

Worship at Home - Sunday 1 January 2023

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you. This is the final Worship at Home sheet we plan to issue. Today we give thanks for and to all those people who have contributed over the last 2 years. Especially to Gabriella Mahadeva who has made the process possible.

### Call to Worship

We pray the opening prayer of the Covenant Service:

Glory to the Father, the God of love, who created us who continually preserves and sustains us and who has loved us with an everlasting love, and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed be God forever

Glory to Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor and was tested in every way and was tested in every way, as we are, yet without sin; who proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross; who was raised from the dead and is alive for ever and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in him; who is seated at God's right hand in glory and will come to be our judge. Blessed be God forever.

Glory to the Holy Spirit the Lord the giver of life by whom we are born into the family of God, and made members of the body of Christ; whose witness confirms us; whose wisdom teaches us, whose power enables us; who will do for us more than we can ask or think.

Blessed be God forever. Amen

For many churches in the Methodist Connexion today or a Sunday close to today is the day we hold the Covenant Service. At this service we recall the promises God has made to us and we renew our promises to God. This year the 1<sup>st</sup> January also happens to be the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of John Newton's hymn Amazing Grace.

Around the world you can find 12,700 different versions of Amazing Grace; it has been recorded in every genre, including

jazz, country, folk, classical, R&B, hip-hop – even heavy metal! It is sung by congregations in every Church across the world and is well known and well-loved by people with no Christian faith.

Today we use this hymn to help shape our devotions.

**Hymn: StF440 Amazing grace how sweet the sound**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here: [Amazing Grace. Lyric video \(StF 440\) - Bing video](#)

Amazing grace -- how sweet the sound --  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.

John Newton (1725-1807) (alt.)

John Newton, the writer of this hymn was by no means perfect. He was a former slave trade captain who came to faith when God saved him from a shipwreck. He was, however, willing to change his ways. Later in life he anonymously supported William Wilberforce in his successful campaign to have Parliament declare the slave trade illegal.

Newton, deeply moved by his own redemption wrote 'Amazing Grace' to accompany his New Year's Day sermon to enable his congregation to comprehend. The entire hymn is inspired by 1 Chronicles 17, a chapter that speaks of King David's past, present, and future. At the beginning of this New Year let us read that together today.

**Today's Bible Reading:** 1 Chronicles 17

### Time to Reflect

Nobody is perfect - and if we think we are,

that's probably one of our major imperfections! We all need God's amazing grace, which is his freely given, pouring out of love to all those he has created.

It's not always easy to comprehend how much God loves us and how powerful that love is. Some years ago I had the good fortune to visit Niagara Falls. To this day I struggle to comprehend the amount and the power of the water falling every minute over the falls. I couldn't imagine where it had all come from, how there could be so much water and how it didn't just run out and stop altogether. God's grace is that and so much more. His love for us all is ever flowing, ever powerful and yes, truly Amazing.

When you look back on your life, the time of the pandemic or indeed the last year I wonder, where do you notice God? Were there any moments when you experienced the overwhelming love of God? It certainly has been a difficult couple of years - and yet time and again we have seen the power of love, through NHS staff, volunteers, kind neighbours etc. demonstrating that love and kindness will win.

What about in the recent days in the run up to Christmas and the celebrations of the festive season, what did you notice of God and about yourself?

How about today? At the beginning of a new year what would be your hopes for your relationship with God?

The Christian faith is centred on a relationship between us and God revealed in Jesus, constantly shaped and developed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's not an equally balanced relationship - God pours out so much more on us that we can ever offer back. Sometimes, when we are in tune with the Holy Spirit (who draws us closer to God in prayer) this relationship feels strong. At other times, we will wander faraway from what we are called to be and do. This is rarely intentional; it just happens as we live our lives. We find ourselves, like John Newton, needing a strong nudge from God maybe even a traumatic event to show us that we are not on the right life pathway.

Over the past two years, we have all been through a traumatic event. How have you responded? Has anything changed? Or have you drifted back into doing things as you

have always done them, or longing for the old days? If you were to write a hymn about your past present and future what would it say?

At the beginning of this New Year maybe it's time to stop. To pause and reflect on God's abundant love poured out on us, and what our personal response will be. The Lord has indeed promised good to us in this life and the next. I pray that even in our darkest times we will still find our hope in God.

Take a time to sit quietly

### **A time of prayer**

At the beginning of this New Year let us call to mind the promises of God to be with us in good times and bad....

We pray for the broken places in our world. For those countries at war, and for those who look on feeling hopeless.....

We pray for those people that we love, (and we name them before God) .....

We pray for those people we struggle to love, (and we name them before God) ....

We pray for ourselves. (What do you hope for in the coming 12 months?).

Loving God we give you thanks for the promises you have made to be with us in life and beyond death. Help us to hold onto you. We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus.

### **The Lord's Prayer** *Our Father .....*

Hymn StF 628 Faithful One  
[Faithful one so unchanging - YouTube](#) or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

*Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)*

#### **A prayer of blessing**

May the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

May you know God's love surrounding you today. May that love and mercy sustain and renew your hope in the days and months ahead. Amen

Original Materials by The Revd Paul Wood Director of the Ministries Team

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