**Text

Description automatically generatedWorship Sheet for 24th January 2021 prepared by Barbara Spencer**

**of Berkley Street Methodist Church, St Neots**

**Call to Worship:** Jesus said, “*I will make you fishers of men*”.

Lord God, let us know your presence with us now as we join with others, near or far, to worship you and give you thanks and praise. Let us clear our minds of superfluous thoughts and just **be** with you Lord.

**Hymn:** StF 443/H&P 691 - Come let us sing of a wonderful love <https://youtu.be/XCSx7ZZ3-2I>

**Prayers:** Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for all that you are and all that you provide for us. We marvel at your creation and even in the darkest days see the promise of new life. We give thanks for the creative people who use their special gifts to enhance our lives. In the generosity of so many people we see the manifestation of your love. *(You may like to give thanks for particular situations.)*  Most of all, we give you thanks for Jesus, for his selfless love for everybody, and his willingness to die on the cross so that we are able to come to you as your children.

We are sorry for the times when we have taken you and your gifts for granted, when we have failed to use our gifts in the ways that you intended. We are sorry for the times when we have not listened to your promptings for us to offer our time and talents to those in need, whoever they may be. Forgive us Lord and enable us to be renewed in your spirit, strengthened in the knowledge of your love for us, and confident that we *“can do all things through Christ who strengthens”* us. In Jesus name. Amen

**The Lord’s Prayer**: <https://youtu.be/-HaEoCqH47Y>

**Reading:** Jonah 3: 1 – 10

Jonah was a most reluctant prophet. He was quite stroppy with God when he was asked to go to Nineveh. In fact, he went the other way! But as is often the way, God was persistent and made it clear to Jonah what he wanted from him. With bad grace Jonah went to the city and gave probably the shortest prophecy on record! Surprisingly, the Ninevites listened, even the king and nobles. As a consequence they had a change of heart and were spared by God, much to Jonah’s disgust – but that’s for another day. It is an example of how God can turn around what we perceive as lost causes and has compassion for all who will respond. It also demonstrates that he is able to use us in situations we may have written off!

**Hymn:** StF 489 - All I once held dear <https://youtu.be/oxpPIa-BskY>

**Reading:** Mark 1: 14 – 20

A picture containing text, person

Description automatically generated

When I was a child my parents and I used to visit my aunt and her family in Herefordshire. They were the stalwart of their village church. We were often invited to attend special services there. One of the songs I learnt was this one, <https://youtu.be/R0jpyeRpRq4>, *“I will make you fishers of men”.* We would often sing it when we were in the car. I think it must have resonated with my aunt and uncle. I remember the influence they had on the village community, not only in the church but running a sizeable Sunday School too. They also had an influence on me, even though I didn’t recognise it at the time!

One notable occasion was when we arrived for the Sunday School Anniversary. My mother was told that she should play the piano, or organ, and I should sing a solo! We had no other warning! We debated what I might do and eventually decided on *“At the End of the Day”* - you can find it being sung by Harry Secombe on You Tube. For some reason, my aunt expected that I would be able to do it. I have to say that I was quite reluctant, to put it mildly, but she and my mother prevailed!

**Hymn:** StF 156 **-** From the breaking of the dawn <https://youtu.be/0DpSIIiWkEM>

I was given the confidence to do something I was not expecting to do, and without preparation. So often, when we are asked we find excuses, rather like Jonah. We need time to prepare, we are not good enough, we don’t have the right words or expertise, others would be better and so on. But when God calls us he knows our capabilities, just as he knew that Jonah was fit for the task.

Jesus also knew which people to call upon to help in his work. Just imagine what it must have been like. The fishermen were getting on with their work when Jesus arrives. They have probably heard of him, and may even have listened to him, but I would think the last thing on their mind was being called to be one of his disciples! Unlike Jonah, and me, they didn’t find excuses. They stopped what they were doing and went with Jesus. What a risk! What an effect on their families and friends! What cost!

Jesus calls us to think differently from the world view and to see things in the context of God’s love for all, including you and me. The pressures on us from the media are ever stronger. It is easy to believe what we read, see, and hear when they are so persuasive. Fake news is a thriving, and sometime lucrative, business. Why are there people who are convinced that Covid 19 does not exist or that vaccines are harmful to everyone? Not only are such things wrong they are also dangerous! In the same way, misinformation about Christianity has circulated over time.

We are called – to respond and show God’s love in action. We may think that we cannot do much during lockdown but maybe we need to think differently, to see possibilities and be creative, and to recognise what *we can* do. Prayer is powerful. Let us listen to what God is saying to each of us. Let us, like the disciples and reluctant Jonah, be willing to say “Yes, we can”. We should never forget that we are not alone, nor are we asked to undertake impossibilities. God’s love is for all, unconditionally given. Accept!

**Hymn:** StF 558 - Lord, you have come to the seashore <https://youtu.be/l6JH3OQzzBA>

**Prayers for others:** Loving and accepting God thank you for the love you showed us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Help is to know that we are valued very much by you and that you have given us gifts to use for the furtherance of you kingdom. Help us to listen more carefully to you.

O Preacher of Good News, declaring holy revolution,

Who founds a People using common folk who’ll hear,

Calls those who’ll wait through troubles, take no trust in wealth, or might, or power:

Come now and heal us; summon us, and make us yours. *(Vince Gilbert.)*

Let us bring before God the people and situations for which we have concerns…

We pray:

For all of those risking their own lives in order to save others

For those who are working long hours and are tired – NHS staff, teachers and others who enable us to have the material things that we need, or want – farmers, delivery drivers…

For those threatened by, or are victims, of floods and for the people working to help and protect them

For those who are struggling with loneliness, mental and physical health problems, hunger or abuse, made worse by the current situation.

For difficult situations around the world – the USA, Indonesia, and others

For those bringing the good news of God’s love.

Lord, hear our prayers. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

**Hymn:** StF 407 - Hear the call of the kingdom <https://youtu.be/WL-UdwB0Qvc>

**Benediction:** StF 658/H&P 785: A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify, a never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky…

Help me to watch and pray, and on thyself rely, so shall I not my trust betray, nor love within me die.

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever!” Amen