

**Dorset South & West.... Written Service  
Sunday September 3rd 2023**

**Dear Sir ....**

**Prepared by Revd Jean Quick'**



**Call to Worship.**

Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells. Psalm 26:8

**STF 137**

New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove;  
through sleep and darkness safely brought,  
restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day  
hover around us while we pray;  
new perils past, new sins forgiven,  
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

If on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find,  
new treasures still, of countless price,  
God will provide for sacrifice.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,  
as more of heaven in each we see;  
some softening gleam of love and prayer  
shall dawn on every cross and care.

The trivial round, the common task,  
will furnish all we ought to ask;  
room to deny ourselves, a road  
to bring us daily nearer God.

Prepare us, Lord, in your dear love  
for perfect rest with you above;  
and help us, this and every day,  
to live more nearly as we pray.

**Prayers of Adoration and Confession.**

Our prayers are a hymn written by Gillian Collins and included on the Singing the faith website.

The words can be sung to the tune we normally associate with the hymn, 'Just as I am without one plea'.

Just as we are, your servants here,  
Sure of your loving presence near,  
Offering all our hearts hold dear,  
**Accepting Lord, we come.**

Just as we are, with all our pain,  
Deeply-felt wrongs which long remain,  
Chances we know won't come again,  
**Forgiving Lord, we come.**

Just as we are, you made us so,  
Plain earthen pots no beauty show,  
Yet deep within your treasures glow,  
**Affirming Lord, we come.**

Just as we are, we come to you,  
Trusting your promise ever true,  
"See, I am making all things new!"  
**Renewing Lord, we come.**

**Amen.**

**Scripture Reading:** Romans 12:9-21

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## **Reflection**

### **Two letters, the same message**

The picture at the beginning of this service is about an article printed in a 1905 newspaper to the question posed, "What is wrong with the world?"

The journalist and author G.K. Chesterton's response was reportedly one of the shortest letters ever written. It comprised less than ten words: "Dear Sir, I am. Yours Sincerely, GK Chesterton". Chesterton was of course the author of the Father Brown books and a devout Christian. Is he recognising that he is part of what is wrong with the world? We know sin is all around us, just listen to the news or read a newspaper. But is sin also within us? It is in the thoughts of revenge and bitterness. Sin is in the selfishness and lack of care for those in need around us. It is in our lustful desires and greedy intentions. This is the heart of the passage from St Paul's letter to the church in Rome that we have read today.

### **Valediction**

We are looking at two very similar letters, although very different in length! Thinking about writing letters or emails, I have always struggled with how you end correspondence. Which valediction is appropriate for the letter or message written, 'yours sincerely', or 'yours faithfully'? Both seem to add a sense of respect, genuineness and sincerity.

However "Yours sincerely" is typically employed when the recipient is addressed by name (e.g. "Dear John") and is known to the sender to some degree, whereas "Yours faithfully" is used when the recipient is not addressed by name but addressed by a phrase such as "Dear Sir/Madam".

### **Let's write...**

I was led to write this thought by the opening verse of our Bible Reading today. 'Love must be sincere'. Have you ever written a letter to God? If you did what valediction did you end with? Would it be similar to the valediction you should use if writing to our present Monarch? Which is, "I remain, with the profoundest veneration, your Majesty's most faithful subject and dutiful servant." That, 'takes my breath away', and makes me question if I can truthfully assert that? G.K Chesterton's 'yours truly', might feel more sincere and expresses a sense of honesty, especially if addressing it to the One who knows us so intimately.

If you were to write a letter to God, could you, kind of plagiarise the verses in our Bible reading today? Could we turn them around and personalise the passage as a sort of proclamation about who we see ourselves as? Especially if we ask that same and age old question, 'what is wrong with the world?' I guess it would read something like this, "I am sincere, I hate what is evil, I cling to what is good...I am joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. I share with the Lord's people who are in need. I Practise hospitality," and so on.

### **The challenge**

It's a very humbling and challenging piece to write. Our verses today are just a small part of a letter written to the church in Rome. This part contains sixteen commands of how to live as Gods people. There are contrasts with what we must not do and what we must do. But notice that Paul is not asking the recipients of his letter to simply practice self-control when provoked. They are to do more! For example, rather than refrain from repaying evil; they are to initiate doing good to their opponents. This is much harder. But in doing so, Christians overcome evil with good, showing that they "cling to what is good," expressing the definition of true love.

How do we do this? Well staying with written messages, suppose you receive a letter or email or any form of correspondence that irks you. I personally don't like receiving greeting cards from family or close friends with just their name signed and no greeting. It makes me feel like they have done the least possible to keep in touch. I much prefer a personal greeting that shows they are thinking about me, even if it's just a few short words of greeting. The last time that happened, fortunately I contacted the person and thanked them for their card, despite just a signature and nothing more. They responded with an apology for the hastily sent card and

an explanation about all the problems that they were facing. I did feel bad that I had thought so negatively and glad that I had tried to contact them and could now understand what happened.

So often we take umbrage at how someone treats us without trying to think about what they might be having to cope with. I think for example of Multi drop couriers who get such a 'bad press' on social media websites. If you have ever used their companies tracking app to find out when your parcel is coming, you discover your parcel is number xxx of the multiple deliveries that that driver is expected to make, in such a short period of time and no matter the weather or traffic conditions. I certainly couldn't do their job and be expected to greet every recipient, no matter how long they kept you waiting at the door, with a courteous greeting. Social media is so full of what is wrong with the world. We need to turn things around and think about others and not so much about ourselves. It's the way we bring JOY into the world. You recall the mnemonic J.O.Y Jesus first, Other's next and Yourself last, the secret to real Joy.

### **New start**

We are at the beginning of what Methodism and academia and many other organisations, class as a new period of time. A new year. A new start. The wonderful thing about being in God's company is that we are given so many new starts. No wonder the psalmist says, 'Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.' That place, that house is a place of continual forgiveness and new beginnings.

How will you use this new start? Could you rewrite Paul's part of the letter, addressing it to God and expressing a desire to help with the wrong things in the world? Trying, perhaps to give yourself some pointers for how you will try to be proactive in this next period of time?

This season on 'the plan', will incorporate harvest, will there be a number of St Paul's exhortations symbolically harvested and your good deeds to bring? Will you have in your own personal way, clung to what is good and by your prayers, deeds and actions shown to God that you, "remain, with the profoundest veneration, your Majesty's most faithful subject and dutiful servant." **Amen.**

**Our next hymn** is another new hymn from the STF website, also by Gillian Collins and set to the tune 'Morning has broken'.

"Listen, my people, here is my challenge:  
Can you be loving as I love you?  
Those who offend you, hurt or ill-treat you,  
Like you God's children, they're precious too!"

Do you mean us, Lord? Can it be done, Lord?  
Self-giving love that looks for no gain?  
If you'll stay close we'll give it a try, Lord,  
Showing your mercy, sharing your pain.

"Listen, my people, here is my challenge:  
Can you forgive as I forgive you?  
Those who have failed you, pained or betrayed you,  
Do not condemn, you've all done it too."

Do you mean us, Lord? Can it be done, Lord?  
You will repay, so leave it to you?  
Help us to trust and let you be judge, Lord.  
As you forgive, may we forgive too.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Dear Lord if we had just one prayer for others it would be, that we could overcome all the evil in our world and replace it with good. We think of the article's reported in the news. Whether printed or spoken. How wonderful if only good news was reported and celebrated. Celebrated because the evils of life had been eradicated. But we know we so easily fail and add to the world's misery. By our deed's or sin's of omission. Help us in the week ahead to do our part to create a better world in what ever small part we can play.

### **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

There are so many people who are in need. We think of those in our own community struggling with rising costs. We thank God for the work of the food banks. For those who work with food sharing agencies. For those who give their time and gifts to work amongst the homeless. Your word encourages us to practise hospitality. We can so easily become overwhelmed with the needs of our world and those on our doorsteps. We pray for those in need and those who are active in the caring agencies. Show us what we can do, not least to be mindful and offer our prayers.

### **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

We are called to, 'Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.' We too easily take offence and 'take things the wrong way', especially if we feel inconvenienced. Forgive us Lord and help us to see the good in all. We think of the people who have served us in this past week and who will be there for us in the week ahead. So many are unseen and many are in low paid occupations. We thank you for those who serve us. Who collect our rubbish, mend our roads, work in retail and in so many different ways to provide for us. We hardly know what persecution is but we know that many are persecuted for their beliefs and for who they are. We earnestly pray that the world might learn to live in harmony and respect.

**Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

Lord we thank you that we can rejoice with those who rejoice. We give thanks for all those who have cause to celebrate. We pray for those who are facing any illness and we mourn with those who mourn. Be very near to those who need our prayers at this time.

**Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

We pray that we might all Live in harmony with each other. That we might not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone and that we might live at peace with everyone. A peace that will spread to the whole world.

**Lord in your mercy hear our prayer. Amen.**

**We say the Lord's Prayer.**

#### **StF 545**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart  
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;  
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,  
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,  
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;  
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
be thou in me dwelling, and lone with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;  
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;  
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:  
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my  
power.

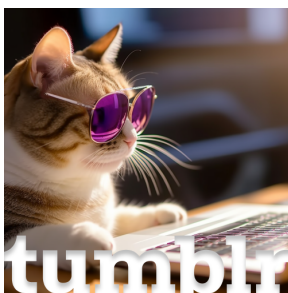
Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:  
be thou mine inheritance now and always;  
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:  
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is won;  
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

**The Blessing** (inspired by Romans 12:9-21)

Go out into the world in peace.  
Have courage.  
Hold onto what is good.  
Return no one evil for evil.  
Strengthen the faint-hearted.  
Support the weak.  
Help the suffering.  
Honour all persons.  
Honour all creation.  
Love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.  
And may the love of God,  
the Light of Christ,  
and the power and communion of that Spirit  
be with us all.  
Go in peace. **Amen.**"

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(An amusing take on a social media platform!  
Hopefully kitty is writing something uplifting)