

**'Dorset South & West Written Service, Sunday March 7th 2021.
Let our lives reflect the love of God. Prepared by Revd Jean Quick'**

For our call to worship we read the words of Paul McDermott's hymn from the STF Website.

In this house all people will be welcome.
In this house all people will find love.
Open the doors so all the world may enter.
Open your hearts and share the love of God.

Refrain
*Let the cross shine out like a beacon
bringing hope to all who need your love.
As we sing our song of adoration
let our lives reflect the love of God.*

Paul wrote this hymn as a response to the church in Lichfield's reorganisation of their building in order that the church might physically show God's love to the world. The rear wall was replaced with large glass doors and a large illuminated stained glass cross shone out from the opposite wall.

Whilst we are in lockdown we cannot get into our churches to hear the organist guide us through the tune written for these words. However the essence of the hymn is just as important.

We must in what ever way we can reflect Gods love out into our world.

Here's a hymn you will know the tune to and it reflects that self same message.

STF 73

Fill thou my life, O Lord my God,
in every part with praise,
that my whole being may proclaim
thy being and thy ways.

Not for the lip of praise alone
nor e'en the praising heart
I ask, but for a life made up
of praise in every part:

Praise in the common things of life,
its goings out and in;
praise in each duty and each deed,
however small and mean.

Fill every part of me with praise;
let all my being speak
of thee and of thy love, O Lord,
poor though I be and weak.

So shalt thou, gracious Lord, from me
receive the glory due;
and so shall I begin on earth
the song for ever new.

So shall no part of day or night
from sacredness be free;
but all my life, in every step,
be fellowship with thee.

Horatius N. Bonar (1808-1889)

A Prayer of Adoration.

Heavenly Father as we look out of our windows we still see despite these difficult times. The glories of your world. The beauty of spring flowers breaking through the cold dark earth. The warmth of a greeting from a passerby reflected in their eyes despite their smile being hidden by a mask. The sense of community in the stranger and yet fellow survivor. The little things in life that before lockdown we failed to appreciate. Now with enforced free time, we are amazed at how many blessings come our way. We marvel at how formerly we would have been too busy to have even noticed or acknowledged. Receive our humble but overwhelming gratitude.

All over the world we see reflections of your love and care. We still have difficult times ahead and the pandemic is yet to be eradicated but despite everything that seems uncertain and unknown one constant is, that your love is as strong as it ever was and will continue to hold us and delight us with new mercies every day, as we reflect and take time to look and let your love in.

Receive our praise and thanksgiving. Amen

A prayer of Confession

Lord as I look through my windows the dust and grime has perhaps removed some of the shine. But I know with some effort all that has tarnished and reduced the sparkle can be removed and life can shine again. Forgive me for what I have allowed to settle and tarnish the reflection of you in my life. Help me to make a real effort to shine and sparkle again that I might reflect your love to a needy world. Help me to wipe away the self indulgences and self preoccupations that have

robbed me from seeing you and your glory reflected in the world. Forgive me for all I have allowed to collect that is just rubbish and has stopped your reflection being seen in me by those I have the privilege to be in community with.

Lord let me shine for you. Thank you for your assurance that when we put in one percent of effort to change, you give your **all** and wipe away our sins completely.

Thanks be to God. **Amen**

The Gospel Reading: John 2:13-22

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

STF 247

I danced in the morning
when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon
and the stars and the sun;
and I came down from heaven
and I danced on the earth,
at Bethlehem
I had my birth.

*'Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance.' said he,
'and I'll Lead you all wherever you may be,
and I'll Lead you all in the Dance,' said he.*

I danced for the scribe
and the pharisee,
but they would not dance
and they wouldn't follow me;
I danced for the fishermen,
for James and John;
they came with me
and the Dance went on.

I danced on the Sabbath
and I cured the lame:
the holy people
said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped
and they hung me on high,
and they left me there
on a Cross to die.

I danced on a Friday
when the sky turned black;
it's hard to dance
with the devil on your back.
They buried my body
and they thought I'd gone;
but I am the Dance
and I still go on.

They cut me down
and I leapt up high;
I am the life
that'll never, never die;
I'll live in you
if you'll live in me;
I am the Lord
of the Dance, said he.
Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

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The Address:

In Singing the Faith Plus the description of Paul McDermott's hymn that we used as our call to worship. The description begins by talking about the neon red crosses you see from the sky as

you fly into Seoul at night. I remember that scene from my journey from China to the South Korean capital. I remember being bemused at the contrast of these enormous statements about the presence of the Christian church alongside the great symbols of technological consumerism. Tall buildings that were impossible to see past the huge advertising LED screens to their towering summits. The taxi driver with five mini screens in his windscreen, rear view, sat nav. There were others that I couldn't work out what they were for and even a mini tv so the driver could keep up with the comforts of the media when his eyes were not on the road!

But amidst what seemed to me to be a hectic chaotic overwhelming city the images of those huge red crosses was kind of comforting and yet confusing.

I guess as we look at our world at the moment it's chaotic, overwhelming and it seems as if we are on a forever shifting sandbank. What we knew as the commercial world is changing and being taken from us, as a result of perhaps COVID 19 and the lockdowns. We can not look out of our church windows onto the world because we cannot enter the buildings. We know that if this third lockdown is lifted before this is published, or when it is lifted, we will still have restrictions placed upon us as to how we can congregate. For ours and others protection of course....But.....

.. I kind of warm to the gospel reading today and the thoughts that, 'gentle Jesus meek and mild', actually might have had a 'wobbly moment' as he entered the temple courtyard.

A moment of righteous anger as some like to explain the events that led to him overturning the traders tables.

Are you, be honest, finding at times, your getting a little angry at odd things? I am glad the things I say to my television set can't be heard by the people perhaps in the news or making mistakes in my favourite quiz programmes. Or the 'thing' that has taken on a life of its own and just won't do what I want it to do! No one else thanks to lockdown can share my in gracious moments!

Displaced anger. I wish instead I could get hold of 'the virus' and give it a piece of my mind! Tell it how it's destroying our way of normal life and destroying life itself. To clear off in the strongest most impolite way, to overthrow its symbolic 'tables' and drive it out by an angry outburst.

But actually I don't want to be within a million miles of 'that bug' and there are times it all becomes too much and something that doesn't deserve it becomes 'the dustbin' instead, for my discontent. Thank God for the scientific fight that is ongoing to eradicate or at least control the virus.

Now Jesus went into the temple to do what? To get ripped off buying the obligatory sacrificial items? To be short changed while engaging in changing money to the temple currency to pay his temple tax? To be jostled and deafened by the noise of consumerism?

Imagine it like this..... Perhaps when lockdown restrictions are lifted and life has changed. We will go back to your churches. But imagine to get into your old familiar seat you have to get through the crowds at the fare trade and craft stalls with throngs trying to grab a bargain. Teabags past the sell by date and half price! Cheap to you and no profit going back to the cause. For example. The concourse is overtaken with people greeting those they have not seen for over a year and shouting over each other and some one else has had the idea of handing out refreshments before the service! Hot drinks in single use cups, we still need to be careful just in case....oh yeh environmental impact? Preserve my life and then I can think about the planet.

The treasurer has decided to invest in contactless payment machines for the offering, safer than touching hard currency, just in case. No more cash collection just tap away as the machine passes by and a notice displayed tells you a 35% charge will be added to all offerings to cover bank charges.

Are you getting a little uncomfortable at this, and it is just an imaginary scene...hear the words of Jesus as Mathew's gospel recalls this event, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

Jesus actually went to pray, to worship, to connect with His Heavenly Father. What will you look for when the church can gather again? What will be your motive, your strong desire to be in God's house? What if we had glass doors like Paul's church in Lichfield. Doors that the world could pass so close by to, that they could look in and be drawn into by what they see?

We don't have to wait till the end of what ever lockdown. Do you remember the children's rhyme with the finger twisting challenge?.....here's the church, here's the steeple and inside are the people. Ch..ur...ch we are the church. UR in the middle, the essence, no matter where we find ourselves and the world watches. What do they see? So often it's been an unrealistic image of 'do gooders', with an assumed exceptionally perfect code of conduct that has kept some people out, in their misconceptions. How can we be real to ourselves to those we come in contact with? What tables should we be overturning? Not too make life easier for us, but so that we might let people really see who God is. That we really want to reflect His ways and not our own desires. Where should the energy of the anger we should feel, be directed and used so that all people can clearly see the reality of a God who loves us as we are and wants the best for our whole world.

Prayers of intercession

Lord as we look upon your hurting world it's like looking at the ripples on a pond. As we open our eyes and our gaze widens beyond our own immediate concerns, so our understanding widens of the needs and complexities of our world.

The stone thrown into the pond in a careless act for someone's amusement and has implications beyond their, or our understanding.

At this time in life we think of the insurmountable problems we create in the environment and the effects upon our world by our demands for more at less cost. We pray for all who are trying to redress the environmental needs of our world and to restore the balance and order of creation.

We think of those who are still at war with each other despite the war of the pandemic devastating our lives. We pray that unrest and strife whether global or in closer proximity will give way to a concerted effort to prolong life and the quality and future of life for every one. That a true sense of connection and appreciation of our common humanity will drive away all prejudices and hatred.

We pray for those who are in the front line fighting what seems like an invisible but highly destructive force in the virus. For all researchers, scientists and care givers. Keep them safe and give them the knowledge and understanding that they need.

We pray for those who are sick or bereaved. Whether from the virus or from the multitude of illnesses that still pervade. Bring healing and comfort. Peace of mind to the lonely and weary.

Lastly we pray for ourselves and thank you that you know what we need before we ask. But as we say the Lord's Prayer and take time over each phrase, to reflect on ours and the world's needs, we pray....Lord in your mercy hear our prayers. Amen. **Meditatively** say the Lord's Prayer.

Offering....not contactless but let us offer to God all the contacts we can make in His name this week. Whether financial or in some other kind.

STF 507. O for a heart to praise my God,
a heart from sin set free,
a heart that always feels thy blood
so freely spilt for me;

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
my great Redeemer's throne,
where only Christ is heard to speak,
where Jesus reigns alone;

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
believing, true, and clean;
which neither life nor death can part

from him that dwells within;

A heart in every thought renewed,
and full of love divine;
perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
a copy, Lord, of thine!

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
come quickly from above,
write thy new name upon my heart,
thy new, best name of love.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

The Blessing.

Written by Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark cathedral.

Ever-present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost
inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.
For Jesus' sake.Amen.