

Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

January 2020 | A Methodist Way of Life

As we mark the start of a new year, throughout January **Worshipping Together** will be exploring **A Methodist Way of Life**. This is a new resource based on Methodism's **Our Calling**, which unpacks how as Methodists we try to live our lives in response to God's love for us, a **Way of Life**.

Far from the last word, these acts of worship are designed to stimulate thinking, action and conversation, as we explore how as Methodists Our Calling shapes and equips us as individuals and communities to live out our faith as a **Way of Life**.

**Our
Calling**



Worship



Learning and Caring



Service



Evangelism

A Way of Life Prayer¹

Used at the end each service.

God of unimaginable love, we give you thanks and praise.

For the love that welcomes the unlovely.

for the love that pardons the unworthy,
or the love that knows no limit,
we give you thanks and praise.

In the love that inspires worship,
in the love of which we would learn more,
in the love we share in out caring,
we give you thanks and praise.

As your love in us serves our neighbour,
as your love tells its story through us,
as your love calls us your people,
we give you thanks and praise.

Amen

¹ By Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Conference

Share these resources with others to use in their own way as we worship and grow together despite the pandemic.

Available at: www.westsussexcoastanddownscircuit.co.uk

Sunday 3rd January 2021 | Introducing a Methodist Way of Life

GATHERING

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Ephesians 2:10

Great God your love has called us²

1. Great God, your love has called us here as we, by love for love were made. Your living likeness still we bear, though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed; we come, with all our heart and mind, your call to hear, your love to find.

2. We come with self-inflicted pains of broken trust and chosen wrong, half-free, half-bound by inner chains, by social forces swept along, by powers and systems close confined, yet seeking hope for humankind.

Pray

God of all time and space,

we praise you for the dawn of this new year.

We worship you in the knowledge that you have always been faithful to us, we celebrate our experience of your faithfulness in our past and present, and hold to the assurance that you promise to be faithful to us in our future.

God of all forgiveness and love,

we thank you for creating us and being with us in all aspects of our living.

We praise you for sending Jesus to aid us, for the way Jesus calls us to lives of unconditional love, limitless forgiveness and selfless service.

God of all, we worship you for your faithfulness.

Help us to be faithful to you. Amen.



² Great God your love, v1 & 2, by Brian Wren, Singing the Faith no.499

Reading: Galatians 3:23-29

Around this time of year Methodists, and increasingly other denominations and Christian networks, hold Covenant services. The service reminds us of our calling as Methodists, to live lives of devotion and discipleship and dedicate ourselves to working for social justice, all in the knowledge of God's gracious promise: *'I will be their God and they shall be my people'*. The service urges us to remember God's promise of faithfulness to Israel, and that this faithfulness continues for us today. We renew our covenant with God as a response to the faithfulness God already has for us.

For me there has always been something important about the covenant service as a communal act of commitment. Just as God's faithfulness was to the people of Israel, so too is this continued faithfulness to us as the Body of Christ. The covenant service often draws my mind to the commitment I made as a Christian at my baptism, but the covenant service is not, for me, a renewal of my baptism. What the covenant does for me is remind me of my baptism and offers me tools and a community in which to live them out – in ***A Methodist Way of Life***.

This month ***Worshipping Together*** is going to be exploring A Way of Life, a new resource that is available across all our congregations. It explores the 4 aspects of Our Calling – Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism – and seeks to equip and encourage us as we live a Christian life as individuals and communities.

The words from Galatians we read earlier end with a beautiful yet challenging reminder that God's faithfulness is not to a humanly defined group of people. Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, all belong to Christ. As we explore ***A Way of Life*** together know that you belong, are welcomed, and are invited on a journey as we each form part of the Body that 'responds to the Gospel of God's love and live out it's discipleship in worship and mission'.³

RESPONDING

Pointers to aid your own reflection

- How does hearing that you belong to Jesus make you feel?
- How have you experienced God's faithfulness in your life?
- What does being a Methodist mean to you?

³ From Our Calling, Methodist Church

Pray

Give thanks for the ways you have experienced God's faithfulness

Pray for your congregation and neighbours

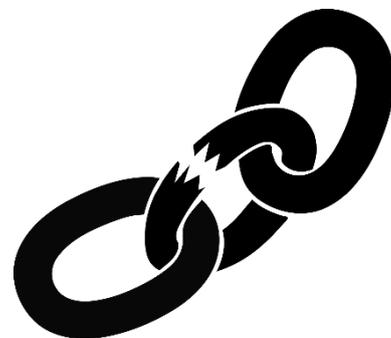
Pray for those known to you today in need

Great God your love has called us⁴

3) Great God, in Christ you call our name,
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right or claim,
but by your gracious love alone ;
we strain to glimpse your mercy-seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.

4) Then take the towel, & break the bread,
and humble us, and call us friends ;
suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

5) Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share ;
give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do,
while love is making all things new.



Closing Prayer

*We pray **A Way of Life** prayer on page 1*

Sunday 10th January 2021 | Worship

GATHERING

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

- We will pray daily
- We will worship with others regularly
- We will look and listen for God in scripture, and the world.

**O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!**

Psalm 95:6

⁴ Great God your love, v1 & 2, by Brian Wren, Singing the Faith no.499

Meet and right it is to sing⁵

1) Meet and right it is to sing,
in every time and place,
glory to our heavenly King,
the God of truth and grace :
join we then with sweet accord,
all in one thanksgiving join ;
holy, holy, holy Lord,
eternal praise be thine.

2) Father, God, thy love we praise,
which gave thy Son to die ;
Jesus, full of truth and grace,
alike we glorify ;
Spirit, Comforter divine,
praise by all to thee be given ;
till we in full chorus join,
and earth is turned to heaven.

Pray

Faithful God, who calls us to worship,
gathered and scattered, your love for us brings us joy,
and we celebrate how all the world cries glory and sings of your beauty.
Helps us daily to see you in the wonder and beauty of the world
and cry glory with all creation.

God, who formed us in your own image,
we worship you our creator with every sinew of our being;
in our worship, day by day, may we be assured of your love for us in Jesus,
and your presence with us by your comforting, empowering Spirit. Amen.

RECEIVING

Reading: Acts 2:42-47

I've always loved the vision of life in Christian community that Acts 2 paints, living and sharing together as followers of The Way, all rooted in lives that respond to the awe that comes upon them after the Spirit is outpoured on the community at Pentecost.

A Methodist Way of Life encourages us to see worship, not as something we 'attend' but as part of what it is to live; as essential to our discipleship as oxygen is to our breathing. Worship encompasses so much, from gathered worship with others, to personal prayer and bible reading, smiling when we see the beauty of a sunrise or love in the actions of others and acknowledge God's activity in the world. Worship draws our focus to God, and the possibilities for worship are endless.

⁵ Meet and Right, V1 & 4, by Charles Wesley, Singing the Faith no.32

If we see worship in such infinite breadth, we discover so many opportunities where worship can be, and indeed is, a way of life. There is cause for worship all around us every day; the challenge, sometimes, is being attentive to it. A life of worship can take discipline. The early followers of The Way we read about in Acts followed and shared as a community, supporting and encouraging one another as their faith in God grew. It was through this shared relationship that they could be disciplined together. Their communal life together fed and nurtured their faith.

RESPONDING

Questions from A Methodist Way of Life for reflection:



- What is the pattern of your prayer life?
- How easy or hard do you find it to pray?
- What has spoken to you recently in worship or in the Bible?
- When, lately, have you felt close to God or distant from God?

Pray

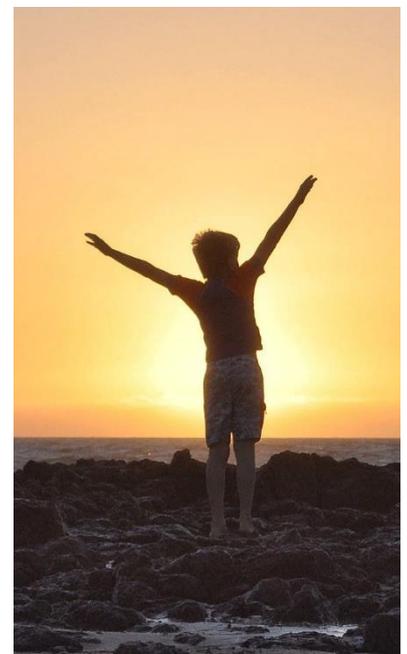
*For people living in countries where they are persecuted for worshipping God
For those isolated, anxious and lonely.
For those known to you in need of prayer*

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise⁶

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise,
the city of our God, the holy place,
the joy of the whole earth.

Great is the Lord in whom we have the victory,
he aids us against the enemy,
we bow down on our knees.

*And Lord, we want to lift your name on high,
and Lord, we want to thank you,
for the works you've done in our lives;
and Lord, we trust in your unfailing love,
for you alone are God eternal,
throughout earth and heaven above.*



Closing Prayer

We pray A Way of Life prayer on page 1

⁶ Great is the Lord, by Steve McEwan, © 1985 Body Songs, Singing the Faith no.50

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

- We will care for ourselves and those around us
- We will learn more about our faith
- We will practice hospitality and generosity

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

John 14:26

Breathe on me, Breath of God⁷

Breathe on me, Breath of God; fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will, to do and to endure.



Pray

Giving God, who gives us form and breath, we praise you.
Loving God, who gives us Jesus as our friend, we worship you.
Living God, whose Spirit is forever with us, we adore you.

We celebrate the way you created us to think and learn,
giving our life meaning and purpose.
Thank you that through the activity of your Spirit among us,
you teach us to act and care for ourselves and one another. Amen.

RECEIVING

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

These words from Thessalonians challenged the original recipients, and now us, not to fall asleep – to be attentive and awake to the coming kingdom. While at the time Jesus' return was expected imminently (not 2000 more years and counting!), the premise remains the same – faith should not lead us to putting our feet up!

⁷ Breathe on me breathe of God, v1 & 2, by Edwin Hatch, Singing the Faith no.370

As Our Calling puts it, the Church is to grow and learn through mutual support and care. In other words, learning and caring is about how Christians relate to one another, help one another, encourage one another and grow as a community that reflects Christ.

We grow by being open to learning. Jesus promised the Advocate as a presence to remind the disciples and future followers of all Jesus had said and teach them everything. Are you ready and open to learn? To discover new things about God?

The passage from Thessalonians ends with a climactic challenge and affirmation: *'therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.'* Discovering for ourselves the salvation and friendship we find in Christ compels us to care for one another and encourage each other as we live in Christ.

RESPONDING

Questions from A Methodist Way of Life for reflection:



How have you practiced generosity recently?

How have you shown hospitality to others lately?

How are you caring for yourself?

How and what are you learning now?

Pray

That God would help you be open to learning.

Ask God who you can encourage and build up this week.

For those who feel no-one cares for them.

Breathe on me, Breath of God⁸

Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God; so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.



Closing Prayer

We pray A Way of Life prayer on page 1

⁸ Breathe on me breathe of God, v 3 & 4, by Edwin Hatch, Singing the Faith no.370

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

- We will help people in our community and beyond
- We will care for creation and all God's gifts
- We will challenge injustice

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8

Sent by the Lord⁹

Sent by the Lord am I;
my hands are ready now
to make the earth the place
in which the kingdom comes.
Sent by the Lord am I;
my hands are ready now
to make the earth the place
in which the kingdom comes.

The angels cannot change
a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love,
of justice and of peace.
The task is mine to do,
to set it really free.
Oh, help me to obey;
help me to do your will.

Prayer

God of all goodness and grace,
With humbleness in our hearts, we worship and praise you.
we thank you that you are not silent, but call us, encourage us and inspire us,
that Christ lives to set us free and shows us a better way of living,
that your Spirit is with us to reveal truth to us.
As we respond to your call to us with worship and wonder,
may our lives overflow with justice, love and kindness. Amen.

Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16

Lion King II includes the iconic song **We are One**. The song captures young Kiara's desire to find belonging and purpose, as father Simba assures her that the family is

⁹ Sent by the Lord, by Jose Aguiar, © 1991 Jorge Maldonado, Singing the Faith no.239

one – that she does belong. Ephesians 4 begins with the same assurance, we are one body that is called to the one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. At times we sometimes feel we don't fit in, or feel we don't belong. Maybe we think we speak differently, think differently, or dress differently. It is human to want to belong and find purpose; yet it also seems to be human to think ourselves out of finding that which we seek and need as human beings.

Ephesians 4 teaches us a really important lesson, that being **one** does not mean being clones. Being **one** is about being able to call ourselves a community, a body of Christ, despite any differences – because no matter what the differences are, the common ground we share is our belonging – one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

By grace we are given gifts and skills to serve our Lord and our communities in specific ways only we can. Teachers, Doctors, Debt Counsellors, Accountants, Checkout Workers. Intercessors, encouragers, preachers, prophets. No matter what we think of ourselves, our differences are an outpouring of God's grace upon us and the whole body of Christ. God's call to us is to recognise the very gifts of grace he has outpoured on us and use them to best of our ability in service.

RESPONDING

Questions from A Methodist Way of Life for reflection:

How are you seeking to serve others in your community and beyond?



What has helped or hindered you in your service of others?

How are you caring for God's creation?

How are you using God's gifts (including financial resources)?

What issues of injustice are you currently concerned about? What are you doing in response?

Pray

For one another in our service.

For people who find themselves excluded because of their apparent 'difference'

That God would help the body of Christ to recognise and affirm the gifts of others

Sing again: Sent by the Lord (pg9)

Closing Prayer

We pray A Way of Life prayer on page 1

As we come to worship, you may like to prepare with a period of quiet, or light a candle. Let us remember that wherever we are, God is with us.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

- We will speak of the love of God
- We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus
- We will share our faith with others

May God our Father himself and our Master Jesus clear the road to you! And may the Master pour on the love so it fills your lives and splashes over on everyone around you, just as it does from us to you.

1 Thessalonians 3:11-12, The Message

May the God of hope¹⁰

1) May the God of hope go with us every day, filling all our lives with love and joy and peace. May the God of justice speed us on our way, bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all; working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.



2) God will be our Shepherd as we go our way and will not forsake us when we go astray. Even though the load of life is hard to bear, we must not forget that God is always there.

Pray

God who comes to us, enriches our lives and fills us with joy,
We thank and praise you for the difference you make to our living.
we celebrate your faithfulness to us,
and ask for your help as we seek to be faithful to your call,
as we share the joy of the good news with those around us. Amen.

RECEIVING

Reading: John 20:30-31, 21:24-25

¹⁰ May the God of Hope, Spanish traditional translated by Alvin Schuutmaat and Ann Mitchell, StF no.411.

Whichever gospel you read, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all tell different parts of the same story. Each includes and excludes different bits, and so we are left with a wonderful and at times frustrating patchwork of historical story that we can't quite piece together into one coherent biography of Jesus.

And that's a good thing, because if we did, we'd be losing sight of the purpose of the gospels. They are not a biography of Jesus – but a proclamation of good news, and a call to action. They tell us what the authors believed was enough of the story to aid hearers and readers to understand the truth of who Jesus was and invite Jesus to be part of their own story.

Evangelism is sharing the experience of God we have had with others. Sharing our story of life with Jesus and inviting others to invite Jesus into theirs. And whether we are aware of it or not, we all have a story that God calls us to share.

Sharing isn't always done with words. In fact, some of the most impacting moments of evangelism I've witness have been wordless – through the witness of the activity of disciples the truth of the good news is not merely spoken but enacted before people's eyes.

RESPONDING

Questions from A Methodist Way of life for reflection:



When was the last time you were able to talk about God?

What opportunities to share your faith have there been recently?

How have you responded to opportunities to share your faith?

Is there anyone you might invite to consider Christian faith?

Pray

*That God would give and equip you to speak of the love of God
For people you know who are in need of God*

Sing again: May the God of hope (p11)

Closing Prayer

We pray A Way of Life prayer on page 1

Acknowledgements

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