while he was still alive. So, to them Herod Antipas was guilty of incest. This explains why Antipas was a bit afraid of John and not sure what to do with him. He kept John in prison, but he talked to him a lot and we are told he even "Liked to listen to him". This obviously worried Herodias... perhaps John would persuade Herod to send her away too. She finally saw her chance to shut John up for good. She used her teenage daughter Salome to trap poor weak Antipas in front of all his dinner guests. He had no choice but to give her what she wanted: John's head. Poor Antipas, was we are told, "greatly distressed", but he'd been out manoeuvred.

Its a good story. It was doing the rounds of the storytellers in the bazaar and Mark was quite happy to include it in his gospel. Why? Because if we look at it the story is all about the sinner and the missionary. And Jesus had just sent out 12 very new recruits to be missionaries and to sort out the local sinners. The experienced missionary, John, shows them how to behave. Firstly, he was not going to go away and leave Antipas in peace. John, the missionary, had to speak out against sin. So,

he kept on nagging at Antipas who knew he was in the wrong and felt guilty about his illegal marriage. John succeeded in making Antipas feel bad, so John was imprisoned. But this didn't shut John up and slowly John was beginning to wear away Antipas' defences as he talked and Antipas listened. Perhaps in the end he could have caused a real change of heart. Unfortunately, John didn't have the chance to reach that point because of Herodias' plotting. But it is amazing how over a period of time the message gets through if the messengers are strong enough. We may feel we are making no difference to the people around us, but we must keep on dripping away with our message of God's love like water wearing away at the granite. So the missionary, the messenger from God, has to be persistent.

The messenger also must be loyal and obedient to God, obviously. Just like John. And it's no use doing this work because of the salary! What does John get as a reward for his lifetime of service? Prison and a missing head! Does that sound very fair? Of course not! I suspect that just didn't worry John the Baptist. He knew that whatever happened was the will of God and that none of it would affect his future after his death. He knew that God's the one with the plan. Even if he'd known he'd end up with no head, John would not have changed any of what he did. But the world looks on and wonders.

Imagine how people felt after the death of John. Would they have said: How could God let such a great prophet die? Probably not, because they didn't give individual life as much value as we do. Some Jews had a strong belief in the afterlife and resurrection. Sometimes today we forget that part too easily and get very upset when a follower of Jesus suffers. Yet, our faith is based on the suffering of Jesus. We can wish it wasn't, but it is. Suffering we have been promised in plenty. If we can continue to witness in the midst of that suffering, that's when people sit up and wonder what this religion is all about. That's what John did. That's where John shows us the true strength of the messenger: to be persistent, loyal and obedient even when everything seems to be going against us. Those are the messengers who are not forgotten and whose work is more valuable than they can ever know. Amen.

Sing/Read/Proclaim: How lovely on the mountains³

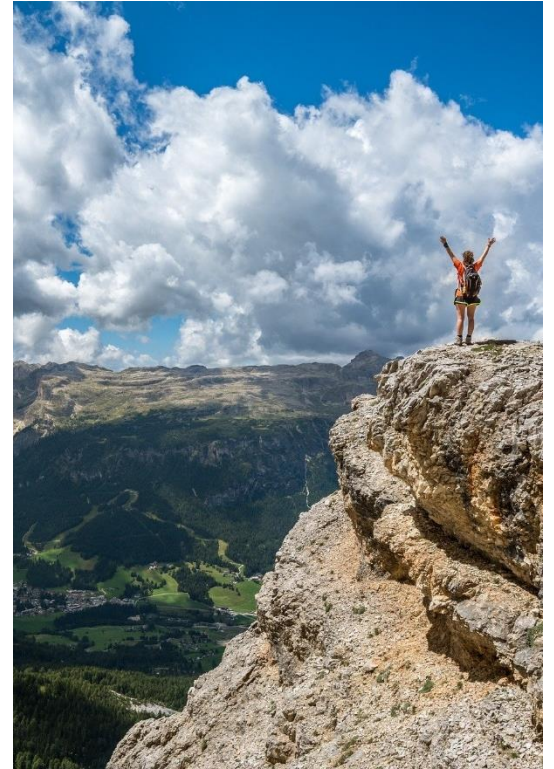
How lovely on the mountains are the feet of Him
 Who brings good news, good news,
 Proclaiming peace, announcing news of happiness,
 Our God reigns, our God reigns.

*Our God reigns, our God reigns,
 Our God reigns, our God reigns.*

You watchmen lift your voices joyfully as one,
 Shout for your King, your King.
 See eye to eye the Lord restoring Zion:
 Your God reigns, your God reigns!

Waste places of Jerusalem break forth with joy,
 We are redeemed, redeemed.
 The Lord has saved and comforted His people:
 Your God reigns, your God reigns!

Ends of the earth, see the salvation of your God,
 Jesus is Lord, is Lord.
 Before the nations He has bared His holy arm:
 Your God reigns, your God reigns!

**Prayers for others**

We pray for those all around the world who are in a bad place today:

for those who feel hunger not just as a need to make the next meal but as a monster tearing at their insides...

for those for whom home is not a house with food and furniture but any shelter they can find no matter how poorly it keeps out the wind and rain:

for those who have had no chance to receive any vaccine and who rarely see any medical staff to help them in times of need:

for those who do not know Jesus as their Saviour.

³ How lovely on the mountains by Leonard E Smith, © 1974 New Jerusalem Music, Songs of Fellowship 192

We pray for our world leaders as they battle for places of power and importance, both with words and actions. May they consider the harm they are doing to people and planet in their quest for power and may they learn to help and not to harm those who depend on them.

We pray for our friends and neighbours who are suffering for whatever reason today and we offer them to you now in the silence of our hearts.....

We pray for ourselves, that we may learn how to be your faithful messengers and bring others to have faith in you.

In the name of Jesus we pray, saying together the prayer he taught us: ***Our Father...***

Sing/Read/Proclaim: Great is the Lord⁴

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise,
the city of our God, the holy place,
the joy of the whole earth.

Great is the Lord in whom we have the victory,
he aids us against the enemy,
we bow down on our knees.

*And Lord, we want to lift your name on high,
and Lord, we want to thank you,
for the works you've done in our lives;
and Lord, we trust in your unfailing love,
for you alone are God eternal,
throughout earth and heaven above.*

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all forever more. **Amen**

⁴ Great is the Lord by Steve McEwan, © 1985 Body Songs, StF50

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

Gathering Words

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Come away. Rest a while'.

Let us join together in the Lord's presence. Let us escape from the burdens and the stresses of our lives as we worship our Loving God.

Let us receive from him the rest that Jesus offers and let us restore our souls to be ready for whatever comes next in our lives.



Sing/Read/Proclaim: The Lord's my shepherd⁶

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

*And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me,
and Your rod and staff.
Are the comfort I need to know.

Prayer

Loving God, we come to you, today, knowing that you are our Shepherd, who has always loved and cared for us. Lord, we give thanks that you have given us our world with its beauty and wonders. You have provided us with everything that we need. We know that, whether we are in green pastures or on a dark path, you are there, so we thank you for the assurance we have that, in times of trouble, we can put our trust in you. We know that whatever happens your endless mercy and goodness will lead us in both good and bad times.

We give thanks that you are always at work in our lives and in our world. This morning, we come to you acknowledging that sometimes we have lost sight of your

⁵ Worship prepared by Malcolm Lindo

⁶ The Lord's my shepherd by Stuart Townsend, © 1996 Thankyou Music, StF481

great love and that we have failed to appreciate how fortunate we really are. We know that we have failed in so many ways. We have not lived in the way that you have taught us.

Loving God, forgive all our faults.

Cleanse us from our weaknesses and renew our faith.

We pray that you will restore us to your side. May we, in the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, be enabled to live more faithfully as your servants. Amen

RECEIVING

Reading: Psalm 23

When I went out the other day, I paused at the front door to check whether I had everything I needed. “Wallet? Phone?, Glasses?, Handkerchief?, Jumper?, House Keys?”. Only when I thought that I had everything, I shut the door and started our walk. We walked along by the sea, watched the boats, the sea gulls and marvelled at the delights of a warm Felpham Summer Day. When we reached the Lobster Pot Café, we decided now was a time for a coffee, so we stopped. It was then I realized that I did not have everything I needed, I had forgotten a mask, so no coffee!



Now I am not necessarily suggesting that there is a direct theological connection between Psalm 23, and my failure to take a mask with me so I didn't have my coffee, but the incident did remind me of the fact that, whilst God does provide and cares for all our needs and wants, my human efforts do not.

David would have chosen the image of a shepherd because he knew how a shepherd looked after his flock, how every one of the sheep was important, how he would nurture them, protect them, and keep them safe.

It is also an image that Jesus used several times, he described himself as being the Good Shepherd, and told the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Those who heard Jesus preach would also have been familiar with the imagery of a shepherd. Partly, because, at that time there would have been shepherds caring for their sheep in the

hills around Galilea, and partly because they knew the history of their King David. They would have known the Psalms and they would have known the song which starts, *'the Lord is my shepherd'*.

In John 10:1-14 where Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd, he says *"I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice, so, there will be one flock, one shepherd"*. I used to be puzzled by that verse, until I read that, in some Mediterranean countries, and in the Holy Land at the time of Jesus, shepherds would herd sheep in a very different way to the way we see them do it in this country. Instead of driving them from behind, using dogs, the shepherd leads the sheep from the front and calls out to the sheep. Amazingly, the sheep recognise the voice of the shepherd and follow him.

The Lord is our shepherd, and today, he is calling me, and he is calling you,

As we sing our next hymn let us commit ourselves to, in the words of the final verse *"turn and follow him, and never be the same"* and dedicate ourselves in the coming week *"to move and live and grow in him and he in me"*

RESPONDING

Sing & Pray: Will you come and follow me⁷

1. Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known?

will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

2. Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare, should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer, in you and you in me?

3. Will you let the blinded, see if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean, in you and you in me?

4. Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?

⁷ Will you come and follow me, by John Bell and Graham Maule © Iona Community, StF673

Will you use the faith you've found, to reshape the world around?
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

5. Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go, where your love and footsteps show.
Thus, I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Intercessory Prayers

Gracious God, hear us as we pray for your world and your people.
We pray for those places throughout the world that suffer from the environmental damage that has been caused by the way which we have used the resources you have given us. Grant us the courage and skills to correct that damage and the wisdom to be better stewards of your world in the future.

We pray for people who suffer because we have chosen to build barriers between each other. Barriers caused because we have failed to see that everyone is equal and the same as each other. Grant us the courage and skills to challenge injustice in all its forms and the honesty to recognise prejudice in the things we do and speak. We pray for the people who are suffering, the poor, the homeless, the hungry. For those who are lonely and unloved, the aged and those who are ill in whatever way. There are so many people who need your love, too many to name but you know who they are. But Loving God, in a moment of silence, we bring before you those we especially hold dear in our hearts whether they are family, friends, members of our churches or simply strangers.

Lord, you have given us and so many others, gifts, talents, and many opportunities to spread your love and to care for each other. So, we pray that you will help us, individually and as your disciples, to use what we have been given to tell and show the world about your love. We pray that in the coming days and for ever, we will move and live and grow in you and you in us.

We bring our prayers together as we share the prayer Jesus taught... ***Our Father...***

Blessing

Go out into the world rejoicing, for God is waiting to meet you.
May what you have shared in here, transform all you do.
Go and walk with him in the light of his love. Amen

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

Gathering Words: Isaiah 55:12

For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Sing, Pray or Reflect: You Shall go out with Joy⁹

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy and the trees of the field
shall clap, shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
and you'll go out with joy.

Prayer¹⁰

God of all, you summon us all,
each and every one welcomed as your guest.
No one should be left behind and no one excluded,
for in your love, you have called all people.

In this moment, you call each one of us by name,
and invite us to sit at your table.

We come to see your Son, crucified for us, and risen,
the sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world.
Lord, forgive us.

God of eternity, you call us now, this is the time!
We come to worship, we come at your call,
we come to the one who died that we might live,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Friend. Amen.

⁸ Worship prepared by Dan Balsdon

⁹ You shall go out with joy by Stuart Dauermann and Steffi Geiser © 1975 Lillenas Publishing, StF487

¹⁰ From Worship led at 2021 Methodist Conference, with slight adaption. [Worship resources used at Conference \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://www.methodist.org.uk)

Reading: John 15:1-11

Different bibles translate John 15 language around the vine differently. The NRSV says God 'prunes', the Good News and NIV says 'cuts off'. This language of being cut off can seem quite destructive and leave us feeling a bit unsure - is God about to sever one of our limbs off?

Ok, so that may be being a little too literal in my interpretation, but it perhaps evidences how the language of scripture can lead us to certain understandings that have an impact on our perception of God, and in our living as disciples of Christ.

Yet an equally appropriate translation of the Greek word here is cleanse. If we remember that the purpose of pruning is not to destroy, but to help a plant to direct nutrients efficiently to become more fruitful. Pruning is not about destroying, but about nurturing the plant for stronger, healthier growth - often by removing the fruitful branches to then enable the fruitful bearing of even more fruit.

Sometimes in our lives, and in Church community, the time comes for pruning. For things to end, or change, or be laid down for a time as we ask God how to pick them up again. And there is no doubt that covid has meant that we have laid down all at once more than we ever thought we would – and ask God what and how we are to pick up again.

As we prayerfully discern the future, our service as individuals, and ministry and Christian communities, there are things we may need to lay down, to prune away, in order to make space for other fruitful activity to grow. If and when we lay those things down, we need to end well, declaring purpose fulfilled as we celebrate their fruitfulness, success and value.

**Reflect**

What have you laid down this last year?

What is God calling you to pick up, or not pick up?

What fruitfulness is God calling you towards?

Prayers

Give thanks for the fruitfulness of things laid down

Praise God for the service of those who's ministry has strengthened your faith

pray for those who find endings a struggle

ask for God's grace and guidance as we discern future fruitfulness

Combine your prayers with the prayers of God's church in praying God's will be done as we pray... **Our Father...**

Song, Read, Proclaim: Great is thy faithfulness¹¹

1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see;

all I have needed thy hand hath provided.

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

2. Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Blessing: Isaiah 55:12

For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Acknowledgements

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Bible texts from NRSV unless otherwise stated, www.biblegateway.com

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¹¹ Great is thy faithfulness by Thomas O Chisholm, © 1985 Body Songs, StF No.51

LET'S PRAY.....EVERY DAY

JULY 2021

1 Thess 5:16-18		A Week of thanksgiving prayer
Thurs	1 st	Thank you for Dan & the other recently ordained who have chosen to serve you. Please bless their walks with you as they serve you & their communities.
Fri	2 nd	Thank you for the warm sunshine and all the beautiful growth in our gardens & parks.
Sat	3 rd	Thank you for more healing from Covid in our world and hence more freedom.
Sun	4 th	Thank you for our neighbours, family & friends who have 'kept an eye' on us, during the past 15 months.
Mon	5 th	Thank you for all the ways we can worship you...in Church, on TV, on zoom, by the sea, etc.
Tues	6 th	Thank you the vaccination programme in this country.
Wed	7 th	Thank you for love & laughter.

Psalm 33: 12-15		A week of prayer for our world "God of the Universe...."
Thurs	8 th	We pray for India, for the vaccine to be received and used across the country. We pray for healing.....
Fri	9 th	We pray for Israeal & Palestine for peace & love to cover every man, woman & child. We pray for healing...
Sat	10 th	We pray for those who are afraid to emerge from this pandemic.... We pray for healing.....
Sun	11 th	We pray for those whose mental health has been greatly affected. We pray for peace.....
Mon	12 th	We pray for all refugees, searching for peace and a place to rest. We pray for healing.....
Tues	13 th	We pray for those trying to deal with the oil spill in Sri Lanka. We pray for safety and all the sealife.....
Wed	14 th	We pray for all involved with the G7 summit, that their work will continue long after the meeting.

Prov 18:10	A week of prayer for our community. <i>God of our towns and our homes....</i>	
Thurs	15 th	For the work of our local GP surgeries, medical centres, dentists, opticians and the Covid vaccination centres.
Fri	16 th	Our local hospitals, Dr's, nurses, paramedics, care workers, especially those exhausted from the past 15 months.
Sat	17 th	For the Foodbank, My Sister's House, Stone Pillow, Grandad's Front Room, The Hub, Eco shop, Jeneses.
Sun	18 th	For all in the education system, working hard to support our children and young people.
Mon	19 th	For all who work with those with mental health problems.
Tues	20 th	For the police, fire brigade, ambulance service, lifeboat service.
Wed	21 st	For all the men and women serving us in our shops, bringing our deliveries, keeping life moving.

Isaiah 41:10	A week of prayer for ourselves. <i>"Healing God"</i>	
Thurs	22 nd	We pray for our families, whether we ask for your blessing or forgiveness & reconciliation.
Fri	23 rd	We pray for our friends, whether there is joy or sadness.
Sat	24 th	We pray for those needing operations/treatment.
Sun	25 th	We pray for those awaiting appointments/test results.
Mon	26 th	We pray for those unemployed, struggling to make ends meet.
Tues	27 th	We pray for those who are sad & lonely.
Wed	28 th	We pray for those grieving and in pain.

Rom 15:13	Prayer for hope: <i>"God of all hope"</i>	
Thurs	29 th	We pray for those we know who live without You.
Fri	30 th	We pray for those praying for a miracle.
Sat	31 st	We pray for those suffering with depression & anxiety.

**GOD
IS WITH**



*you
me*

us

