

## **DSW Circuit Written Service 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025**

adapted from a service first written in 2016 by Rev Ruth Lownsbrough

Welcome to this act of worship, shared with siblings in Christ, across the Circuit.

### **Call to worship**      selected verses from Psalm 97

The Lord is King! Let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!....The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory....For you, O Lord, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.....Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

### **Hymn**   StF 335 Rejoice, the Lord is King      Charles Wesley

Rejoice, the Lord is King:  
Your Lord and King adore!  
Mortals, give thanks and sing,  
And triumph evermore.  
*Lift up your heart,  
Lift up your voice!  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

Jesus, the Saviour, reigns,  
The God of truth and love;  
When He had purged our stains,  
He took his seat above;  
*Lift up your heart,  
Lift up your voice!  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

His kingdom cannot fail,  
He rules both earth and heaven;  
The keys of death and hell  
Are to our Jesus given:  
*Lift up your heart,  
Lift up your voice!  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!*

4 Rejoice in glorious hope!  
Jesus the Judge shall come,  
And take His servants up  
To their eternal home:  
*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;  
God's trumpet call shall sound: rejoice!*

### **Prayers**

Lord, your word tells us that you want us all to be one in you. We are here as your family, connected to you, and to each other, by your blood and by your Spirit. We are all on different journeys, but they are linked together in you. We humbly acknowledge our differences, and gladly celebrate our connections as we worship you. **Amen.**

Praise   Lord Jesus, we praise you this morning that you want us so much to believe in you, to be one with you, and to experience your glory, and then to go out and share it.

We praise you that you give living water, that is free to all who believe.  
Make us generous too, Lord, with all the gifts you give us. **Amen.**

Confession      Loving God, we are not always good at living together in unity; our focus on self, distorts our vision of unity in you, creating

disharmony amongst us. Clear our vision and cleanse our hearts we pray.

Merciful God, we are not always faithful to your call to love others, to love our neighbour, whoever they are; our focus on self, damages relationships because of prejudice and fear. Clear our vision and cleanse our hearts we pray.

Generous God, we are often selfish with the gifts you have given us, focussing on our own needs ahead of those of others. Clear our vision and cleanse our hearts we pray.

Members of the body of Christ, know that your sins are forgiven. Live in unity so that all might be blessed. **Amen**

**Lord's Prayer** – I invite you to pray this prayer in whichever version you prefer.

**Readings** (NIV translation)     Acts 16: 16-34

Paul and Silas in Prison

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

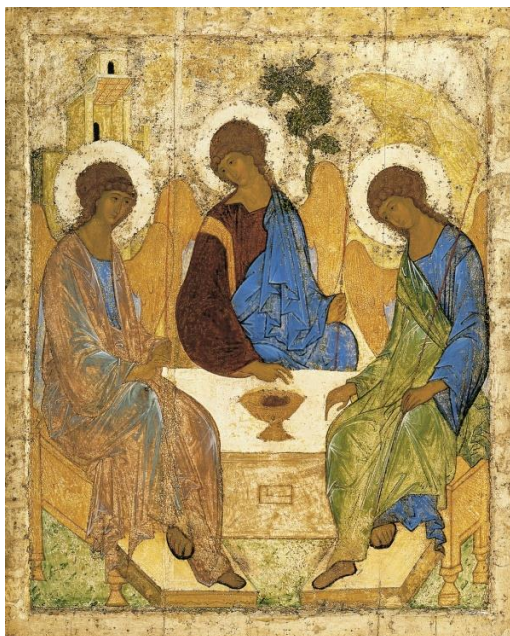
John 17: 20-26

Jesus Prays for All Believers

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."



I invite you to have a good look at this picture of Rublev's icon, called, 'The hospitality of Abraham' but more commonly known simply as 'The Trinity'.

Rublev's piece portrays the divine relationship of unity between the persons of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I think that the most striking thing about the icon is the triangular space at the bottom, in the front. It is an invitational space, made for those who want to step into a relationship with God.

Let's see how this relates to the readings: In Acts 16, set in Philippi, we meet slave girl who's in an unholy spiritual relationship which is controlling and overpowering her and bringing financial gain for her owners. One can understand Paul being annoyed at the attentions he and Silas were given by the girl. She would have been well known in the community and that her services of divination had to be paid for. The Holy Spirit that Paul & Silas were talking about was something completely different. In Jesus' name, Paul brings the girl release; the commentator John Stott indicates not only freedom from a debilitating spirit for the slave girl, BUT also she was brought to faith by the Holy Spirit and enabled to freely step into a life-giving relationship with God.

Later, when Paul & Silas are in a Philippian jail, real evidence of their own relationship with God

and of God's presence with them is shown in dramatic events in the most dire circumstances: an earthquake which destroys prison walls and their ability to sing God's praises even after being beaten and thrown into jail. Paul & Silas also, by not running away from jail, and their witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, are instrumental in bringing the jailer and his household to faith, enabling them too, to step into a relationship with Jesus. Paul & Silas's own relationship with Jesus was what enabled them to do amazing things for God.

In John's gospel, Jesus prays that the disciples will be one as he and God are one; he prays for unity amongst his followers so that the world would sit up and take notice.

The early Christian community in Philippi must have been rather like that because people who in ordinary society would not have mixed at all, were to be found together, sharing their encounters about the risen Jesus and the Holy Spirit, building a new community in the city.

In the flowing language of the gospel writer, the oneness of Father, Son and Spirit are expressed as a mutually sustaining relationship of love; and Jesus prays for the same relationship for his disciples, to protect them and guard them, and to enable them to glimpse God's glory. He prays that the message they will share, will, in the future, bring others to faith as well. Jesus' words mean that, by faith, we too are drawn into that same loving relationship which exists within The Trinity of God, Father, Son and Spirit. It is that relationship which is the foundation, the essence of true life, life in unity with God and with each other. A relationship of love.

Jesus emphasises to his disciples that it is through his relationship with the Father that they and we know who Jesus is. And Jesus asks the Father that all of his disciples will be part of that relationship of unity.

When love really is the motivating factor throughout the church, then the world will really

sit up and take notice because it will be such an extraordinary thing.

This is our calling:

- to live and love as Jesus did, to suffer and struggle, bearing our cross.
- to be obedient to God's will for our lives, not just doing as we like but following Jesus' example.
- to be in loving relationship with God

For in these ways, we will receive God's glory and that glory will be revealed to the world. Amen.

### **Prayers for others**

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of praying for others.

Sometimes, we see praying for people as a duty, not a joy. Then we read your Word, and see how you prayed to the Father, not only for us but for those we reach through your Word, and that gives new life to our prayers...

Thank you that, even though this worship is at home, we are here as your family.

Thank you for the connection we feel with others, and with you.

Welcoming God, we pray for people who don't know you, or perhaps once did but have lost their sense of your reality, lost their way.

We pray for people who have experienced life events that have separated them from you; for those who have had relationship breakdowns, for those who have lost loved ones to death, leaving emptiness, or bitterness, or uncertainty.

Shepherding God, thank you for the times when others have prayed for us.....

We think of people who feel they cannot pray, that they will have people to pray for them; of people who don't think they have time to pray, that they may understand how vital prayer is. Help us to remember that prayer is a conversation with you; we don't need special words but can come to you just as we are and you will hear us.

Remind us that sometimes we need to talk and at other times we need to listen.

In a moment of quiet now, we bring to you those people and situations, which you have laid on our hearts.....

We ask all our prayers, formed and the ones we cannot find words for, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

**Hymn StF 409**

Marty Haugen

Let us build a house where love can dwell  
and all can safely live,

a place where saints and children tell  
how hearts learn to forgive;

built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
rock of faith and vault of grace;

here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

*All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome  
in this place.*

Let us build a house where prophets speak,  
and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek  
to dream God's reign anew.

Here the cross shall stand as witness  
and as symbol of God's grace;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

*Refrain*

Let us build a house where hands will reach  
beyond the wood and stone, to heal and  
strengthen, serve and teach,  
and live the Word they've known.

Here the outcast and the stranger  
bear the image of God's face;  
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

*Refrain*

Let us build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard and loved and  
treasured,  
taught and claimed as words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

*Refrain*

**Blessing** – May you know God's presence and blessing and glimpse his glory in the days and weeks ahead. Amen.

