

Worship for Sunday 27th June 2021 (13th Sunday in Ordinary Time)
(complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

It is my pleasure as today's worship leader to welcome you to this service. If you are a newcomer to our services, do bear with us for any unfamiliar words or ways – we are sure there is an item that will be of especial importance for you. If you are a "regular", we are delighted to have you with us again.

Our preacher is the Rev. Jemima Strain, the lessons will be read by Tim Mead from Mickleton Methodist Church and David Gill of Kineton Methodist Church. The service has been put in print by Kate Tennyson and online by Andrew Barker. We are grateful to them all for their contributions. My name is Stafford Mortimer. To take us to the heart of why we're sharing this service, we turn to words from the Bible and to our first hymn.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11. 32-36)

When David Evans, a piano teacher, wrote in this hymn that "the presence of the Lord is here", no doubt he meant in a church or meeting-hall. But wherever you are reading this service – in your home, your garden or while out and about – it's

still true. Look around you and say, "The presence of the Lord is here!"

Singing the Faith number 20.

Hymn: StF 20 – Be still for the presence of the Lord

1. **Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found —
we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.**
2. **Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight —
our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.**
3. **Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him —
in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.**

David J. Evans (b. 1957)

Opening Prayers

Let us pray.

Eternal and gracious God, we come before you, in the name of Jesus Christ and in the company of his Spirit, to rejoice in your goodness. We bless you for the love that constantly surrounds us, for all the blessings of our lives, for the wonder of our world and for our faith in Jesus. Touch our hearts with your living presence and fill our lives with your grace, so that our love for you may grow, our faith deepen, and our service to you and neighbour be strengthened.

Amen.

Let us share the Lord's Prayer.

**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**

In our next hymn, we ask the Holy Spirit to make plain to us the Bible readings that will follow. The magnificent hymn writer Charles Wesley seizes on many images to describe the Spirit's work; among them fire, fountain, key and dove. He ends with the deep and moving declaration: "God through himself we then shall know, if thou within us shine."

Singing the Faith 155: "Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire."

Hymn: StF 155 – Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire."

- 1. Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,
let us thine influence prove;
source of the old prophetic fire,
fountain of life and love.**
- 2. Come, Holy Ghost (for moved by thee
the prophets wrote and spoke),
unlock the truth, thyself the key,
unseal the sacred book.**
- 3. Expand thy wings, celestial Dove,
brood o'er our nature's night;
on our disordered spirits move,
and let there now be light.**
- 4. God through himself we then shall know,
if thou within us shine;
and sound, with all thy saints below,
the depths of love divine.**

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Psalm 130 (NRSVA)

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

² Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

³If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

⁵I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

⁶my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.

⁷O Israel, hope in the Lord!

For with the Lord there is steadfast love,

and with him is great power to redeem.
⁸It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Gospel Mark 5:21-43 (NRSVA)

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

²¹When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. ²²Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' ²⁴So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' ²⁹Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' ³¹And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?"' ³²He looked all round to see who had done it. ³³But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

³⁵While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is

dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' ³⁶But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' ³⁷He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

In preparation for the address, we open our hearts to the Lord by sharing in *Singing the Faith* number 492: "Christ be my leader, by night as by day"

Hymn: StF 492 – Christ be my leader, by night as by day

- 1. Christ be my leader by night as by day;
safe through the darkness, for he is the way.
Gladly I follow, my future his care,
darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.**
- 2. Christ be my teacher in age as in youth,
drifting or doubting, for he is the truth.
Grant me to trust him; though shifting as
sand,
doubt cannot daunt me; in Jesus I stand.**

**3. Christ be my Saviour in calm as in strife;
death cannot hold me, for he is the life.
Nor darkness nor doubting nor sin and its
stain
can touch my salvation; with Jesus I reign.**

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

Sermon

‘Do you have a Pop’s Surprise for me?’

Every Thursday my dad (also known as Pop’s to my small humans) comes to join in the school/preschool run and stands safely away from the hustle and bustle of the school gate. And so, every Thursday as I pick up the 4-year-old, he asks with hope and expectation, ‘Do you have a Pop’s surprise for me?’

There have been so many months of lockdown. Followed by months of not touching.

There was the lovely time we went to Compton Verney and walked around the grounds finding little arty creatures that had been created to make a trail. But still no touching.

‘Yes, we can see them [Grandparents] today, but still no touching.’

The strangest of things we’ve had to do this past year. The two small humans had found huge sticks and called them the ‘social distance sticks.’ So, as they walked around the grounds, my small humans could hold one end and my parents (small humans’ grandparents) could hold the other end, and somehow, they felt connected.

After months of limited or no physical contact it has been lifted. So, on a Thursday, when my four-year-old catches a glimpse of his Pop’s, he runs at top speed and throws himself into the arms that embrace and hold tightly. This moment is still my favourite moment of the week, even if I am only a bystander. If I could

capture this moment of physical touch of love, adoration, safety, protection and joy.

As humans, we crave connection and interaction, and touching is one of our instincts.

Humans are born needing to experience touch. The minute we come out of the womb, we move to our mother’s breast. Science shows [skin-to-skin contact](#) is one of the most essential and initial experiences we have after taking our first breath.

When we are touched, we release [oxytocin](#), a hormone responsible for regulating positive moods and making us feel happy.

Today’s Gospel reading there are two stories where touch brings healing. In one story Jesus touches the hand of a twelve-year-old girl who was dead and restores her to life. In the other story a woman who has been bleeding for twelve years touches Jesus and is restored to full health.

There is a reason why Mark interweaves both of these stories and it might be illuminating to discover why.

Let us look at the little girl first. She doesn’t come from an ordinary family. She is the daughter of Jairus who is the leader of the synagogue. Everyone knows her and loves her and when she falls sick, everyone is deeply concerned about her. Especially her father, who makes his way to Jesus in the middle of a huge crowd and falls at his feet begging him to come and heal his child. And Jesus immediately goes.

Now another person makes an entrance onto the stage. She’s a mature woman who has been haemorrhaging for twelve years. For as long as the little girl has been alive.

Twelve years is a long time by any definition and when you realise that according to Jewish law a

woman who was in a menstrual cycle was considered unclean and therefore untouchable, twelve years is a very, very long time to be in social isolation.

She reaches out and touches the hem of his cloak. And is instantly healed.

This woman took the initiative. This woman dredged up from her battered self. Ostracized. Unworthy. Knowing that she might contaminate others. That she might contaminate Jesus. She came with fear and trembling, hoping that no one would notice her. And, actually, they were so caught up with themselves and their own egos and sense of self that they didn't notice her.

She internalised the condemnation of her society and religion. She had been socialised to think of herself as dirty.

Jesus says, "Power has gone forth from me." This indicates that what happened to him in a way took him by surprise. According to Jesus, what healed her was her faith, the courage she mustered to touch the hem of his cloak, the power she had to access Jesus' power.

What gave her confidence at this moment, what gave her strength, what gave her courage, was that she had not given up, that she still believed enough in herself have faith?

In the version of this story in Luke's Gospel, you remember how Jesus responded. Everyone is pressing against Jesus. So, to his question, "Who touched me?" Peter says, "Everyone is touching you, master." But that is not what Jesus was talking about. Someone had touched him in such a way that he knew that power had gone out of him.

Jesus' goal wasn't to shame her, but to transform her, bringing freedom and healing and wholeness. I'll say it again, His goal isn't to

shame us, but to transform us bringing healing and wholeness.

'...your faith has made you well; Go in peace', Jesus said, 'and be free from your suffering'.

And so, the messenger comes with the news that Jesus is too late; the little girl is dead. Jesus selects a small group of people to go to the girl's room and touches her hand and raises her from the dead.

Now I want to talk a little about these two touches because both were forbidden in that culture. Mosaic law decreed that if one touched a woman who was bleeding or a person who was dead that person became unclean. But when Jesus touches what isn't clean, it becomes clean.

The fact that all three Synoptic Gospels report this story signifies that in three different contexts of the early Christian community this event in the life of Jesus was considered important. Certainly, Jesus rejects the uncleanness of women. The fact that all three evangelists interrupt the story of the raising of the daughter of Jairus—one of the leaders of the synagogue—indicates that the early community saw the event of the woman whose faith saved her from impending destruction as important.

This story is one of the many gems that show us insight into the equality, progressive, innovate, modern advanced nature of Christ. Sometimes I read and reflect on these stories and wonder what held us back on equality for so many years and why we still have issues over gender, race and sexuality today?

So, as we come to an end, I wonder which part of the story you need today? To be like the woman who had faith? The father who was the advocate for his daughter? To be able to show

the transforming love of Jesus? To receive healing in your mind, body and soul?

Or to be touched once more by the love of God that swoops us up as we run to him. That will hold us tightly in His arms of love, adoration, safety, protection and joy.

Perhaps all of these things.

May the grace of Christ attend us,
The love of God surround us,
And the Holy Spirit keep us,
This day and for ever. Amen.

Hymn: StF 655 – We cannot measure how you heal

- 1. We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.**
- 2. The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.**
- 3. So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain
and make your broken people whole.**

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of intercession

Our final prayers are for others and for ourselves. We start by seeking God's forgiveness for our shortcomings.

Forgive us, Lord,
that in our homes, in the Church and in the world
we live as sinners.

We should be reliable but are often fickle.
We should encourage each other but often tell
tales,
spread gossip, or play fast and loose with our
affections.

Forgive us, sinners that we are.

We both help others and hurt them.
We strengthen our families and weaken them.
We rejoice in the love of others, and trade upon
it.

Forgive us, sinners that we are.

Only you can cleanse and heal and remake us.
We put ourselves in your hands and claim your
mercy,
undeserved but generously given through Jesus
Christ.

The Lord assures us of pardon and peace.
Amen. Thanks be to God.

Let us bring before God our families.

Father, we pray for our homes and all who are
closely bound to us.

May those carrying a burden of pain or stress
find healing and reassurance.

Give wisdom and serenity to those facing vital
decisions or making important changes.

May those blessed with good news be
encouraged to rejoice and to give thanks to you,
the Giver of all good things.

Amen.

In the wider world, let our focus be on Kenya. Today the World Council of Churches asks Christians worldwide to thank God for Kenya's abundant resources, Africa's highest literacy rate and compassionate help for incoming migrants; to pray for greater tolerance between its Christians and Muslims; for young Kenyans to resist radicalisation and develop their own lives and their communities; and for those at risk from climate change and drought to be provided with clean drinking water and for their crops and animals to flourish.

Let us also pray for Kenya's new Methodist school and for the Elsa Trust, which teaches its young people how to care for their environment, and which one of our local Methodists, Mark Boulton of Mickleton, helps to run.

Father, we thank you for your richly diverse family, and ask you bless our sisters and brothers in Kenya. May we help them through prayer, action and giving as we are able.

Amen.

Our closing hymn inspires us, as individuals and as part of the big Christian fellowship, to close our service in confidence and joy, for "we are marching in the light of God".

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 483 – We are marching in the light of God.

- 1. We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, oh,
we are marching in the light of God,
we are marching, oh,
we are marching in the light of God.**

- 2. We are living in the love of God,
we are living in the love of God.
We are living in the love of God,
we are living in the love of God.
We are living, oh,
we are living in the love of God,
we are living, oh,
we are living in the love of God.**
- 3. We are moving in the power of God,
we are moving in the power of God.
We are moving in the power of God,
we are moving in the power of God.
We are moving, oh,
we are moving in the power of God,
we are moving, oh,
we are moving in the power of God.**

South African traditional

v. 1 Anders Nyberg (*b.* 1955)

vv. 2, 3 Andrew Maries (*b.* 1949)

Prayer & blessing

Wherever your next task lies,
go in peace.

And may the Holy God
surprise you on the way,
Christ Jesus be your company,
and the Spirit lift up your life.

Amen

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StF 492 – Christ be my leader, by night as by day

Timothy Dudley-Smith (*b.* 1926)

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StF 655 – We cannot measure how you heal

John L. Bell (*b.* 1949) and Graham Maule (*b.* 1958)

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StF 483 – We are marching in the light of God.

South African traditional

v. 1 Anders Nyberg (*b.* 1955)

vv. 2, 3 Andrew Maries (*b.* 1949)

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StF 20 – Be still for the presence of the Lord

David J. Evans (*b.* 1957)

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StF 155 – Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire.”

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

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NRSV & NRSVA

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