

Sunday 27th September

This week's worship has been prepared by Rev'd Patrick Stonehewer (Muriel's son), a Methodist Presbyterian serving in Bristol and draws upon the Harvest Sunday resources from All We Can – the Methodist Relief & Development Charity. This week we also wish Muriel a very happy birthday!

Today we come together to celebrate Harvest. We bring our gifts of food and money to the altar and offer them to God. We not only bring the first fruits of food but the first fruits of our lives as living sacrifices to Christ.

As we begin our time of worship together, let us remember that our brothers and sisters around the world continue to battle injustice and inequality. Today, we will meet the community of Butagaya in Uganda and hear how their lives are being transformed. We will learn about the cycle of poverty they face and consider how we can be bearers of good news by helping to raise funds to buy bikes for people who live there. We will learn how change can begin with us.

Psalm 33: 1-5

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous;
It is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Praise the Lord with the harp;
Make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
Sing to him a new song;
Play skilfully, and shout for joy.
For the word of the Lord is right and true;
He is faithful in all he does.
The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of his unfailing love.

Prayer

Loving God, we have gathered here to worship you,
With open hearts and minds.
O Holy God, lift our eyes to you,
Help us to see.
Heavenly Father, we worship and adore you,
You are worthy of all praise.
Lord of all, may we honour you in all we do and say.

Amen.

Hymn

Why not sing or reflect on the words of one of your favourite harvest hymns?

John 6: 1-15

6 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages^[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." ¹³ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Reflection

Today, we walk in the footsteps of this young boy. We too are invited to offer what we have to support God's transformative work through All We Can.

Sometimes we can think of generosity in the style of Philip. It is a big act. It requires much from us. It will be costly. But the essence of this story is that all Jesus requires of us is our willingness to bring to him our ordinary offerings. It is in Jesus Christ that the ordinary will be made extraordinary. This model of generosity is woven throughout the Bible. God takes ordinary people and uses them for extraordinary things. We, as ordinary as we are, are beckoned into relationship with the creator of the world. The one whose hands flung stars into space takes our hands and wants to walk with us.

So, when we look at something as every day and ordinary as a bike, we can look at it through the lens of Jesus. How much more is this bike capable of? What can it do for the one who it belongs to? For Nawalat, a young girl in Uganda, this ordinary bike will allow her to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. The monumental change in her life begins with an ordinary bike and the potential to do something extraordinary in the future. It will allow her family to gain some financial security by having a means of transport for income generating activities. It will have an extraordinary impact on her life.

Change begins with a bicycle for Nawalat. Change begins for us when we bring our offerings to God and our willingness to give him ourselves. What ordinary gift are you bringing today which will be made extraordinary?

Please give what you can, if you can at www.allwecan.org or call 020 7467 5132.

Prayer

O God of all,
You bring life and transformation
And offer us the gift of joining in partnership with you.
All over the world, we see change beginning,
we see ordinary things and ordinary people
having an extraordinary impact.
Show us how to demonstrate your generous love in all we do,
Give us hearts that overflow from you,
Living God, we pray that change will begin here,
in this place,
We pray that change will begin with us,

Amen

Intercessions

Heavenly Father,
We pray for the students and teachers in our communities.
We bring before you the children who will be able to access
education because of the extraordinary gift of a bike.

Lord of transformation,
Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary

We pray for those who are living in poverty in our midst. We
pray that the work of All We Can and their partners would
break the cycle of poverty in Uganda and bring change.

Lord of transformation,
Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary

Help us all to fulfil our God-given potential. May these bikes
be a starting point for children to live life to the maximum and
see their hopes and dreams become a reality.

Lord of transformation,
Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary

We pray for our heads of government and those in positions of

power. We ask for them to be motivated to eradicate injustice and inequality.

Lord of transformation,
Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary

(An opportunity to pray for people known to you)

We thank you for the NHS and the amazing staff that keep it running. We pray for communities like Butagaya where access to healthcare is difficult and limited.

Amen

Blessing

May God help us to steer our lives towards him,
May he use us to break the cycle of poverty
And keep the wheels of transformation turning.
May Almighty God bless you
and guide you on your way,

Amen.

Please do contact Rev James on 07734 323 402 or email revjamesmorley@outlook.com if you would value a conversation or a socially distanced visit.