

ACT OF WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 20th JUNE 2021

Introduction and Explanations

Dear friend,

Yesterday, Saturday 19th June, ordination services were held across the Methodist Connexion, for presbyters and deacons who were due to be ordained at the *last* Methodist Conference – of 2020. This included the Revd Dan Balsdon of the West Sussex (Coast and Downs) Circuit. Next Sunday, at the Methodist Conference of 2021, presbyters and deacons will be received into Full Connexion and ordained. This includes the Revd Naomi Oates of the North Kent Circuit.

This order of service reflects on the call to ministry, and the reflection I offer is based on the sermon offered at the Ordinand's Testimony Service held last Saturday for Naomi Oates. Whether we are called to ordained ministry or not, God calls us to be disciples. How will you respond?

Please note that as churches are rapidly re-opening, and worship in churches and online, as well as printed worship resources are now widely available, **next week's District worship leaflet will be the last in this pandemic series.** I hope and pray that they have been of use to you. Thank you for journeying with me in these extraordinary times.

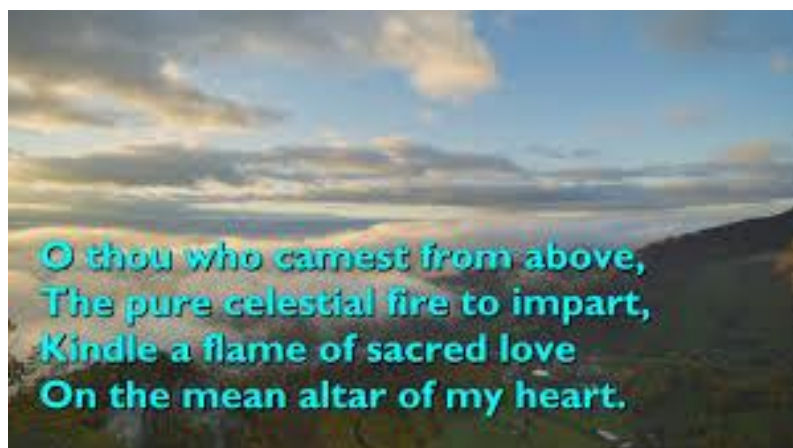
Blessings.

David

Revd David Hinchliffe,
Chair of the South East District of the Methodist Church.

Preparing to Worship

*You may like to be still, light a candle as we continue to celebrate Jesus, the Light of the World;
and listen to a calming piece of music as we gather in worship*



Preparing to Worshipⁱ

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good;
And His mercy endures for ever.

God of all grace,
You call your Church to be a holy people to the praise of your name.
In the power of your Spirit,
Fill our hearts with your love
And our lives with your glory;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn (Singing the Faith) 340 – Ye servants of God, your Master proclaimⁱⁱ

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
And publish abroad his wonderful name ;
The name all-victorious of Jesus extol ;
His kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save ;
And still he is nigh, his presence we have ;
The great congregation his triumph shall sing,
Ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

'Salvation to God who sits on the throne !'
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son ;
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
Fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right ;
All glory and power, all wisdom and might,
All honour and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

Prayers of Openness and Praiseⁱⁱⁱ

There is a pathway of passion, of costly life,
Which leads us towards the Christ, who always walks before us:
CALL US ON, JESUS CHRIST.

There is a company of the faithful who have gone ahead,
Singing with life in the Spirit.
CALL US ON, JESUS CHRIST.

God, the great Creator,
Cup hands of love around us as we go.
CALL US ON, JESUS CHRIST.

There are times, loving God, when we know that
To acknowledge your presence is to invite your challenge into our lives.
But still we do that I faith,
With our vulnerable lives only too clearly before you.

Come to us this day, Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ.

COME, HOLY SPIRIT!

COME, LORD JESUS.

COME.

AMEN.

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Jeremiah 1. 4-10

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon^{iv}

God, who does not turn away from the truth about our life, even unto death,

We confess that we have far less courage.

We often pretend to ourselves, we often pretend to others,

And sometimes we even try to pretend in your presence.

If we are afraid to see who we have become,

If we are too grieves about our lives to ask for forgiveness,

Or if we are too proud to ask others for forgiveness:

STAND BEFORE US IN THE TRUTH OF YOUR COSTLY GRACE, JESUS CHRIST.

When our lives celebrate comfort and complacency instead of the journey of faith,

When we close off the reality of the lives of others

Because it demands a response we will not give:

STAND BEFORE US IN THE TRUTH OF YOUR COSTLY GRACE, JESUS CHRIST.

SPEAK INTO OUR HEARTS IN NEW WAYS,

THE WAYS OF YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO US, O GOD.

Silence

Even as we pray, the life of Jesus moves towards all that would destroy us,

Healing, loving and bringing grace.

We are forgiven!

THANKS BE TO GOD.

GOSPEL READING: John 21. 1-14

Hymn (Singing the Faith) 447 – Jesus, be the centre^v

Jesus, be the centre,

Be my source, be my light, Jesus.

Jesus, be the centre,

Be my hope, be my song, Jesus.

Be the fire in my heart,

Be the wind in these sails;

Be the reason that I live,

Jesus, Jesus.

Jesus, be my vision,

Be my path, be my guide, Jesus.

Be the fire in my heart,

Be the wind in these sails;

*Be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.*

Jesus, be my vision,
Be my path, be my guide, Jesus.

The Sermon: Ordinand's Testimony Service Sermon - Revd David Hinchliffe
Based on the sermon preached at the South-East District Ordinand's Testimony Service for the Revd Naomi Oates, on Saturday 12th June 2021 in the North Kent Circuit.

“Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth.” (Jeremiah 1.9)

Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Take our minds and think through them.

Take our lips and speak through them.

Take our souls and set them on fire. Amen.

My guess is that all ministers quickly discover that there are any number of ways in which we encounter the unexpected, and we don't quite know what to do.

In my previous appointment I frequently had to travel to Jersey. I was completely confused when, on my first official visit, the first lady I met offered me her cheek to kiss, and then after that, the other cheek. Now, we don't do that kind of thing in Yorkshire where I come from, and certainly not to people we barely know! And through my mind two things hurtled through: which cheek first? My left or hers? My right or hers? But more than that, I could already hear the call from the Safeguarding Officer if I got it wrong. Oh my heavens. Mercifully, this kind soul appreciated by confusion and embarrassment, and kindly expressed the cultural etiquette in Jersey! There are clearly some advantages to worship online!

Being called to ministry is perhaps not something we ever expected, anticipated, or wanted (or want!). As a sixteen year old, feeling called in a young people's Bible study group, to be a Methodist minister was bewildering and confusing. I wasn't even a Methodist. The following Sunday I went to my local Methodist Church desperate for some sign that either I had indeed gone mad (which I suspected), or that God had called me. The minister read the Bible passage: the call of Jeremiah. It was both reassuring, and deeply disturbing. Reassuring because Jeremiah was young when God called him, maybe a teenager too. Reassuring, because Jeremiah immediately tried to reject the call, accusing God essentially of having got it wrong. And, frankly, Jeremiah's excuses were good ones. He was young- who would listen to him? He didn't know what to say? How could God possibly use him? And at that moment it looked and felt as if I was off the hook.

But then the disturbing part. God knows (and let's be honest, Jeremiah knows) that Jeremiah is, in his gut, making excuses for doing what he in his heart of hearts knows: that God has called him, and when God has called him, Jeremiah ultimately has to respond. He has to go to whomsoever God sends him to, and say whatever God says to him.

But with that disturbing acceptance, comes and ominous reassurance: Jeremiah need not be afraid. God there to deliver him (to rescue him!). Gulp! And then something extraordinary happens. Jeremiah records, ***Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth.*** There we are; mouths again. Mouths, mouths used for kissing (though maybe not often right now); mouths used for eating (as we discovered in our gospel reading); mouths used (at the moment) for lateral flow tests, and dentists to examine. But now, mouths, touched by God, a symbol of God feeding the disciples not with bread and fish, but with words to say; words *from* God, words *for* God's people to listen to, to chew over, to digest, to be energised by, and to act upon.

And that is no easy or straightforward task. For Jeremiah that will mean speaking words to people, a task he doesn't want but has; words which will have the effect of plucking up and pulling down, destroying and overthrowing, building and planting. In Jeremiah's case the bias seems to be on the destructive. And it was a ministry which Jeremiah came to cordially loath, because in God's honesty, Jeremiah was called to a ministry which in speaking forth God's word, alienated him from family and friends and community. Yet this was God's call. They were God's words (not his), and Jeremiah was faithful, in spite of the cost.

Now, with such a picture as this, those preparing for ordination might be wondering why! Is this what ordained ministry is like – the kind the young Jeremiah is being called to? Maybe, is the honest answer. Ministry is not always overwhelmingly joyful. We can feel like Jeremiah, that God has got it wrong – choose someone else!

But the key, I think, to all ministry is this: ***Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth.*** In other words, it is God who calls us. It is God who puts His words in our mouth. Put it another way: the ministry to which we are called is in the last analysis, not yours, or mine; not even the Methodist Church's; but God's. The word *of* God; the word *from* God, *for* the people of God.

Just imagine breaded toasted on the barbecue fire and roasting fish beside the lake. Can't you just smell it? Simon and his friends had had a lousy night; they'd caught nothing. And there is this wretched man on the shoreline, on the beach for goodness sake, who tells them to cast the net over the other side of the boat. And they do. And they catch an extraordinary catch. But it is Jesus on the beach. And it is Jesus who has the bread ready toasting, and the fish gently roasting. It is Jesus who will take the bread and share it with them; take the fish and eat with them. It is Jesus who will feed

these tired disciples who had spent a fishless night fishing. It is Jesus who will feed us, who will reach out his hands, touching our lips with the food of his love, and the words we shall speak. It is Jesus who feeds us, so that we might feed those around us.

That is the task of ordained ministry; it is also the task of every Christian. It is to allow the words of Jesus, to be taken into our mouths and hearts and minds, that as they feed us, we will want to feed others. Had we read on from our passage in John's gospel, we would have seen Jesus restoring Simon Peter to the apostolic task: feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep.^{vi}

We are living in an age of profound fear and uncertainty as live in an age of global pandemic. This is a time when we need to be fed by the word of God; a time when we need to reflect on God's call on our lives and what it means to be the Church in times like this. None of us knows what the Church will look like in a year from now let alone a decade, or what our ministry will be like. But when our lips are touched by God; when God's words are on our lips and in our hearts; when we speak up and speak out in Jesus's name, when we accept our calling, God will be with us. This is God's ministry to which we are called. And the Spirit of God is with us. So we can dare to pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Take our minds and think through them.

Take our lips and speak through them.

Take our souls and set them on fire. Amen.

Or, as Charles Wesley penned it:

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire

To work, and speak, and think for Thee;

Still let me guard the holy fire,

And still stir up thy gift in me.^{vii}

Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth. Thanks be to God for calling presbyters and deacons to ordination, and calling us. Thanks be to God for calling and equipping presbyters and deacons for ordination, and for calling and equipping each of us. Amen,

Prayers

These prayers were written by the Revd Tony Graff, co-Superintendent of the North Kent Circuit, and were used at the District Ordinand's Testimony Service. They are reproduced with permission.

Eternal God,
Sometimes it comes in a whisper
And sometimes in a voice as loud as thunder

But in every moment
Including right now
You call each one of us by name

Your voice speaks from beyond the universe
And rises from the deep within our hearts where we are one with you

You say,
“Do not be afraid
For I have redeemed you
I have called you by your name
You are mine
You are precious and honoured in my sight
And I love you”

We thank you that you know each one of us by name
You know us just as we are
All the beauty
And all that is not quite so beautiful
All the strength
And all the vulnerability
Seeing everything
Seeing us fully
You say,
“You belong to me. You are mine”

You not only see us as we are
You also see us as we will be
You call us by a new name which sums up this vocation to which you summon us
In this new name
Our souls are restored
Our selves are refashioned and made new
We are reformed in your image and likeness

So, God of love,
Call each one of us by name
As Jesus called Mary Magdalene on the day of the resurrection
Showing that he knew her
And at the same moment
Revealing himself to her
So that she would know him
As the one she loved and served
And as her friend

Call each one of us by name
As Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb
Summoning him out from all that deadened and bound him
Summoning him forwards
To a place of belonging
Where he felt the touch of others
Unbinding and letting him go
Releasing him for freedom, joy and life

Call each one of us by name
As Jesus called Zacchaeus
Welcoming him into the fellowship
That unlocked his generosity
Awoke his desire for justice
And gave him the will to right the wrongs that bring suffering and destruction

Call each one of us by name
And with those like Abraham and Rebekah
Help us to say, "Here I am
Ready and attentive
Available and willing
Freely and whole heartedly yielding all things to your pleasure and disposal"

Call each one of us by name
And with Isaiah of Jerusalem
Help us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices
Who say "Here am I, send me"

Call each one of us by name
And with Mary, the mother of Jesus
Help us to give our consent
To say, "Yes"
To say
"I am your servant
Let it be with me
According to your word"

Call each one of us by name
And be our hospitable God, our courteous Lord
Who cooks our breakfast on a charcoal fire
Who offers bread and wine
And says,
This is me
This is what I am
This is my life
Take and eat
Take and drink
That what I am
That my life
May fill and come to life in you

Jesus, our courteous Lord,
We are faced with five thousand needs
Our gift seems so small and inadequate amongst so many
Yet you take our offering in your hands
You say,
"It is enough
You are enough
You are worthy"
You hold us up and thank God for us

You break us and share us
And needs are met
Thousands are fed
All eat and are filled

Call each one of us by name
Be our hospitable God,
Be our courteous Lord

Today especially we pray for Dan and Naomi, and all who were ordained as presbyters and deacons yesterday, and all who will be ordained as presbyters and deacons next Sunday.
We thank you that they have heard your call to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church
We pray for them
And thank you for those who are part of their formation
Who have helped to make them who they are:
For family and friends and colleagues;
Especially in the churches they serve;
Those they meet in the wider community.
We are grateful for their openness to you;
That they heard your call
And said "Yes."
With the church we say that they are worthy.
And we commit ourselves to pray for them:
That you will continue to sustain them with the gifts of your grace
And bless thousands through their ministry.

We bring our prayer
Through Jesus Christ
Our Good Lord
Our Saviour
And our Friend.

AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn (Singing the Faith) 564 – O Thou who comes from above ^{viii}

O thou who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and Think for thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up thy gift in me —

Ready for all thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death thy endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.

Concluding Prayers

Preparing to Go Forth^{ix}

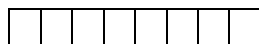
Creator God, may we be
ready to plant your words,
ready to grow in faith and
ready to go and sow your love.

Amen.

The Blessing^x

And may life in all its beauty and colour be spread before us,
And the roots of our faith grow deep into the earth around us
As a living testimony to the joy of the Holy God: our Creator, Saviour and Friend.

AMEN



Acknowledgments:

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ⁱ *Methodist Worship Book* © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (1999), 298f.

ⁱⁱ Charles Wesley (1707–1788). Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 340.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dorothy McRae-McMahon, *Liturgies for Daily Life* (London: SPCK, 2004), 61.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 62.

^v Michael Frye. Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number **447**. Words and Music: © 1999 Vineyard Songs UK. Administered by Song Solutions copycare, 14 Horsted Square, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN2 1QG. <www.songsolutions.org> Used by permission.

^{vi} See John 21. 15-19

^{vii} Charles Wesley (1707–1788). Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 564, verse 3.

^{viii} *Ibid.* Whole hymn.

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^x McRae-McMahon, 79.