

## Mission Sunday *worship*

### A service that explores how justice and evangelism are inseparable parts of God's good news

*This service can be led by a minister, Local Preacher, or any member of the congregation. If led by a presbyter, then they may want to consider including a celebration of holy communion during the worship.*

*This act of worship invites people to explore how evangelism and justice are key elements of Christian discipleship that cannot be separated. Each informs and supports the other, and both are part of God's mission.*



### Gathering in God's Presence

*The beginning of worship is a time to gather together in community and with God – to welcome one another and become aware of God's presence among us. You could use some or all of these elements to welcome people and prepare them for worship.*

#### **Call to worship** (selected verses from Psalm 89)

Leader: I will sing of the Lord's great love forever;  
All: with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known  
through all generations.

Leader: I will declare that your love stands firm forever;  
All: that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

Leader: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;  
All: love and faithfulness go before you.

Leader: Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you;  
All: who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.

#### **Welcome and introduction**

*You may like to say a word of welcome to the church and to introduce yourself and any others that are leading worship. Notices may be given here or elsewhere in the service, according to local tradition.*

In today's service we will be exploring how evangelism and justice are key elements of Christian discipleship that cannot be separated. Each informs and supports the other, and both are part of God's mission.

"Evangelism" comes from a biblical Greek word that literally means "good news". All Christians – not just some – are called to listen for, speak of, and live out the good news of God's love in Jesus. This is the love that transforms the world, bringing peace, joy and generosity. And this transformation is God's justice in action – which brings good news to the oppressed, binds up the broken-hearted, and

proclaims liberty to the captives. As we speak and live the good news, the world is transformed. And as the world is transformed, the good news is spread further still. So evangelism and justice are inseparable, and each fuels the other. And, day by day, we are drawn into God's love and God's mission, journeying together into the kingdom.

### **Prayer of praise**

*You could use either of the prayers of adoration on page 40 of the Methodist Worship Book, another suitable prayer of confession, or write your own prayer, possibly drawing on the reading from Isaiah for inspiration.*

### **Prayer of confession**

*You could use the prayer of confession on page 41 of the Methodist Worship Book, or another suitable prayer of confession.*

### **Hymns or songs**

*There is a list of suggested suitable hymns and songs at the bottom of this page.*

## **The Word**

*This part of the service offers an opportunity to hear God's Word in scripture, prayer and preaching. You could use some or all of these elements to listen to and explore God's message for you today.*

### **Bible readings with introductions**

Isaiah is one of the great biblical prophets. He uses beautiful poetry to paint a picture of God's promised future. Today's passage is one that Jesus himself quoted from when speaking in the synagogue in Nazareth ([Luke 4](#)) and when speaking to John the Baptist's disciples ([Matthew 11](#) and [Luke 7](#)). It describes a future where good news is proclaimed and justice reigns.

#### [Isaiah 61](#)

Our gospel reading today is from the gospel according to Luke. In this passage, Jesus tells a parable to a group of people dining at the house of one of the Pharisees – Jesus takes inspiration from his setting to teach a lesson about hospitality, generosity, justice and welcome.

#### [Luke 14:12-23](#)

### **An engaging telling of the gospel reading**

*While one person is reading the gospel passage, others could perform simple actions to illustrate the story, including:*

- *Someone acting as the servant by setting a table with flowers, cutlery, plates and glasses*
- *Someone acting as the master, pointing the servant out into the congregation*
- *The servant beckoning to a few people and them shaking their heads or otherwise gesticulating 'no'*
- *The servant returning to the master and showing their hands are empty*
- *The master looking cross and pointing the servant back out into the congregation*

- *The servant and master both beckoning to everyone present*

### Asking questions

*Invite the congregation to have a conversation with those sat near them, using the following questions as prompts. You can allow as much time as you like for this discussion; we suggest 5-15 minutes.*

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- How would it feel to have no one turn up at your party?
- What do you think the servant was thinking and feeling?
- Are there any events or characters in the story that we could take away, where the story would still have the same meaning?
- Would you go to a strangers' party at short notice? What would influence your decision?
- What happened as a result of the banquet? What do you think happened next and what was the impact on those who attended?

### Reflection

*This could be developed into a longer sermon, or used in this form for a shorter reflection. If you set a table earlier in the reading, you could indicate some of the elements whilst sharing this reflection – the plates, glasses and cutlery during the first paragraph; the chairs during the second paragraph; and the flowers during the third paragraph.*

This passage has a lot to teach us about speaking and living the gospel. It shows us that the gospel involves welcoming all people; sharing food and drink in a comfortable place, and being in company and community with others. Those who shared in the great banquet were 'full' – physically, emotionally and spiritually.

It also shows us the importance of actively reaching out to new people, and that God has a preferential bias for the poor and marginalised – seeking to welcome these people into his kingdom.

And finally, it teaches us that we must not wait for God to 'set things right' in the end times, when Jesus returns, but that God wants us to begin creating the kingdom *now*. Welcoming all people to hear the gospel and experience God's love and justice *now*.

Acts of justice – serving and loving others – give a foretaste of God's kingdom. They are evidence of the gospel – the good news of God's love in Jesus. And evangelism – speaking of and sharing the gospel – will motivate us and others to act justly. They are like interlocking cogs – when one moves, the other also turns. Evangelism and justice are key elements of Christian discipleship that cannot be separated. Each informs and supports the other, and both are part of God's mission.

### Hymns or songs

*There is a list of suggested suitable hymns and songs at the bottom of this page.*

## Responding to God's Word

*This part of the service offers an opportunity to respond to God's Word – the congregation have a chance to reflect on what they're heard, pray for God's world, and commit themselves again to*

*Christian living. You could use some or all of these elements to respond to God's message for you today.*

### **Offertory**

*A collection of money to support the work of the church or other projects may be taken here, or elsewhere in the service, according to local traditions. You may also like to use this creative offertory to invite people to make commitments to give their time and energy to God's mission.*

We're now going to take up offerings for God's work in this place. In addition to our usual way of taking the offering, I'd like to invite you to consider what struck you most from the story and our discussion and reflections today – in what way you can give time and energy to God's mission?

Could you offer hospitality to others?

Could you offer company?

Can you reach out to new people beyond our church?

Can you serve the poor and marginalised?

In what way can you help to transform the world, and bring a small taste of the kingdom to it?

We're going to take a couple of minutes of quiet now to think and reflect, and then I'll invite you to bring your offerings to the table.

*[Allow a couple of minutes of thinking time, perhaps play some music in the background. You could distribute pens and paper so that people can write down their offering, or you could use Play-doh or Lego to allow them a more creative response. This will be especially popular if you have children in your congregation! Alternatively, if you have a smaller congregation, you might like to invite people to say their 'offering' out loud.]*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

*You could use the prayers of intercession on page 45 of the Methodist Worship Book, or the prayers below. Throughout the below prayer, wherever there is an ellipsis (...), you may like to mention something specific, relating to that line of the prayer, e.g. praying for groups, or upcoming events or decisions.*

God's banquet table has no end – it just stretches on and on, with room for all to gather and share together. As we hold this vision of the kingdom before us, let's pray for our world.

This prayer has actions that go with it – lifting up hands, marching on the spot and placing our hands on our hearts. Please do join in with these as you are able, so that we can live out our prayers, as well as speaking them out.

Lord God, we pray that you would uplift our church. We raise our hands up to you *[encourage people to lift hands up]* and ask for your strength in lifting our church in prayer... And also our sister churches in our circuit... And the Church of Christ throughout the world...

Lord God, we pray for your guidance for our world. We are marching now *[encourage people to march on the spot]*, but it is you who guides our feet. We pray for your wisdom for our country's leaders... And the leaders of the world... And all who strive to make the world more like your kingdom...

Lord God, we pray for your love in our community. Our hearts are full now [*encourage people to place a hand on their heart*], we pray that you keep them full and fill the hearts of others with compassion. We pray for our local community... And our neighbours and friends... And particularly those in need or in pain...

We draw our prayers together by saying the words that Jesus taught us:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,  
 hallowed be your name,  
 your kingdom come,  
 your will be done,  
 on earth as in heaven.  
 Give us today our daily bread.  
 Forgive us our sins  
 as we forgive those who sin against us.  
 Lead us not into temptation  
 but deliver us from evil.  
 For the kingdom, the power,  
 and the glory are yours  
 now and for ever.  
 Amen.

### **Hymns or songs**

*There is a list of suggested suitable hymns and songs at the bottom of this page.*

## **Sending out**

*At the end of a service, we are sent out into the world to continue to worship God and engage in God's mission, empowered by the Holy Spirit and in the power and company of Jesus Christ. You could use some or all of these elements to send out your congregation.*

### **Blessing**

May you be anointed with God's Spirit,  
 as you bring good news to the poor,  
 proclaim release to the captives,  
 and let the oppressed go free.

**Amen.**

### **Hymns or songs**

*These hymns and songs relate to the theme of the worship and can be used anywhere throughout the service.*

- A charge to keep have I (StF 658)
- All people that on earth do dwell (StF 1)
- Brother, sister, let me serve you (StF 611)
- God's Spirit is in my heart (StF 404)

- Good news, good news, to you we bring (StF 201)
- Heaven shall not wait (StF 701)
- Let love be real (StF 615)
- Make way, make way, for Christ the King (StF 264)
- Tell out, my soul (StF 186)
- There's a spirit in the air (StF 398)