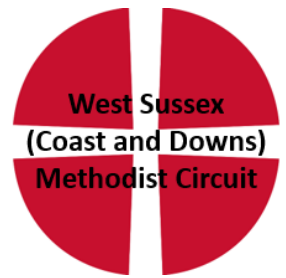


Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

January 2022



Worshipping Together comprises an act of worship for the month, with a different set reading and reflection for each week, 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 God's ever-present Spirit.

We invite you to use **Worshipping Together** 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.

Please share these resources with others.

Also available at: www.westsussexcoastanddownscircuit.co.uk

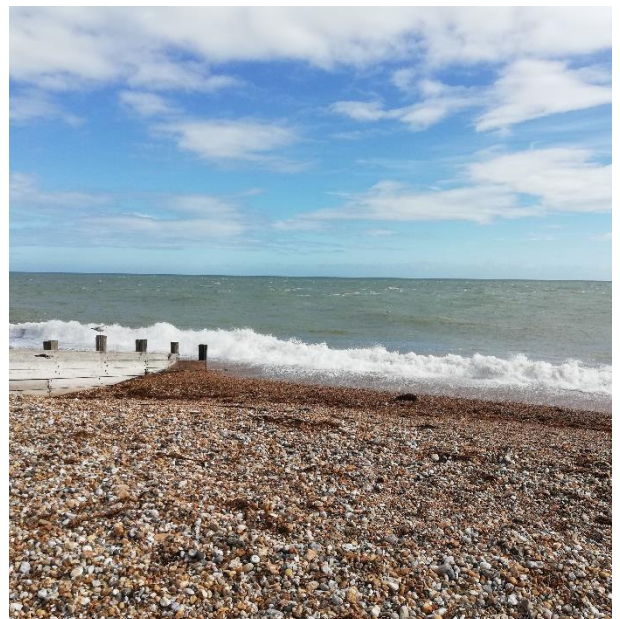
As you prepare to worship, you may like a period of quiet, or to light a candle. Become aware of God's already present presence.

GATHERING

Gathering Words: Psalm 29v1-4

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendour.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, over mighty waters.
The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.



Sing: All my hope on God is founded¹

1. All my hope on God is founded ;
he doth still my trust renew.

Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.

God unknown, he alone,
calls my heart to be his own.

2. Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust ;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.

But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

3. God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom passing thought ;
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of nought.

Evermore, from his store,
new-born worlds rise and adore.

4. Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.

Christ doth call, one and all,
ye who follow shall not fall.

Prayers of praise²

God, who created the heavens and the earth, you are the source of our life.
When we forsake you, you seek us out,
when we return to you, you are gentle and merciful.

Your son came to be our Saviour, taking our nature upon him.
He was baptised by John in the Jordan, identifying himself with sinners,
not turning aside from our humankind but meeting us in our need.

He shared our death on the cross, and was raised by your mighty power.
Through baptism and the Holy Spirit we are born again in him,
united with his body, and called to share in his mission.
Baptised into his death, we have victory over death through him.

United with him in a resurrection like his, we rejoice in the glorious hope
that we shall live with him forever.

To him, with you and your life-giving Spirit,
be all honour and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

¹ Robert Bridges (1844–1930) (alt.)

based on Joachim Neander (1650–1680) StF No.455

² From 'Praying with the scriptures' by Neil Dixon, p19

Below are readings and reflections for each week of January.

These 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.

Jesus as one of us

Week beginning Sunday 9th January

Reading: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

One of the things I have always found fascinating and attractive about Methodism is our strong emphasis on ministry being the call and responsibility of the whole people of God. Collaborating with one another, and seeking the will of God's Spirit among us, ordained and lay, employed and volunteer, young and old, are all equally called to serve together in the mission of being God's church. All of us are to be encouraged and empowered to use our gifts, passions, interests and skills for the work of God, as far as we are able.

Reading the story Luke tells of Jesus' Baptism, it almost seems to be an afterthought to tell us that Jesus has been baptised. Luke first tells us that all the people have been baptised, and then adds that Jesus also had been too. It was then, after the people and Jesus had been baptised, that the Holy Spirit descended.

It seems to me that for Luke it is important that despite how special and unique Jesus was, Jesus was also like us, human, in equality with us. Despite Jesus being God, the powerful truth of the incarnation is Jesus came to live with us and work with us in equality.

Follow up: Read & Reflect on Philippians 2.





The Best is yet to come

Week beginning Sunday 16th January

Reading: John 2:1-11

This week the lectionary segues away from Luke and into the gospel of John. Here we read John's first account of a Jesus-miracle; water turned to wine.

It was normal in those days that the best wine would be served first, then once everyone was a bit drunk the 'not-best' wine could come out and no one would be any the wiser because they were already a bit drunk anyway. So the idea that the best wine had been saved till last ran counter to the cultural norms of hospitality. It was absurd to think that the best had been saved till last.

I wonder if this is the metaphor John was using when he placed the story of this Jesus-miracle where he did in his gospel. Pointing out to the reader that after many centuries of God providing for the people he calls his, now the next chapter is unfolding, and it is the best bit.

But interestingly, John also tells of mother Mary's role in this miracle. Jesus is pushed on by his mother to make this miracle happen. Who might God be speaking to you through today, pushing you on to fulfil Gods plan for your life?

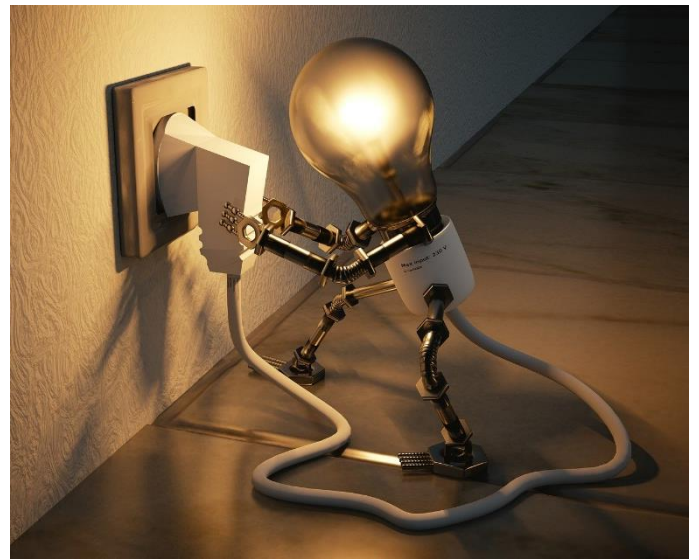
Follow up: Reflect on how God has spoken to you through others in your life. give thanks to God for them.

The right power source

Week beginning Sunday 23rd January

Read: Luke 4:14-21

I don't know about you but in my house there are a lot of devices that need a charging cable. Some charging cables are the same but others are different and it's not unusual in our house to get confused between which is the right one. Get it wrong and the device won't charge because the power is not getting to it correctly.



In our Christian lives, getting power from the right source is essential. The reading today begins by telling us Jesus was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a really important part of the story because in the verses that precede this one we have just witnessed Jesus put to the test. Tested to turn stones to bread; to find power in material things. Tested with having dominion over the world; to find power through ruling over others. Tested to command Gods very angels to save him from death; to find power through controlling life and death.

But Jesus has not found power in those places, but in God's Spirit. Sometimes the gospels might feel like they're all about Jesus, and that may be true, but they are also all about the gift Jesus gives to us. Jesus did not just live and then disappear, Jesus left his Spirit with us so that we to can find the right power source for our Christian lives.

Follow Up: Read & Reflect on Isaiah 61 (the text Jesus quotes in today's passage from Luke)

To Unfamiliar & Unexpected

Week beginning Sunday 30th January

Read: Luke 4:21-30



In a pastoral conversation this week the person I was talking to reminded me of a story of a congregation turning up to a first service with their new minister. The congregation was full of expectation but the new minister was nowhere to be

seen. The only the only person that was to be seen was a homeless person curled up just outside the front door asleep. As the service began it was announced that the minister hadn't turned up, when low and behold the homeless person walked up to the front, laid their sleeping back down and took off their coat to reveal themselves as the new minister. The congregation were shocked, and guilty that they had all ignored their sleeping homeless guest.

Our gospel reading today reminds us that God works in the unexpected places. Jesus is in Nazareth, and people can't believe it is Joseph's son. Jesus talks of how a prophet is not welcome in their hometown. Not welcome in their familiar surroundings. The words familiar and family come from the same Latin root, as words talking about the known and the intimate. It seems that here Jesus sows the seed that God may well call us out of our known and comfortable places to the unfamiliar and unexpected.

Follow Up: as the reading goes on, Jesus talks of God's provision for Zarephath (1 Kings 17) and Naaman (2 Kings 5), both people who were deemed at the time to be 'outside' of the community of God's people.

Read their stories and reflect on what God is saying to you through them today.

Prayers of Intercession³

Loving God we pray for your church:

for all those baptised into the household of faith.

***Come, Holy Spirit, come to your people;
comfort us and encourage us: fire us with your love***

We pray for the worldwide church:

for the poor, the hungry, those caught up in conflict;

for the powerless, persecuted, exploited or oppressed;

***Come, Holy Spirit, come to your people;
comfort us and encourage us: fire us with your love***

We pray for the church in this society:

for the unity that witnesses to the love of Christ;

for a deeper concern to meet human needs;

***Come, Holy Spirit, come to your people;
comfort us and encourage us: fire us with your love***

We pray for the church:

for a wise and loving Nurturing of disciples;

for those who are ill, sorrowful or anxious:

***Come, Holy Spirit, come to your people;
comfort us and encourage us: fire us with your love***

We pray for ourselves:

that we may remain faithful to our baptismal promises;

that we may hold fast to your promises to us.

***Come, Holy Spirit, come to your people;
comfort us and encourage us: fire us with your love***

In the name of your beloved son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, **Amen.**

³ Adapted from 'Intercessions' by Christine Odell, p124.

Sing: Jesus the name high over all⁴

1. Jesus — the name high over all,
in hell, or earth, or sky!

Angels revere, and nations fall,
and devils fear and fly.

2. Jesus — the name to sinners dear,
the name to sinners given!

It scatters all their guilty fear,
it turns their hell to heaven.

3. Jesus - the prisoner's fetters breaks,
and bruises Satan's head;
power into strengthless souls it speaks,
and life into the dead.

4. O that the world might taste and see
the riches of his grace!

The arms of love that compass me
would all the earth embrace.

5. His only righteousness I show,
his saving grace proclaim;

'tis all my business here below
to cry: 'Behold the Lamb!'

6. Happy if with my latest breath
I might but gasp his name;

preach him to all, and cry in death:
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'

Closing Prayer⁵

The God we worship is our strength and our song.

The God we serve is our courage and our reward.

The God we trust is our hope and our joy.

He now sends us out to declare his glory and to serve in his name.



Acknowledgements

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⁴ Jesus – the name by Charles Wesley, StF357

⁵ From 500 More Prayers for all occasions, David Clowes, p311