

Worship for Trinity Sunday (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Hello, I am David Greenwood and it is my pleasure and my privilege to welcome you to our worship this week for the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit.

There are a number of people who've been involved in putting this service together: our readers are Margaret Weir and Ann Howe, and Sam McBratney will be leading us in our reflections on those readings.

As ever the greater thanks goes to those who work behind the scenes to pull all this together: and we thank Andrew Barker who so wonderfully has stitched these various videos together and to Kate Tennyson who brings the words together for those who are reading the service.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Let us just hold a short moment of quiet as we bring ourselves before God in worship.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength
ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name
ascribe to the Lord and worship him in holy splendour.

This week is Trinity Sunday and our opening hymn is perhaps the hymn that we most associate with this day – Singing the Faith number 11, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, God in three persons blessed Trinity

Hymn: StF 11 – Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

- 1. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!**
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:

**holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!**

- 2. Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around
the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before
thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.**
- 3. Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide
thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may
not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside
thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.**
- 4. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth
and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!**

Reginald Heber (1783–1826) (*alt.*)

Opening Prayers

Let us pray
Mighty and gracious God
to you be all thanks and praise.
You set your glory above the heavens
we worship you in your holy splendour.
When we look up and see the sky, the moon
and the stars which you have established,
we wonder that you should care for us
mere mortals.

You created the universe by your powerful word
and saw that it was good,

you made humankind in your image
and gave your Son for our redemption.
In his life, death and resurrection
we discover your loving purpose.
Through him we have been born anew of water
and the Spirit.

Through him we have peace with you
and rejoice in the hope of sharing your glory
as joint heirs with Christ our saviour.

By the Holy Spirit given to us,
your love has been poured into our hearts,
your spirit dwells within us
revealing the truth of Christ
and strengthening us to proclaim the gospel,
teaching, baptizing and making disciples in every
nation.

Mighty and gracious God
to you be all thanks and praise.

But as we come before you in worship,
we recognize who and what we are
our weaknesses and our failings.

You are holy,
but we are sinners in need of forgiveness;
you are gracious,
but we are jealous and proud;
you are righteous,
but we are unjust and uncaring;
you are faithful,
but we are false and unreliable;
you are loving,
but we are selfish and unkind.

For the sake of your Son, eternal God,
forgive us,
restore your image within us
and strengthen us by your Spirit.

Let us hear the words of Christ:
'your sins are forgiven'
and in that knowledge let us go out renewed
to live and work out his gospel.

This we pray in the name of our saviour, Jesus
Christ who taught us to pray saying

**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.**

Our second hymn also reflects our worship today
for the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the
Godhead three in one. It's number 15 in Singing
the Faith – The splendour of the King clothed in
majesty. How great is our God.

Hymn: StF 15 - The splendour of the King

**1. The splendour of the King,
clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice,
let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light
and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice,
and trembles at his voice.**

*How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.*

**2. And age to age he stands,
and time is in his hands;
beginning and the end,
beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One,**

**Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb,
the Lion and the Lamb.**

***How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.***

**Name above all names,
worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing:
how great is our God.
Name above all names,
worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing:
how great is our God.**

***How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God, and all will see
how great, how great is our God.***

Chris Tomlin (b. 1972), Ed Cash and Jesse Reeves

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Isaiah 6:1-8 (NRSVA)

A Vision of God in the Temple

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ²Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³And one called to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’

⁴The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: ‘Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’

⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’ ⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’

Psalm 29 (NRSVA)

The Voice of God in a Great Storm

¹Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

²Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendour.

³The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

⁴The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

⁵The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, ‘Glory!’

¹⁰The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king for ever.

¹¹May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

Epistle Romans 8:12-17 (NRSVA)

¹²So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will

die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Gospel John 3:1-17 (NRSVA)

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

¹Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.'
⁴Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'
⁹Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' ¹⁰Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you

do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Sermon

'In the year that King Uzziah died ...' Isaiah sees a great vision in the Temple in Jerusalem. He might have also seen his P45 because his ministry had begun to flourish under this King and was now in jeopardy. It would be fair to say that the Middle East has been in turmoil for approximately 4000 years, and peace and stability has been the exception rather than the rule. After five decades of relatively peaceful rule by Uzziah, the prophet knows that there's trouble ahead! Uzziah's reign will become Biblical code for 'the good old days!'

Like Isaiah, we are heading into a new period of uncertainty and instability as the world continues to struggle with the global pandemic. We might be hankering after the 'good old days' when we didn't have to think about masks and hand sanitizer and risk assessments. Or further back to times when the pews were crammed with people of all ages - but especially children – and Church fêtes were never ruined by rain or cloud: those are the times that really stick in the memory.

Like Isaiah, we live in anxious times. Faith in the business of politics itself has been critically damaged as our leaders struggle to offer answers in the midst of uncertainty. Anxiety often forces us to turn inward, as individuals, organisations, and societies, in a vain attempt to find a secure place from which to face the future. But it is a false security if it seeks to build barriers rather than bridges.

The Church is not immune from this. In the last decade, the Methodist Church, like all mainline denominations, has witnessed significant decline, and a growing sense that life is going on without us. The real fear that the Methodist Church in Britain might cease to exist within our lifetime is ever present though rarely acknowledged. In an anxious and nervous world, it is hard to resist the zeitgeist; fear is contagious
....

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah is swept up in a vision of God that fills the Temple and overwhelms his mind. Thrones and robes and earthquakes and weird angels calling to one another – but they are not important. They are the window dressing of this vision, which is about Isaiah lifting his eyes above the fear and anxiety. For prophets are not the manufacturers of visions, and if they try to do it by themselves, they fail those they serve. If the Church of God is to be a prophetic presence, it is borne out of being captivated by a vision of God's love and generosity that shakes us to our foundations.

It was that vision which captivated the disciples and turned them into apostles, that captivated St Patrick, St Augustine of Canterbury, St Hilda and St Brigid, St Alban, St Aidan and St Columba, whose sacrificial labours mean that we sit here as Christians today. We sometimes forget that European Christianity is a result of missionary activity too.

John Wesley declared that the whole world was his parish. In times of uncertainty and change, there is always a danger that the parish becomes our world rather than the other way around. The urgent so often crowds out the important from our agendas. I once heard a prayer of confession that went: 'O God, how often we must bore you as often as we offend you.'

Or to paraphrase Jesus: 'The wearisome and disgruntled you will always have with you!' It is easy to be distracted by our own needs and fail to see the needs of others.

In times of disorientation, it is important to take time to trace our route and map our direction of travel. In spiritual terms, this means telling our stories and listening to those we have inherited from others. Not stories of when we were successful or powerful, but stories of when we felt the love of God.

It is like asking a couple to tell us when they fell in love. Tell us that moment when your heart skipped a beat and you knew. Tell us that moment when the inklings you had been toying with for a while suddenly sparked into life. Tell us when God's love filled your heart and mind and gave you the energy and courage and vision to live in new ways.

We tell our stories not for our benefit, but for our children's. It is the stories of faith that have sustained us to this point and will carry us on into the unknown future. Our faith is not nurtured by good ideas or nifty strategies, or even by running the church reasonably competently. A healthy bank balance is no indication of a healthy soul or church.

The late great Donald English once asked a group of preachers, including me: Do you still love God, or do you just work for him now?

The answer to that question is our map to the future.

Our next hymn is part of the response to those readings, as we look to live out the love of God in our world: Singing the Faith, number 398 – There's a Spirit in the air, calling people everywhere, praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working in our world

Hymn: StF 398 – There's a spirit in the air

- 1. There's a spirit in the air,
telling Christians everywhere:
'Praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world!'**
- 2. Lose your shyness, find your tongue,
tell the world what God has done:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today!**
- 3. When believers break the bread,
when a hungry child is fed,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.**
- 4. Still the Spirit gives us light,
seeing wrong and setting right:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today!**
- 5. When a stranger's not alone,
where the homeless find a home,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.**
- 6. May the Spirit fill our praise,
guide our thoughts and change our ways.
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today.**
- 7. There's a Spirit in the air,
calling people everywhere:**

**praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.**

Brian Wren (*b.* 1936)

Prayers of intercession

We come to our prayers of intercession:
It is the nature of these services that I'm being recorded a couple of weeks before you are able to watch me. Such is the pace of change in the world, such is the nature of events, that there will be things on your heart, people on your heart, that I am unaware of as I record. I will leave space in our prayers for each of us to bring our own prayers.

Let us pray,

God of all love

we pray for our world – a world of division,
of haves and have-nots.

A world of war and violence.

We pray for places where there is fighting.

We pray for those caught up in the violence.

As we begin to come out of lockdown,
we pray for places in the world where Covid is rife,
where health services are overwhelmed.

We pray for those in particular need at this time.
We pray for the changes in our country over the last year

for the hundreds of thousands whose jobs have gone

for the empty spaces in our high street,
for those who face an uncertain future.

We pray for those whose lives have been changed by the illness.

We pray for those suffering from long-term Covid.

We pray for those who have been bereaved.

We hold those known to us before our God in prayer.

We pray for our churches as we come out of lockdown,
as we begin to meet and worship together.
May we find new ways to share your love to a needy world
to our communities
and in particular to those in need.
Help us together and individually
to be the Church, the disciples you call us to be
at this time.

We bring these and all our prayers
in the name of our risen and ascended saviour,
Jesus

Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

When I was at college the Methodists claimed Charles Wesley as the father of our hymnody; if I trained alongside Anglicans, no doubt they would have claimed Isaac Watts as the father of their hymnody. I did train alongside members of the United Reform Church and they claimed Philip Doddridge as the founder of the reformed hymnody and we're going to sing one of his hymns to close. It's another hymn that challenges us in the power of the spirit to go out and proclaim the love of God, in word and deed in our world. To become part of the bright succession of disciples of Christ down the millennia, who have followed his calling. It's number 669 – The Saviour when to heaven he rose,
in splendid triumph for his foes
scattered his gifts on us below
and wide his royal bounties flow.

Hymn: StF 669 – The Saviour when to heaven he rose

**1. The Saviour, when to heaven he rose,
in splendid triumph o'er his foes,
scattered his gifts on us below,
and wide his royal bounties flow.**

- 2. Hence sprung the apostles' honoured name,
sacred beyond heroic fame;
in lowlier forms, to bless our eyes,
pastors from hence, and teachers rise.**
- 3. From Christ their varied gifts derive,
and, fed by Christ, their graces live;
while, guarded by his mighty hand,
midst all the rage of hell they stand.**
- 4. So shall the bright succession run
through the last courses of the sun;
while unborn Churches by their care
shall rise and flourish large and fair.**
- 5. Jesus our Lord their hearts shall know —
the Spring whence all these blessings flow;
pastors and people shout his praise
through all the round of endless days.
Amen.**

Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)

Prayer & blessing

Thank you for sharing in our worship today.

And now a blessing:

God to enfold you

Christ to uphold you

Spirit to keep you in heaven's sight.

So may God grace you

heal and embrace you

lead you through darkness into the light

Amen.

Copyright Notices

Hymn Words:

One Licence

The following hymns / songs are reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE, License # **A-736737**. All rights reserved

StF 398 – There's a spirit in the air

Brian Wren (*b.* 1936)

Words: © 1969, 1995, Stainer & Bell Ltd, 23 Gruneisen Road, London N3 1DZ www.stainer.co.uk

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number **398**

Integrity Music

The following hymns / songs are reprinted with permission from Integrity Music, under License number **007316**. All rights reserved

StF 15 - The splendour of the King

Chris Tomlin (*b.* 1972), Ed Cash and Jesse Reeves

Words and Music: © 2004 worshiptogether.com Songs / Sixsteps Music Administered by Kingswaysongs, a division of David C Cook <tym@kingsway.co.uk> for the UK & Europe, and Alletrop Music / SongSolutions CopyCare www.songsolutions.org

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number **15**

Public Domain

The following hymns are all in the Public Domain.

StF 11 – Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

Reginald Heber (1783–1826) (*alt.*)

Based on Revelation 4:8-11

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number **11**.

StF 669 – The Saviour when to heaven he rose

Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number **669**.

Bible Verses

NRSV & NRSVA

Scripture quotations marked NRSVA are from New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

*If you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on
07578 640013 or swc.katetennyson@gmail.com*