

Worship for 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome: to worship for 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time. We are grateful to all who are taking part this week. If any of you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on swc.katetennyson@gmail.com

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

(Words based on Isaiah 44 6-8)

We come into God's presence knowing that today we share worship with Peter as our superintendent for the last time. Remembering the good times, we have shared and giving thanks for his friendship and care.

We come praising God, for who is like the Lord – He is our King and our Redeemer – the Lord Almighty – the first and the last – apart from him there is no God.

We proclaim God's Greatness as we join together in singing our first hymn....

Hymn: Great Things *Phil Wickham*

**Come let us worship our King
Come let us bow at His feet
He has done great things
See what our Saviour has done
See how His love overcomes
He has done great things
He has done great things**

**Oh hero of Heaven, You conquered the grave
You free every captive and break every chain
Oh God, You have done great things
We dance in Your freedom, awake and alive
Oh Jesus, our Saviour, Your name lifted high
Oh God, You have done great things**

**You've been faithful through every storm
You'll be faithful forevermore
You have done great things
And I know You will do it again
For Your promise is "Yes and amen"
You will do great things
God, You do great things**

**Oh hero of Heaven, You conquered the grave
You free every captive and break every chain
Oh God, You have done great things
We dance in Your freedom, awake and alive
Oh Jesus, our Saviour, Your name lifted high
Oh God, You have done great things**

**Hallelujah God, above it all
Hallelujah God, unshakable
Hallelujah, You have done great things
Hallelujah God, above it all
Hallelujah God, unshakable
Hallelujah, You have done great things
You've done great things**

**Oh hero of Heaven, You conquered the grave
You free every captive and break every chain
Oh God, You have done great things
We dance in Your freedom, awake and alive
Oh Jesus, our Saviour, Your name lifted high
Oh God, You have done great things**

**You have done great things
Oh God, You do great things**

Prayer of approach

(Based on Psalm 86)

Teach us oh, God your way,
that we may rely on your faithfulness;
give us an undivided heart,
that we may worship your name.

Great is your love toward us;
you have delivered us from the depths,
from the realm of the dead.

You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious
God,
slow to anger, abounding in love and
faithfulness.

Turn to us now and have mercy on us.

Prayers of adoration

When Jesus was confronted for allowing children
to praise him, he replied "From the lips of
children and infants you, Lord, have called forth
your praise" so for our prayers of adoration
today we are led by our children (see recording
of Take 3 children's prayers)

Prayer of confession

Lord God, you give us so much – so many good
gifts.

Food to spare, clean fresh water. Safe homes,
security.

But yet, Lord God, so often we take these things
for granted

We find ourselves wanting more.

Father Forgive.

Lord you ask us to care for the needs of the
vulnerable.

For the elderly and the weak,
you ask us to shine your light into our
communities.

But often we are too busy doing the things that
please us

And we forget to do the things that please you

Father Forgive

Lord God, during this Coronavirus we have
focused too much on feeling sorry for ourselves
We have forgotten to consider those who are
affected worse than we are

For the small business owners, for those losing
their jobs, for those working hard to stack our
shelves.

For those in poverty both in this country and
around the world who struggle to feed their
families

We have put our desires to return to the lives we
once knew ahead of the safety of our
neighbours.

Father Forgive

Lord God we acknowledge before you the past
mistakes of state and church

For the churches failure to be fully inclusive

For times when the church has lacked courage

For times when we have failed to feed the
hungry and to protect the vulnerable

We recognise our own individual failings to speak
out and be counted

Father Forgive

And now in a moment of silence, let us recall to
mind anything that we personally need to bring
to God asking him to forgive and to set us right.

In the stillness of this time and space, we hear
the kind, gentle loving whisper of our Lord and
Saviour as he tells us

– My child – you are forgiven – you are loved –
you are free to go and live life knowing that your
sins are forgiven

Amen

Hymn: StF 422 – Father we have sinned

- 1. Father, we have sinned
in word, and deed, and thought,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through deliberate fault:
we've sinned against our neighbours
and against you, Lord,
yet we are truly sorry,
and we turn to you once more.**
- 2. Father of the nations,
you who bless the poor,
we're servants of the endless want
and drive for more.
We've made our greed a virtue,
while the children starve;**

**come, change our joy to sorrow.
till our lives reflect your heart.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading: Isaiah 44:6-8

(New Revised Standard Version)

⁶ Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel,
and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
⁷ Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to
come?
Let them tell us what is yet to be.
⁸ Do not fear, or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one

Psalm: Psalm 86:11-17

(New Revised Standard Version)

¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your
name.
¹² I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my
whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.
¹³ For great is your steadfast love toward me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of
Sheol.
¹⁴ O God, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.
¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and
gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love
and faithfulness.
¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;

save the child of your serving girl.
¹⁷ Show me a sign of your favour,
so that those who hate me may see it and be
put to shame,
because you, Lord, have helped me and
comforted me.

Epistle: Romans 8:12-25

(New International Version)

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an
obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live
according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the
flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to
death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.
¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are
the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received
does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear
again; rather, the Spirit you received brought
about your adoption to sonship. And by him we
cry, “*Abba, Father.*” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies
with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now
if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of
God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share
in his sufferings in order that we may also share
in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not
worth comparing with the glory that will be
revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager
expectation for the children of God to be
revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to
frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will
of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the
creation itself will be liberated from its bondage
to decay and brought into the freedom and glory
of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been
groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to
the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we
ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,
groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our
adoption to sonship, the redemption of our

bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Gospel Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

(New International Version)

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Sermon

Text: Romans 8.15-17

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.

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the reading from Matthew today, Jesus tells a parable about a field of wheat that is sown with weeds. Darnel is a weed that looks much like the wheat of the area at that time. I managed to find a photograph to show you of the two next to one another. I think you will agree they are remarkably similar, especially when still green, before the wheat matures ready for harvest.



WHEAT: before it is fully ripe.



TARES: Lolium Temulentum

Of course, there are some in our circuit who still farm or have a farming background and in this comparison I am hardly able to teach them anything. However, it is evidence that even this city boy can learn something of the ways of the agricultural world whilst I have been in South Warwickshire.

In the parable, the servants ask their master if they should pull up the weeds, but the master says the two should grow together. Until both are fully grown it is hard to identify the weeds from the wheat. The root of the darnel is also much longer than that of the wheat, so pulling up the weeds while the healthy crop was growing could cause damage to the wheat crop.

In this part of Paul's letter to the Romans, he continues to work with the tension between living according to the flesh or the Spirit. However, he moves on to declare that believers are adopted as children of God, and in what is probably an echo of Jesus' words also found in the later compiled Gospels, for example Mark 14.36, the moment when Jesus prays that the suffering cup of crucifixion be taken from him he uses the same language when he says that we can call God Abba – 'father'. It is expressing a relationship that is echoed in Galatians 4, when Paul speaks of the Spirit that dwells within us that makes us children of God. However, interwoven with the honour of being children and joint heirs with Christ, and the glory awaiting us, is the theme of suffering, illustrated by the pains of childbirth. This suffering is not restricted to believers suffering with or because of faith in Christ but is experienced by the whole of creation. Paul expands our vision to the bigger picture. The work of God in Christ is then set on a cosmic stage as Paul describes creation eagerly awaiting the fulfilment of God's work as it looks forward to release from slavery to decay. What precisely these verses mean has been much debated, especially in the light of recent discussions about the environment. At face

value, they imply that Christ's redemptive event affects all living things and not just humans. What is clear is that the term 'creation' in verses 20 and 21, refers to non-human creation, and that its fate seems bound up, in a positive sense, with the work of God in Christ. Creation, pictured as a woman in labour, may be groaning but it has hope for a good outcome.

These passages all have something to say about the power of God and God's action in the world. But they also all testify to the ongoing presence of evil and suffering. Jesus preaches that the kingdom is near, and Paul says that believers are now children of God, but both describe situations where the kingdom of God coexists with other incompatible elements that still cause 'stumbling'.

The master's response in the gospel passage is helpful, as it reassures the reader that he knows what is going on and has a solution to bring about a healthy and full harvest.

It is a fact of our existence that good exists alongside evil and ongoing temptations, until the end of time. But this reading reminds us that we are not in charge, and that we are called to live together with all the imperfections of the world.

The whole world has been going through some unprecedented times and they look set to continue for some while yet. We may not have been in this exact situation before, but this is certainly not the first humanity, and the whole planet, have faced tragedy and a deep feeling of helplessness.

It is testimony to the Spirit's divine presence that human beings have found ways to be amazingly creative in the most testing of circumstances. Many of you will know that my old dad served in World War Two. He and I enjoy sharing his memories and I usually only have to offer a couple of well thought through questions to set him off in his reminiscences. The other day we were talking about how the war affected

everyone across the world and how, during such a terrible time, so much was invented that we still benefit from today. This is a list we came up with. I am sure you could add your own; radar, radio navigation and landing (which my dad worked on for a while), synthetic rubber, penicillin, jet engines, space travel, nuclear power, and computers.

As we have already seen in this parable, told to the crowds, the sown seeds are of two sorts: the food crop wheat, and non-food weeds. The weed is probably darnel, common in wheat fields, which looks remarkably like wheat until the seed heads form. However, it has deeper roots than wheat; consequently, pulling it up at an early stage risked pulling up the wheat with it. Later, when the separation is easier, the weeds would normally have been gathered and used as fuel, as the story indicates. We must be careful not to only see the weeds and overlook the wheat that is also there before us.

The reading then jumps to the disciples asking for an explanation of the parable. Jesus portrays himself as the sower, the 'Son of Man', this term is often used by Matthew as Jesus speaks of himself in the third person. This seed is the 'children of the kingdom' being sown in the field of the world, accompanied by the sowing of the children of the evil one. Thus, Jesus explains the continuing presence of evil despite the advent of the kingdom – it is the result of ongoing enemy action. However, the story continues to promise the eradication of evil at 'the end of the age', which is again portrayed as a time of harvest. The 'causes of sin' in verse 41 can also be translated as 'that which causes stumbling' which we find again in Matthew 18.6-9. This time, the angels go to collect sin out of the kingdom, in contrast to Matthew 24.30-31 where they gather up the chosen. This highlights the need not to press the parable for more information than it is designed to communicate – images mean different things in different

parables!

Most of you will know that this is my last 'official' sermon as a Minister in South Warwickshire. The Methodist system of itinerant ministry may well be creaking at the seams due to a shortage of ministers, but it is very much alive and kicking! It is kicking me from South Warwickshire to Oxford! A relatively short hop and certainly the shortest move I have made in 25 plus years as a minister. As I close this chapter of my call to ministry in South Warwickshire another chapter opens in Oxford. In a few weeks I will have passed over this farewell sermon and put my mind to a welcome sermon. Humbly I ask that you continue to be kind, generous and encouraging to Iain Ballard and his family, Sarah, Miriam, and Joel. Pray for them as you have prayed for me.

It is impossible to remember every encounter, every conversation, or every sermon! But as I have moved from circuit to circuit strong impressions remain, many faces linger, and time spent with many different people unexpectedly come to mind. I can see no reason for that to change at this move. Your faces and personalities will accompany me into the future.

You will be in my prayers as the months and years go on. I continue to pray regularly for people I met and walked a season with during my training and in my first and subsequent appointments. Each day when I pray, I know that sometimes I will be praying for the dead as well as the living, even though I have no idea what lives people have now. My task is to be diligent in prayer without knowing the circumstances, simply bring people and place before God, and leave the rest to the work of the Spirit.

As I move on and in the light of today's readings perhaps I might just offer a few thoughts.

First, I ask God's forgiveness, and yours, for anything I have said or done that has caused anyone to stumble. We all make mistakes and I

know I certainly do. Not everyone of you has liked me, and why should you? Thank God we are only human. Out of our mistakes and sin, God makes something beautiful. Pray for me as I pray for you.

Second, I encourage you to be more and more inclusive in your attitudes to others. Open your arms and your hearts wide. In the parable today I noted that the wheat and the tares grow together. The harvest is yet to come, the growing is not done, and the story is not finished. Judge no one, for such lies in the hands of the master who commands the harvest. Who knows what transformation is yet in God's hands for those God sends our way?

Third, always remember that you are a child of God, adopted into the Way of Christ. Remember also that it is true of all people and all creation, for in God's economy there is room for all. Pray and work for transformation, the bringing of wholeness and reconciliation, between people and for all creation.

These are the priorities I leave with you. Forgive. Include. Transform.

And last of all, but first to heart and mind, as in our reading from Isaiah, declare the greatness and power of God. Seek no praise for yourself. Give God the glory in all things, for there is no other.

AMEN

Hymn: King (Friend of Mine) – ICF Worship

**Who spread out the heavens
Who can move the mountains
His name is Jesus
Friend of sinners, friend of mine**

**Who gave away His glory
Left His throne to save me
His name is Jesus
His name is Jesus
Friend of sinners, friend of mine**

**You are God above it all
Maker of my soul
Your name be praised forever
You have loved me from the start
Ruler of my heart
I surrender and confess
You are my King**

**Who spread out the heavens
Who can move the mountains
His name is Jesus
Friend of sinners, friend of mine
His name is Jesus
Friend of sinners, friend of mine**

**You are God above it all
Maker of my soul
Your name be praised forever
You have loved me from the start
Ruler of my heart
I surrender and confess**

**You are God above it all
Maker of my soul
Your name be praised forever
You have loved me from the start
Ruler of my heart
I surrender and confess
You are my**

**Servant and King
The First and the Last
Everlasting hope, neverending love
You made a way
Bore the cross, brought us life
Everlasting, neverending**

**You are God above it all
Maker of my soul
Your name be praised forever
You have loved me from the start
Ruler of my heart
I surrender and confess**

**You are God above it all
Maker of my soul
Your name be praised forever**

**You have loved me from the start
Ruler of my heart
I surrender and confess
You are my King**

**Who gave away His glory
Left His throne to save me
His name is Jesus
Friend of sinners, friend of mine**

**Be the King of my heart
The King of my soul
Come have your way in me, God
Be the King of my heart
The King of my soul
And come have your way in me, Jesus**

**Servant and King
The First and the Last
Everlasting hope, neverending love
You made a way
Bore the cross, brought us life
Everlasting, neverending**

(REPEAT THRICE)

**You are God above it all
Maker of my soul
Your name be praised forever
You have loved me from the start
Ruler of my heart
I surrender and confess**

**You are God above it all
Maker of my soul
Your name be praised forever
You have loved me from the start
Ruler of my heart
I surrender and confess
You are my King**

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

Almighty God, we thank you for your daily care.
You know us completely, you know all our needs,
You are familiar with the way we do things.

We thank you for the world around us, for its
wonder and variety
For the beauties of form, and colour, and
texture.

It all looks amazing

We really thank you.

We praise you for the gift of loving and being
loved

For the friendships we have discovered in our
churches and communities

For the way that you have in Jesus shown us how
to care for one another

We are truly grateful.

We thank you for the gift of memory, that prods
us to do better

For visions and dreams which challenge and
inspire us.

When uncertainty clouds our joy, and we despair
of humanity

Thank you for your encouragement and
reassurance,

revealed in the life of Jesus who loved even to
death, and lives again.

Thank you for the opportunities you provide for
us for fresh starts.

Thank you for your presence with us during this
time of worship,

for the technology that makes it possible for us
to share together now.

Generous God, may we live to your praise and
glory.

Amen

Hymn: King of my Heart – Bethel Music

**Let the King of my heart
Be the mountain where I run
The fountain I drink from
Oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart
Be the shadow where I hide**

The ransom for my life
Oh, He is my song

'Cause You are good
You are good, oh-oh
You are good
You are good, oh-oh
You are good
You are good, oh-oh
You are good
You are good, oh-oh

And let the King of my heart
Be the wind inside my sails
The anchor in the waves
Oh-oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart
Be the fire inside my veins
The echo of my days
Oh-oh, He is my song

Let the King of my heart
Be the wind inside my sails
The anchor in the waves
Oh-oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart
Be the fire inside my veins
The echo of my days
Oh, He is my song

'Cause You are good
You are good, oh-oh
You are good
You are good, oh-oh
You are good
You are good, oh-oh
You are good
You are good, oh-oh

You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
And You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down

You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down

Oh 'cause You are good
You are good, oh-oh
'Cause You are good
You are good, oh-oh
'Cause You are good
You are good, oh-oh
You are good
You are good, oh-oh..

You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down...

Prayers of intercession

Jesus spoke of workers sowing seeds, tending fields or cooking or cleaning, gathering harvests, some working imaginatively, and some starting late. Let us pray for all workers:

God of grace,
We pray for workers in the field of the world
Who sow and harvest the food we eat.
We remember before you those in this country
and overseas who are struggling to make a living
from the land and sea, worrying about fair prices
and international tariffs.

Grant them through us fair rewards for their
labour and reassurance of your bounty at a time
of climate change.

We pray for workers in the field of the world
Who stand in solidarity with poor people in our
own communities and help them to find change.

We ask that through what the workers do, and
what we can support, lives might be transformed
and enriched. Empower the workers so that
barren desert lives might blossom and grow.

We pray for workers in the field of the world
Who spread the good news of the gospel
Where hungry people are fed,

Homeless people are given shelter
And people enslaved by prejudice can feel free.

We remember those workers set aside for
ministry and their families, particularly Peter,
Deborah, Anna and Rosie. Lord, grant them the
knowledge of your presence, the assurance of
your guiding call and the strength of your Holy
Spirit.

We pray for the workers in the field of the world
Who support the lives we lead.
We ask for wisdom for those who teach and plan
to reopen schools in safe ways.
We seek courage, skill and patience for those
who heal us in hospitals and care for us at home,
especially during this time of pandemic.
Be alongside people who feed us and entertain
us in our homes and communities.

Lift despair and give hope to all who fear for
their employment, or are unable to find work,
that all workers may hear your praise, "Well
done, you good and faithful servant!"

We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

(Remembering in our hearts those who we know
are in special need)

**Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever
Amen**

The Offering & prayer

Generous God, we offer back to you the money
we have given in various ways for the work of
your church, the love in our hearts and our
responses to the opportunities you provide. We
humbly ask that you accept them all through
Christ our Lord and Saviour.
Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: Cornerstone – Hillsong

**My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus' name**

**My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly trust in Jesus' name**

**Christ alone; cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all**

**When Darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
My anchor holds within the veil**

**Christ alone; cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all
He is Lord
Lord of all**

**Christ alone; cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all**

**Christ alone; cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all**

**When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh, may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless stand before the throne**

Prayer & blessing

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we
meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His
hand.

Amen.