

Worship for 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Good morning. I'm Margaret Weir and it is my privilege to welcome you to our Circuit service. In these sad and worrying times it is good to join with others in an act of worship and to remember – God is with us. Our preacher this morning is Rev Richard Wilde. Rev Jeongsook Kim and Rev Dr Iain Ballard will be reading the lessons. Even though we are not meeting in our church buildings we can join together in worship through the wonders of modern technology. We are grateful to all who help to put this service together. If 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

Psalm 147:1-11, 20c (NRSVA)

Praise for God's Care for Jerusalem

- ¹ Praise the Lord!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.
- ² The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.
- ³ He heals the broken-hearted,
and binds up their wounds.
- ⁴ He determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
- ⁵ Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure.
- ⁶ The Lord lifts up the downtrodden;
he casts the wicked to the ground.

- ⁷ Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre.
- ⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.
- ⁹ He gives to the animals their food,
and to the young ravens when they cry.
- ¹⁰ His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;^[a]
- ¹¹ but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.
- ^{20c} Praise the Lord!

Hymn: StF 107 – I sing the almighty power of God

- 1. I sing the almighty power if God,
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad,
and built the lofty skies.**
- 2. I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at his command,
and all the stars obey.**
- 3. I sing the goodness of the Lord,
that filled the earth with food;
he formed the creatures with his word,
and then pronounced them good.**
- 4. Lord, how your wonders are displayed
where'er I turn mine eye,
if I survey the ground I tread
or gaze upon the sky!**
- 5. God's hand is my perpetual guard,
he guides me with his eye;**

**why should I then forget the Lord,
whose love is ever nigh.**

Isaac Watts (1674 – 1748)

Opening Prayers

Lord God,
High in the heavens, yet kneeling at our feet,
Let us sing praises loudly, let us pray quietly,
Let us listen attentively, let us act presently.
Let our words praise You,
Let our actions praise You,
Living, loving, eternal God.

As we draw near to You, may we find that You
Already are on Your way to meet us,
Let us praise Your Holy Name!

Amen

Loving Lord Jesus
When you were here on earth you were often
surrounded by people asking questions,
demanding attention, seeking help. You never
complained.

We're sorry, Lord, that the weight of life's
demands causes us to complain, to lose our
temper and collapse under pressure.
Help us to be more like you, Lord.

We're sorry for not getting our priorities right.
We're sorry for allowing other people and things
to take over and squeeze out our time with you.
Help us to draw on your strength to cope with
what each day holds.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Amen

Declaration of forgiveness

The Son of God loves us. And because of his love,
healing us and setting us free from sin's guilt and
power, we are forgiven.

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) & Graham Maule (b 1958)
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THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading *Isaiah 40:21-31 (NRSVA)*

²¹ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the
foundations of the earth?

²² It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;

who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
²³ who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴ Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵ To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
'My way is hidden from the Lord,
and my right is disregarded by my God'?

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ but those who wait for the Lord shall renew
their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Epistle *1 Corinthians 9:16-23 (NRSVA)*

¹⁶ If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no
ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on
me, and woe betide me if I do not proclaim the

gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a
reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted
with a commission. ¹⁸ What then is my reward?
Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the
gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use
of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹ For though I am free with respect to all, I have
made myself a slave to all, so that I might win
more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew,
in order to win Jews. To those under the law I
became as one under the law (though I myself
am not under the law) so that I might win those
under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I
became as one outside the law (though I am not
free from God's law but am under Christ's law)
so that I might win those outside the law. ²² To
the weak I became weak, so that I might win the
weak. I have become all things to all people, so
that I might by any means save some. ²³ I do it all
for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in
its blessings.

Gospel *Mark 1:29-39 (NRSVA)*

Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they
entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with
James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law
was in bed with a fever, and they told him about
her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand
and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she
began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all
who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And
the whole city was gathered around the
door. ³⁴ And he cured many who were sick with
various diseases, and cast out many demons; and
he would not permit the demons to speak,
because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' ³⁸ He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' ³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Sermon

Greetings! I wonder what hopes and dreams you have that are helping you get through these difficult days of restriction? For Olive and I one thing we are so looking forward to time with friends and family. Having Zoom meetings with grandchildren (the youngest are just two and a half – they're twins!) and their parents is better than nothing but we long to share meals and time together. We are also looking forward to travel with family, and with the family of Jesus Christ in Christian Fellowship. Over the last fifteen years we have taken groups to Israel/Palestine, Turkey and Greece following St Paul's journeys from Cappadocia to Corinth and many places between. They have proven to be memorable and enlightening always and including and benefiting from having Christians from different churches and traditions. Mostly Methodist, inevitably, because of our contacts but always there have been Anglicans and folks from other Christian denominations.

On 11th May in 2022 we are heading off for a week to the Austria/German border for a Christian fellowship holiday which includes the Oberammergau Passion Play. These plays have been performed every ten years since the village was spared the worst of the Plague in 1633. Postponed from 2020, the 2022 performances

will draw many thousands of pilgrims from all over the world and transport them back to the First Century through creative imagination performed on stage. Though dialogue is in German, a language neither I nor the vast majority of the audience speak, the drama which is faithful to the gospels is powerful and compelling. A transcript in English is given out to follow though many don't bother reading it as they know the story well enough to follow the drama and feel the atmosphere.

It is a holiday rather than a pilgrimage. The play is only one day so there is site seeing, walking and coach tours to enjoy in the Alpine lakes and mountains. McCabe's Pilgrimages supply us with a local guide to make all our arrangements and provide local information. This is the same Christian tour operator that I have travelled with seven times. Hotels, coaches, guides have all been of a high standard as have been meals and venues. We already have around a dozen people booked from several different churches. Most of them had planned to do the same tour with Rev Rachel Hextall in 2020 and she is delighted that I have taken responsibility for 2022. With my pilgrimages and holidays I try and ensure there is ample time to meet others and make new friends as well as respecting the need to spend some time alone or with a partner. In the hotels we might gather in a lounge some evenings, perhaps including worship and prayer, these of course are optional and will involve folks who wish to participate.

If this appeals to you then please contact Kate Tennyson or me for more details and a brochure.

Travel has always been part of my life, ever since I was a child – I travelled with my dad when he went to various places. I grew up in

Northamptonshire, and I've been back there from time to time over the years. In fact before lockdown, I went back and I was walking down through Towcester one afternoon, I passed a woman, and as had gone by and my brain was slowly whirring the cogs, I thought 'I know her', and then the name came back to me from school days; and so I turned and called back, 'Sally!', 'Sally Jones'.

She stopped and turned and said, 'Well I was Sally Jones, but I've had two other names since those days! Do you know me?' 'Yes, you don't remember me?' and as she came closer and looked at me, and clearly there was no sign or spark of any recognition, I said,

'Richard Wilde? – Spon School, 1966 – 71?'

'Yes', she said, 'I was there'

'You don't remember me?'

'No'

and I looked at her and thought well we're the same age as each other, of course, we're the same school year; but the years have not been very kind to her – looking at her complexion and looking at the way she carried herself, I thought 'Poor woman, you've had a hard time since we left school. I wonder what you've been through – you certainly look more than my years, that's for sure'.

But I didn't like to say anything like that, of course you don't do you. So we carried on and I said,

'You don't remember me at all?'

'No', she said, 'you're going to have to help me out; Richard Wilde? What did you teach?'

Well so much for me thinking she'd looked older than I am.

Travel! I plan to travel, I've been travelling. And in fact it was on one of my journeys to Capernaum as part of an Israel tour, that I felt a very powerful sense of being in the place where

Jesus stood. I guess, rather like I have found, Jesus knew his ministry would be more well received away from his home village of Nazareth. Nazareth to Capernaum is a jolly good day's walk – in fact I think most would struggle to do it in a day, although maybe in his youth he would have done. So it's a good way away, and quite a number of villages lay in between. Perhaps he thought that, down there by the lakeside, in a different community – similar to his, but different – his ministry would take off better. So he did, as he always did. He was after all, a faithful Jew, and to bring in the new covenant, he had to be faithful to the one that folks were living by then, and he was, and he joined in worship.

The ruins of that synagogue are still there today – well ok, technically, it's the rebuild just a couple of centuries later, but it's the same spot; and standing there where he stood or sat and addressed the congregation is a powerful experience – linking me, linking any of the world right back through all the centuries. And after he'd preached there, he was invited to go back to the only four disciples mentioned at the moment, to the home of just two of them – well at least, the mother in law of Simon's home. And when he went, as you heard from the reading, he found she was unwell, so wanting to offer hospitality as that was part of their custom; and when the Christian Church is at her best, it's part of our custom too. Sharing meals together, particularly blessing the preacher, when she or he has led the worship.

Over the years, I've done that very often, been invited back to someone's home and shared in their own home. And what a chance and what a privilege it gives, to engage in deeper conversation, maybe going back over something

in the service, or finding out more about each other and our life's journey our faith story.

It was very near by, the houses there are very close to each other, I don't doubt in those days, any illness would spread very quickly, just as any news or gossip would spread very quickly from place to place. And they would offer hospitality, our Lord's compassion was touched. This was a village that even in those days, valued women more than many. The synagogue there, very unusually, was not designated men's parts and women's section – you were able to actually be in the same space as you engaged in prayer and hymns and listening to the exposition of the Word.

So his compassion got the better of him, as ever. Jesus broke all sorts of rules and guiding principles – it was the Sabbath, never mind that – there was a woman in need. It was a woman and he touched her, and we know from other healing stories that he didn't need to touch, just simply to say the word, but touch is also very powerful. And so he touched her, and she was restored from the fever, and remember in those days, a fever –there were no antibiotics –could often be fatal and many folks perished before very many years at all on the clock. So she was made well, and went back to the role of hostess, providing for him, caring for him, being with those that needed her at that moment.

And the word spread, and so folks came – maybe many had heard Jesus in the morning, now they wanted the chance to experience that ministry in the afternoon, and we read in Mark, that many came with all sorts of diseases and were healed and also many demons were driven out. It seems that Jesus recognised, we are all body, mind and spirit. He healed them in the physical ailments, not every person was healed, that's not what it says – look carefully – but those who

came, many of them were. Now demons are a complex subject, but if we simply gloss it all over as being first century understanding, we miss the point: there is a spiritual wholeness too, that Jesus recognised, and a mental wholeness.

In these days of restriction, and not being able to socialise, no meals together for anybody, let alone Christian fellowship, we need to recognise and work towards the days when we can, once more, support each other. And when we can, please do. Please make a point of inviting folks round for tea and for coffee and going to their homes too. To sit and receive as well as sometimes, to offer and to give. It really helps folks feel included and needed and wanted in just the way that Jesus did.

But his own spiritual care mattered too, and so at the climax of this short story, in this part of the gospel, he did the natural thing, he went for his own time of quiet and of prayer, very early the next morning. This truly set him up for the week, the worship on their sabbath day, for us on Sunday and our own quiet time and space, preparing ourselves for the week that lies ahead and all that we will go through.

May God bless all of those who seek to provide for us spiritually, physically with healing that's coming we pray through vaccine and through restriction; and the hope that we have for wholeness for all and restoration for the work and our place in the fellowship, our community and our family. God bless you in these difficult days.

Hymn: StF 471 – Lord I come to you

**1. Lord, I come to you,
let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace
that I found in you.
And Lord, I've come to know**

**the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away
by the power of your love.**

***Hold me close,
let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
and I will soar with you,
your Spirit leads me on
in the power of your love.***

**2. Lord, unveil my eyes,
let me see you face to face,
the knowledge of your love
as you live in me.
Lord, renew my mind,
as you will unfold in my life
in living every day
by the power of your love.**

***Hold me close,
let your love surround me;
bring me near, draw me to your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle,
and I will soar with you,
your Spirit leads me on
in the power of your love.***

Geoff Bullock (b1956)
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THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving & intercession

Creator God
Our eyes feast on the beauty of the sky and the
scenery around us.
Words are not enough to express our wonder at
the beauty of creation.
Help us to care for and protect the earth and all

its inhabitants.

Help us to make good the damage caused by
human thoughtlessness and selfishness.

We thank you that we can come to you to
recharge our batteries.

Nurture in us a spirit of calm peace and quiet
strength.

Heal those weakened by illness.

Strengthen those exhausted by caring.

Bind the wounds of the broken-hearted.

You rejoice when we live in love and harmony.

Give our leaders your wisdom and compassion in
their decision making.

Bless us in caring for the weak and vulnerable.

Break down the walls of hatred.

And build bridges of love.

Send us out to proclaim your message of rebirth
and renewal to all people.

In the name our Saviour, your son Jesus Christ.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

We say 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

The Offering & prayer

Lord of all gifts, Lord of all grace,
Accept the gifts we offer today – as we
acknowledge that all we have, and all we are,
comes from you.

Show us how to use our gifts to build your
kingdom of love here on earth.

In Jesus name we pray.

Amen

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 418 – We have a gospel to proclaim

- 1. We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour's name:
we sing his glory, tell his worth**
- 2. Tell of his birth at Bethlehem -
not in a royal house or hall,
but in a stable dark and dim,
the Word made flesh, a light for all.**
- 3. Tell of his death at Calvary:
hated by those he came to save,
in lonely suffering on the cross,
for all he loved his life he gave.**
- 4. Tell of that glorious Easter morn:
empty the tomb, for he was free.
He broke the power of death and hell
that we might share his victory.**
- 5. Tell of his reign at God's right hand,
by all creation glorified.
He sends his Spirit on his Church
to live for him, the Lamb who died**
- 6. Now we rejoice to name him King:
Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth**

Edward Joseph Burns (b 1938)
Words © Canon Edward J Burns

Prayer & blessing

We go into the world
To walk in God's light,
To rejoice in God's love
And to reflect God's glory.

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Hymn Words:

StF 107 – I sing the almighty power of God

Isaac Watts (1674 – 1748)

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StF 655 – We cannot measure how you heal

John L Bell (b 1949) & Graham Maule (b 1958)

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