

PROCLAIMING THE WAY:

SERMON OUTLINES AND WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR A METHODIST WAY OF LIFE

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Introduction

In the Methodist tradition, the sermon is a central part of worship. But what is a sermon for? Like all of worship, a sermon should be addressed to God as part of all that we offer when we gather as a community of faith, however that might be.

Sermons are also for the moment. They are 'experienced' as part of worship and if we happen to learn or remember anything, that is a bonus. However this preaching series aims to challenge worshippers to consider different aspects of their discipleship and what it means to be a Methodist in every moment of our living, not just in worship.

We are very grateful to the twelve writers who have contributed to this resource.

How to use these sermons

This resource offers a sermon outline for each of the twelve commitments of a **Methodist Way of Life**. Preachers are encouraged to develop these themselves in order to enhance worship and lead God's people in their discipleship. Each outline contains a great deal of material, and the expectation is that not all of it will be used, or applicable, in every situation. (There may even be sufficient material for a second sermon on the same subject.)

The series offers the opportunity for the commitments of the four sections of a **Methodist Way of Life** (Worship, Learning and Caring, Service and Evangelism) to be considered, each over a three-week period. However, it would also be possible to make it a four-week series, using one sermon from each section. Both these options, with gaps between, are probably better than one twelve-week series – but that is also a possibility!

Small groups may also be able to pick up and develop the themes and the passages in these sermon outlines. Suggestions for how this might be done are provided on page 28. Following up on sermons with reflections in small groups will also be a way of reminding one another that a **Methodist Way of Life** is for all and for all time.

A Methodist Way of Life

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

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

Worship

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

Learning and Caring

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

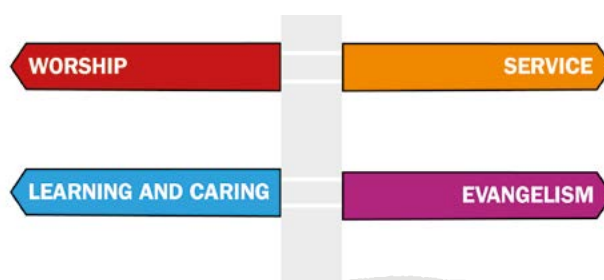
Service

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

Evangelism

- 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 we be a blessing within and beyond God's Church,
for the transformation of the world.**



Sermon Outlines

1	We will pray daily	Jill Baker	CLICK HERE
2	We will worship with others regularly	Peter Howdle	CLICK HERE
3	We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world	Judith Rossall	CLICK HERE
4	We will care for ourselves and those around us	Anna Bland	CLICK HERE
5	We will learn more about our faith	Richard Teal	CLICK HERE
6	We will practise hospitality and generosity	Jongi Zihle	CLICK HERE
7	We will help people in our communities and beyond	Tim Baker	CLICK HERE
8	We will care for creation and all God's gifts	Sarah Hooks	CLICK HERE
9	We will challenge injustice	Michaela Youngson	CLICK HERE
10	We will speak of the love of God	Faith Nyota	CLICK HERE
11	We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus	Calvin Samuel	CLICK HERE
12	We will share our faith with others	Anne Browse	CLICK HERE

Jill Baker is a past Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, current Chair of the Methodist Council, and a local preachers' tutor in the Strathclyde Circuit, Scotland.

Bible readings

- Proverbs 8:32-36
- Luke 11:1-4

Sermon outline

Introduction

A number of people responding to a **Methodist Way of Life** have admitted that what troubles them about this first commitment is not the word 'pray', but the word 'daily', so that is where the focus for this sermon lies.

- What are the things we do daily? (*Invite responses and/or list some of your own.*)
- Amongst these, it is essential that we breathe. Might we find this commitment less daunting if we thought of prayer as an essential, even involuntary, part of daily life?

It is interesting to note uses of the word 'daily' throughout the Bible:

- the Israelite slaves in Exodus 5 are oppressed by the demand for the same levels of daily productivity even when straw is not provided for them to make bricks – is this sometimes how we think about daily prayer? An impossible target which can only make us weary and feel as though we have failed?
- many passages refer to daily offerings (eg Exodus 29:38-46)
- several stories deal with daily wages or providing people's daily needs (eg Deuteronomy 24:15).

Perhaps all these references have something to say about prayer too, but we will focus on two small but significant references to daily activity. These will be considered as 'daily listening' from Proverbs and 'daily asking' from Luke.

Daily listening – Proverbs 8:32-36

- Proverbs 8 is an extraordinary chapter from which many hundreds of sermons could be preached. Amongst other things, it appears to explore the relationship between God as Creator and God as Wisdom or Word (Proverbs 8:30 speaks of Wisdom as the 'daily delight' of the LORD).
- In this lovely extract, God describes the happiness of those who are attentive to God, listening, watching and waiting daily at God's gates and doors – ie at the entry points of life.
- Seeing this passage as a description of prayer could be liberating. This sort of living, or praying, is about listening to and seeking after God, not about a system.
- In a contribution to BBC Radio 2's *Pause for Thought* in October 2005, Rowan Williams used the image of sunbathing to illustrate how we encounter God in prayer: just relax and let it happen.
- Prayer is not meant to be a burden, rather an unburdening (*see the story below*).

Daily asking – Luke 11:1-14

- Prayer is for the tough times too.
- Jesus' own practice of prayer includes turning to God when things were hard – when drained (Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16), when making hard decisions (Luke 6:12), in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36), in bereavement (John 11:41).
- When asked to teach his disciples about prayer, Jesus encourages them to ask daily for all that they need – bread is cited, but this could stand for a range of needs, it gives strength for the day.
- When we are carrying too much in life we become weary – prayer invites us to lay down those heavy packs (*see the story below*).
- Our culture promotes self-sufficiency and independence; it moves us away from the habit of expressing need and asking for help. Maybe that's why some of us find prayer a challenge?
- What do we need day by day? How is our recognition of need a kind of prayer?
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, foodbanks were more in demand than ever. Perhaps those who came week by week to receive a bag of food that they were not able to choose or pay for

expressed better than most the 'poor in spirit' to whom is given the kingdom of heaven.

- Just as in the wilderness when manna was given (Exodus 16), God's grace comes in small packages which are soon exhausted – precisely so that we will go back and ask for more – 'give us each day...'

Conclusion

As Methodists seeking to adopt a 'Methodist Way of Life', if we are not to stumble at the very first commitment – "we will pray daily" – perhaps we need to learn how to listen more and ask more.

How might we do that?

- It is said that when Mother Theresa was asked what she said to God in prayer she replied, "I mostly listen" and when the interviewer went on to ask her what God said to her, she answered, "He mostly listens". That kind of listening is powerful, and builds a relationship.
- Such listening usually denotes a relationship of love that longs for more and more communication between the lovers. Such communication is not a chore, but a delight.
- Praying daily may begin with reminding ourselves daily that God wants to communicate with us at every moment, because of God's great love for us. It's not about technique or accomplishment, it's about opening channels to listen and to ask for what we need.
- If we are already wearied by the demands of our lives, praying daily can feel like one more exhausting task. Might it help to see prayer (as in the story below) as a daily unburdening? To believe that God wants us to ask for what we need – even just for strength for the next breath, or next step, or next hour?

Further information

For further examples of the comparison between breathing and prayer, see Rob Bell's *Nooma* video on 'Breathe' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-h3c45Hug4) or Richard Rohr's book *The Naked Now*.

For examples of 'daily offerings' in the Old Testament see Numbers 28:3; Ezra 3:4; Ezekiel 43.25.

Malcolm Guite's poem *The Church's Banquet*, offers a helpful contrast between "Precise prescription, rigid regimen," and "beauty and gratuitous abundance" (an example of how Proverbs 8 might liberate our understanding of prayer).

Story

In the Caribbean and many other parts of the world, it is common to see people – mainly women – carrying enormous baskets on their heads. They may be setting off to work in their farmlands, carrying their tools, food and water for the day – or returning at the end of the day with produce to feed a family. Their poise is remarkable and they negotiate obstacles or rough terrain with grace and ease.

But sometimes, if you happen to be looking when the basket is taken from the head and put down, you can sense a palpable relief at the unburdening. Is that not what prayer can be? The daily unburdening of loads too great to carry?

For reflection...

- What are the voices you hear daily? Are there ways in which you could, on a daily basis, be more attentive to God's voice?
- How do we distinguish between asking God daily for our bread (what we need) and the kind of 'shopping list prayers' that make a mockery of what true prayer is?
- You may like to fill a basket (or a rucksack) with some heavy things that represent some of the 'burdens' in your life. Try carrying it around – maybe for a whole day – then taking things out and considering how each one might be released as prayer.

Professor Peter Howdle is a past Vice-President of the Methodist Conference, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Medicine in the University of Leeds and a local preacher.

Bible readings

- Isaiah 6:1-8
- John 4:19-24

One or more from a number of passages where Paul offers guidance to the early Christians:

- Romans 12:1-8
- Colossians 3:15-17
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Sermon outline

Introduction

In a **Methodist Way of Life** we commit ourselves to worship, and in this sermon we will concentrate on the second commitment: “We will worship with others regularly”.

There are three main points in this commitment to worship:

- an initial commitment to worship
- that the commitment is a shared one: we will worship with others
- that the commitment is to worship regularly.

This leads us to three questions:

What is worship?

Worship is the Christian community’s celebration of its faith in a living God. It is an exultation, a hymn of praise, a great thanksgiving, for the truth and love shown to us in Jesus Christ and made real for us by his transforming spirit.

When we worship, or ‘go to worship’, it is not for God’s benefit. Nor do we need to ask God to be with us: God isn’t there just because we have come – we have come because God is already there.

In *Called to Love and Praise* (1999) the Methodist

Church stated that worship has “a twofold intention: first, adoration and praise, and, second, our transformation by the grace and power of God.”

In true worship we come to God for transformation through God’s grace.

In whatever way we order our worship, it usually consists of:

- a celebration of God’s presence
- a proclamation of the good news for today
- an appropriate response to God’s saving grace in our lives.

Q A question to consider

Why do we come to worship?

With whom do we worship?

We commit ourselves to worshipping with others.

This shared nature of worship reminds us that the followers of Jesus are called to be a community of believers, a faithful people, and to make disciples of all nations (see Matthew 28:19 and 1 Peter 2:9-10).

How we think of a community, however, can be problematic, as we so often picture a community of people like ourselves. People whom God calls to worship may not be like us in a number of ways, perhaps in terms of culture, race, social class, income, sexual orientation, age, disability, even understanding of the nature of Christianity – but all are welcome.

The Black Lives Matter movement has made us think harder about our unconscious racism. The Covid-19 pandemic may also have made us reappraise our commitment to community. The Church is a community of believers as diverse as the whole of humanity – we will worship with others. We should remember that as we worship, it is with others in the universal Church and with ‘all the company of heaven’.

Q A question to consider

How diverse is the community with whom you worship?

How regularly do we worship?

We commit ourselves to worshipping with others regularly.

Worship was at the centre of the practice of the Early Church. Luke tells us in Acts: “Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God” (Acts 2:46 NRSV).

Many mothers and fathers of the Church over the centuries have stressed the value of regular praise, prayer, thanksgiving – in a word, worship.

For many, worship is a daily exercise in faith, and regularity of worship is normative and formative in our discipleship.

Public worship often happens on a weekly basis, and in a church building or other special place. In responding to *Our Calling* as Methodist Christians we should remember that regular worship is not only a feature of what we are called to do but is ‘a means of grace’, an activity to which God calls us so that our faith is strengthened and we become more and more aware of God’s love.

Regularity of worship became important for many during the pandemic in 2020. I myself found a weekly service and weekly morning prayer via video conferencing to be both a necessity and a means of grace.

A question to consider

Q How has worshipping regularly as a community strengthened your faith?

Further information

What is worship?

Over the centuries, types of worship have been very varied. Originally, it was essentially domestic, arranged around a celebration of the Last Supper. Eventually, it became a more public occasion in churches. A service of word and sacrament was the primary type of Christian worship until the Reformation. The primacy of preaching became much more common in the Western and post-Reformation traditions including Methodism (although John Wesley still expected his members to attend services of Holy Communion in their parish church on a regular basis). Now, with increased liturgical and ecumenical cooperation, worship is again frequently a service of word and sacrament.

With whom do we worship?

It is exciting to consider the greetings from the writer at the beginning of several epistles, where we

see that we are brought by God, through Jesus and the Spirit, to be a holy people, one community, the Church, for example:

- Romans 1:7: “To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:” (NRSV).
- Ephesians 1:1: “To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus” (NRSV).

Archbishop Rowan Williams, in *Being Christian* (2014), writing about Holy Communion, reminds us that we are there because God invites us, and we should remember that this obliges us to see the person next to us as wanted by God. God desires that person’s company as well as our own.

How regularly do we worship?

For the Early Church, worship was a daily exercise in faith. Historically there are many examples of those who worship God daily: some in a monastic-type of setting such as Julian of Norwich, some burning with zeal for God’s grace such as John Wesley. Today religious communities and cathedral churches continue the tradition of daily services.

Story

Here is an experience from my own life to reflect upon, you may have similar experiences you can share.

When I was a visiting lecturer at Harvard University in Boston, USA, my wife and I found a Methodist Church in the centre of Boston, which was not at all what we expected. It was not a wealthy, well-attended church but a struggling inner city church in an old historic building. There we had a very diverse congregation across race, class, wealth and sexual orientation. I remember standing around the communion table receiving the elements and seeing this variety of humankind, and at the same time, thinking of friends at our church back home, worshipping the same God in the same way. It brought tears to my eyes as I realised God wanted all these people at his table, both on earth and in heaven.

For reflection...

- Did the Covid-19 pandemic make us reappraise our commitment to community?
- How far do our own traditions and prejudices affect our form of worship?
- Why does regularity of worship matter to us?

The Revd Dr Judith Rossall is Methodist Oversight Tutor at The Queen's Foundation.

Bible readings

- Isaiah 55:6-11
- Luke 19:9-10

Sermon outline

Looking for the God who is already looking for us

The idea that God seeks us before we seek God and that everything we do is a response to God's grace, is central to our understanding of the gospel, yet sometimes gets lost when we talk about our practice of spiritual disciplines.

When we read the Bible, we are not primarily trying to learn more facts, but encounter God and to be transformed. We want to respond to the gracious God who always seeks us. Isaiah emphasises a living word – how do we seek God in the Bible and the world, in a way that is faithful to Isaiah's vision?

My experience is that it is important to acknowledge early that Bible study can be a joy, but also a struggle, and that people have wildly different experiences of encountering God. Some find God more easily in the world, others find God more easily through Scripture. Although we do not always know the reason for this, it is important that we find ways to share our different experiences and encourage each other, whether we are finding Bible study easy or difficult.

God in Scripture and God in the world

How do looking for God in the world, and looking for God in the Bible, relate to each other? One of the most famous illustrations comes from Calvin, who said that the Bible is like a pair of spectacles: by looking through Scripture, God's presence and action in creation comes into focus for us. This is an important reminder that we do not read Scripture to learn facts, but to change how we see our lives and the world around us. Equally, the Bible tells us of a God who does not just reach out to individuals, but

who is active in the world and tells us of a way of life which is meant to be lived. Isaiah urges us to go out into the whole world, with joy.

Identifying the God who is looking for us

Isaiah talks about God as someone who "will abundantly pardon" (55:7). He also speaks of the Word of God as being fruitful and having a purpose. How does that help us seek God in the Bible and the world? Wesley talked about interpreting Scripture "according to the grand truths which run through the whole" (Notes on Romans 12:6). Our overall sense of those 'grand truths' matters in how we read particular verses. We seek the God of Jesus, God who is with us in everything. We seek the God who cares about justice and mercy and the God who left the safety of heaven to be with us in our struggles. It is important to acknowledge that the Bible contains passages which most of us find difficult, and which we need help to interpret.

Seeking God together

Isaiah uses both the singular and plural tense when he addresses his audience. English hides this, and we tend to read 'you' as always meaning 'you singular', the individual. However, reading the Scriptures together, through preaching and in small groups, has always been at the heart of Methodism. This is a challenge to the Church, not just individuals.

Questions to consider

Q Are we the kind of Church in which people who do not feel confident with the Bible can find the help they need?

Are we as a community seeking God in the Bible and the world?

Further information

It can be particularly important for those who find Bible study difficult, or have never tried it, to be reminded that God is seeking them.

Wesley eventually changed his teaching on assurance of salvation because he met faithful

Christians who had never had the heart-warming experience which was so important to him. Each faith journey is personal, but even the greatest saints have spoken of times when they struggled to sense God's presence. Most of us experience some times when the Bible seems to speak directly to us and other times when it is confusing, frustrating or just plain boring.

When we find passages difficult, it matters that we have a good sense of the 'grand truths', the picture of who God is, which we learn from all of Scripture. We can then look for what God is doing in the world around us – and seek to join in.

Story

Most adults will have played 'hide and seek' with a child who is slightly too young to understand the rules. Generally, you can stand in the middle of the room and say "where's so and so" and the child will leap out and enthusiastically cry "Here I am!" .

The child wants to be found, in the same way that when we seek God – God wants to be found.

For reflection...

- The Bible was written down at a time when most people could not read. It was intended to be read out loud. Have you tried listening to Scripture, perhaps to longer sections than are read in church?
- There are lots of different ways to read Scripture. Have you tried different styles of reading? For example, asking questions of the text or *Lectio Divina*. Can you find a group with whom you could read Scripture?
- "I find it bewildering that the Bible has been interpreted in so many different ways." "I find it exciting that the Bible has spoken in such different ways to people in different times and places." With which of these statements do you most agree, and why? (Taken from *A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path*, page 651.)
- What does it mean to you to look for God in the world? In what ways is this easy? In what ways is it more difficult?
- Try to write down the 'grand truths' which lie at the heart of the Bible's message. If you had to sum up the 'master story' that the Bible tells, what would you say?

Anna Bland is the Development Officer for LMM, the Yorkshire West Methodist District's Leeds City Centre project.

Bible readings

- 1 Kings 19:4-12
- Mark 6: 30-32; 45-46
- Luke 10:38-42

Sermon outline

A Methodist Way of Life and self-care

- Begin by suggesting that when we take care of ourselves we are so much better able to take care of others.
- The commitments of a **Methodist Way of Life** are preceded by the phrase “as far as we are able”. This is a very important statement. It gives us permission to give ourselves a break.
- Society is always asking us to be more, buy more, do more. A **Methodist Way of Life** should not end up as yet another thing we feel we have failed at.
- In the first book of Kings, after Elijah has had an incredibly stressful time, the angels take care of his physical needs: God does not demand more prayer or action from him but allows him to rest from ‘doing’ and just ‘be’.
- How can we hear the still small voice of God which tells us we are enough and we are loved?
- We must make time to listen to this voice and treat ourselves as if we are enough just as we are, not constantly trying to prove we are loveable.

The greatest commandment

- “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Mark 12:31 NRSV).
- The Church is excellent at loving our neighbour. We can all think of times our church offered hospitality or food provision to those in need, as well as community spaces.
- However the Church may not always have spoken enough about the other side of this commandment – “as yourself”.

- We say far harsher things to ourselves than we ever would to others – this is not showing ourselves love – how can we be more loving to ourselves?
- There are many places in the Gospels where Jesus takes some time for himself and takes time for the disciples to have a break: Luke 5:16, Mark 6:30-32 and 45-6. He does it for a number of different reasons: to recharge; to prepare; to spend concentrated time with God; before making a big decision.
- In the story of Martha and Mary, in Luke 10, Jesus congratulates Mary on sitting, listening and connecting to what he is saying, rather than rushing around taking care of many tasks as Martha does.
- “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10 NRSV) – “have life, and have it abundantly,” or “have it to the full” in other translations – what does a full life mean to you?
- God’s plan for us includes time to rest and have fun, as indicated in the observance of a Sabbath (*explored at more length in Further Information, below*). This is part of our calling as Christians, and it is amazing what God will do with even small periods of rest. People will often say how after times of rest they feel both mentally and physically rejuvenated. God will bless and honour those times of Sabbath.
- Maybe share something of what rest means to you and how you create spaces for prayer, but also for fun.
- From this strong base of prayer, self-knowledge and compassion we are much more able to give to others with true generosity of spirit. Our personal well of love and compassion can only be deeper the more fulfilled and flourishing we feel.

Further information

A **Methodist Way of Life** is not a tick box exercise, but a framework that can be used to help us grow in our faith. We cannot fail at a **Methodist Way of Life**. In this, it draws on other ‘rules of life’, such as Wesley’s famous: “do all the good you can, by all the

means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, at all the times you can, as long as ever you can.” This too, is not just a mandate to more action, but a reflection on what it is we ‘can’ do. It is not asking us to do more than we are capable of, and allows us lots of space just to ‘be’.

Think about the story of creation – God mandates us to have a Sabbath, not just to recover our energy to do more work, but because rest and fun are part of our calling as Christians. There is a rich history and theology of the Sabbath, going right back to the creation story in the first two chapters of Genesis, where all the days lead us towards resting with God on the seventh day.

For another take on the Mary and Martha story, you might like to listen to Rob Bell’s podcast – Episode 214 – Jesus H. Christ – Part 5 – What She Knows (<https://robbell.podbean.com/e/what-she-knows/>).

Story



The stress bucket analogy (see illustration below left) is used in lots of mental health training. It uses the idea that the levels of stress we can deal with have a limit, and that most of the time we are able to manage the incoming stresses of work, relationships, health and money as these are counter balanced by the things we do to relieve stress: prayer, resting, exercise, socialising and, of course, a good night’s sleep. Do you maintain a good balance?

For reflection...

- Ask people to think about their job, family, friends and interests and write them down. Then encourage them to break those down further into the specific people, activities, tasks and groups that make up each section of their lives. Invite everyone to make a different mark or use a different colour for the things that are energising, draining, fun, challenging or rewarding.

We are not naïve enough to think that our whole life can be fun, rewarding and energising. The more difficult parts of our lives are necessary, and these are the things that help us to grow. Yet there may be things in our lives that we could do more or less of to make us feel that we are flourishing and caring for ourselves a little better.

- Spend some time thinking and praying about the shape of your life currently in all its variety; the life-giving and the challenging. How full is your stress bucket at the moment?
- Write down what a full life would look like for you. How close is it to how you live now? Is it realistic or would you be exhausted if you lived like that? Where is your Sabbath within it?

The Revd Richard Teal is the President of the 2020 Methodist Conference and Superintendent of the Driffield-Hornsea Methodist Circuit.

Bible readings

- Matthew 5:43-48

Sermon outline

As a Methodist community, our Founding Father is John Wesley and we owe him a profound debt of gratitude. However we should be wary of indulging in an uncritical worship of a man which sometimes seems to put him almost on a level with God.

Wesley had his faults, yet he always had a restless desire to be a better disciple of Jesus Christ, to grow and mature in the faith. So, what solid reasons are there for being grateful to God for him and what can we learn from him about growing in the faith? This sermon will consider this under three headings.

The gospel for All

In an age of social inequality, grinding poverty and great need, many people felt dehumanised, alienated and powerless. Although Wesley had to face much opposition, his preaching touched the lives of thousands with a message of hope. Everyone mattered to God. Salvation was not dependent on social standing or moral virtue; it was a gift available freely to all.

This 'All' is what gives Methodism its visionary fervour and zeal. The gospel is not something available to a few people – it is for All. This liberating message is often summarised: "All need to be saved. All may be saved. All may know themselves saved. All may be saved to the uttermost".

Faith is a journey. Wesley emphasised that the Holy Spirit helps us to realise our need of God, come to discover him and then receive the assurance of his acceptance, love and forgiveness. This is not the end of our pilgrimage, but it is the end of our searching for the way. The 'means of grace', such as worship, prayer, Bible study, fellowship and service, help us travel the way of holiness, the essence of which is

perfect love for God and humanity. For John Wesley, this stress on perfect love, which simply means Christ-like love, is paramount.

True religion is never solitary

Beginning with Wesley, and throughout Methodist history, it is through the love and care of small groups that many people experienced an intense personal encounter of faith. The results of evangelical preaching were consolidated, effective pastoral care took place and many were motivated to get involved in social and community action.

When John Wesley said (in the Preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*) that "there is no holiness but social holiness" he meant that true religion can never be solitary. As his brother Charles put it in one of his hymns:

"He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on." (*Singing the Faith* 608)

Head, heart and hand

John Wesley never lost his evangelical zeal, but he was always keen to proclaim the faith with intellectual integrity. Generally people will not accept simplistic answers to fundamental and complex life questions. We need a learning Church that is prepared to plumb the depths and so produce Christians who know what they believe. Such people will have confidence to share what they have discovered and show its relevance to, and in, contemporary life.

John Wesley described himself as a 'man of one book' and no doubt that is a major reason for his effectiveness. We do not need to take the Bible literally, but we do need to take it seriously and interpret it in the light of experience, reason and tradition.

How do we grow in faith? Methodist discipleship gives us a model, for it is a journey for All which leads to holiness of heart and life. This journey is not solitary, but is in fellowship with others where faith is deepened and matured, resulting in a deep faith which has grappled with the questions of life.

Further information

The four 'Alls' of Methodism:

- **All need to be saved:** salvation is rooted in what Christ has done for us to renew our relationship with God, and what the Spirit does in us to heal our hearts and transform our lives.
- **All may be saved:** the Spirit is already, and always, at work in our hearts.
- **All may know themselves saved:** but, as in Romans 8:15-16, the spirit of adoption within us cries out "Abba! Father!" and brings us assurance of forgiveness.
- **All may be saved to the uttermost:** God finishes what he starts, he changes us from glory to glory into the likeness of Christ.

The structure of early Methodism:

- **Societies:** These were meetings where people gathered for particular purposes or common interests. In his 'Rules' Wesley describes the Methodist Society as a group of men and women "having the form, and seeking the power, of Godliness; united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation".
- **Classes:** From its beginnings, Methodism was divided into Classes, small groups of twelve people who met together. Each Class had a leader and they would meet together once a

week to develop in, and deepen faith. Every Methodist was expected to belong to a Class.

- **Bands:** These were smaller groups, single sex. Their purpose was to deepen discipleship and faith in their meetings through confession, accountability and prayer.

Story

George Whitefield, John Wesley's colleague in the 18th century Evangelical Revival was recognised as a powerfully effective preacher who made many converts, but he entrusted his converts to Wesley's care. Wesley had a gift which Whitefield lacked. John Wesley often preached to vast crowds and did so with great power, but much of his effectiveness was due to the fact that he was a skilled organiser who welded his followers into a movement. He not only encouraged but insisted converts join groups for mutual encouragement and support – these were societies, classes and bands (see above). It was in these groups that new Christians were encouraged and challenged to grow in their faith.

For reflection...

- What can we learn from John Wesley's life, particularly when it comes to practising a way of life?
- How helpful might it be for your church to be shaped around the traditional Methodist structure of Societies, Classes and Bands?
- How might you grow in faith and support others in your community to grow in their faith?

The Revd Dr Jongikaya Zihle is Chair of the London Methodist District.

Bible readings:

- Acts 2:40-46
- Matthew 25:35-40

Sermon outline

Introduction

- A sermon on hospitality and generosity needs to begin by mapping out the context of being a follower of Christ today and, particularly, by focusing on the challenges your community may be facing with regard to the need for hospitality and generosity. Include a personal example if you have one.
- There is a warning for Christians today: as disciples of Christ, we must heed the caution (given in Romans 12:2) to avoid conforming to the patterns of this world. In fact, many of us will have stories about how the selflessness of others in our Christian journey has been instrumental in making us the kind of Christians we are.
- The result of a life devoted to God is that we will learn, as well as practise, being generous and hospitable. This is an essential aspect of growing in grace.

Follow this Introduction with a story that illustrates the topic.

This sermon offers two stories: one is a familiar account of views of heaven and hell. The other is from South Africa in the dark days of Apartheid and tells how the spirit of hospitality and generosity which is commended repeatedly in the Bible, can be expressed in modern day situations. You may wish to retell it in your own words or use another story which illustrates what hospitality and generosity can mean today.

Hospitality and generosity in Christian discipleship

In a *Methodist Way of Life* hospitality and generosity are practices by which 'learning and caring' are expressed in action. 'Learning and Caring', in the context of *Our Calling*, is focused particularly on Christian fellowship (while 'Service' is directed to the world). In Christian fellowship we can support each other as disciples in our sharing, caring, learning and growing together. That includes learning the habits of hospitality and generosity.

We need to translate our knowledge of God into action. Being one in Christ doesn't just come with words and songs in worship but it also demands sacrifice, and a willingness to encounter another in spite of our own fears and sense of what we lack. See Acts 2:44 – "All who believed were together and had all things in common" (NRSV). Being hospitable and generous calls for equal treatment of all, even when they're different from us or if we are wary of their culture or origin.

Further information

There is a widely quoted African saying that can be translated, 'a person is a person through other persons'. That can be put more emphatically still: we are truly human only in relationship with others – in generous and hospitable relationships with others. (See the stories below for illustrations of how this may be expressed in practice.)

One of the marks of the earliest Christian church described in Acts 2 is that it demonstrated hospitality and generosity. In Hebrews 13.2 we are told, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." (NRSV). In the only saying attributed to Jesus in the New Testament outside of the Gospels we are told that Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35 NRSV).

This theme appears repeatedly in the Bible, for other examples see:

Proverbs 19:17
Isaiah 58:7
Luke 6:38
Romans 12:13
Hebrews 13:16.

Stories

A story about hell, and heaven

A man was once taken on a tour of hell and was surprised by what he saw. The inhabitants were all sitting in a dining room, at long tables laden with delicious dishes of food. The air was filled with an exquisite aroma. But the diners' arms were all tied to slats of wood that kept their arms extended. The poor souls were unable to bend their spoons to their mouths. Hell was filled with the hungry, tortured by the fact that they were so close to the most amazing food imaginable and yet could not eat it.

Then the man visited heaven and found the same scenario. Long tables, hungry souls, strapped arms, unable to bend their hands to their mouths to eat. But there was a profound difference. The souls in heaven sat across from one another, not attempting to feed themselves, but instead feeding the persons sitting opposite them.

The difference between heaven and hell, it might be said, is that the inhabitants of hell are concerned only for themselves. Heaven, on the other hand, is populated with people who spend their time serving each other.

We can likewise make our lives here on earth an extension of heaven or a reflection of hell. The difference between the two may just be our willingness to forget ourselves long enough to turn our attention outward to those whose stomachs, hearts or souls hunger to be fed.

A story from South Africa

A young man had been held in a detention centre where he had been kept cold and naked for fourteen days. He was suddenly released far from home, without any clothes. It was dusk as he ran from his captors towards the smoke-filled and dusty

township nearby. A middle-aged woman ran out of her dilapidated shack dwelling to cover him with a blanket. As it grew darker, and he continued to run in the direction of home, a kind man offered him a t-shirt and a pair of short grey trousers.

Still clutching the musty blanket, he was stopped by another fatherly figure who offered him food and shelter for the night (in a two-roomed dwelling with his wife and six children). In the morning, on his way to a delivery job, this stranger offered to take him home, a twenty-three mile diversion from his work route. All these people were unknown to the prisoner but all were aware of how things were under the oppressive system in Apartheid South Africa, and anyone seeing someone in the young man's situation would respond unquestioningly in offering generous care.

This is my own story. The care and compassion, generosity and selflessness that I experienced at this difficult time contributed to making me the person that I am today. Without the willingness of these people to share of themselves, and to be hospitable to a stranger, I don't know where my life's journey would have taken me. Hospitality and generosity produced a burning heart, willing to heed the call to 'do all the good I can, by all the means I can and in all the ways I can' in a world in need of God's love. That has been, and continues to be, the defining marker for a Methodist Christian to this day!

For reflection...

- Where is God directing you to practise hospitality and generosity? What holds you back?
- Reflect on the story of hell and heaven. Is the spoon of your compassion long enough to reach all the way into the lives of the hungry, lonely and lost? How, in your experience, do you see

Tim Baker is the Churches and Volunteers Manager at All We Can, the Editor of *The Vine* and a local preacher.

Bible readings

- Isaiah 58:6-14
- Luke 10:27

Sermon outline

Introductory note: Helping people involves serving their immediate needs, but beyond that, there is a need to deal with the issues that cause them to experience deprivation. Working for social justice is therefore a big part of helping people. The *Methodist Way of Life* commitment “We will challenge injustice” is covered separately in the ninth sermon outline with a distinct difference of emphasis.

Introduction

- A commitment to serving or helping the people in our local communities and beyond, has always been an essential trait of Methodism.
- Examples range from Methodism’s involvement in the abolition of slavery through to hundreds of foodbanks, night shelters and community centres run by Methodist people and/or located in Methodist buildings around the country. Perhaps there is one in your church or area that you would like to highlight?
- A **Methodist Way of Life** has a natural rhythm, which has been described as breathing in, breathing out. For example, **Worship**, with **Learning and Caring** might be seen as breathing in; **Service** and **Evangelism** as breathing out. We read this in Luke 10:27 – love God and out of that, find ways to love your neighbour.

At this point, it is worth spending a moment on the word ‘neighbour’. By this, we mean more than the person who lives next door, or even the people in your local village, town or city. There is something both local and global in the biblical use of neighbour, which is captured in a **Methodist Way of Life** when we say we wish to help our communities and

beyond. This might include All We Can, as much as a local foodbank.

A role for everyone

It is therefore important that we recognise the ‘we’ in this commitment: “We will help people in our communities and beyond”. Between us, together, we can make a difference in our world. We all have a part to play.

- What is your part in this big field? What is yours to do? In the Daily Cordial podcast (May 12, 2016) the American pastor Rob Bell talks about the importance of a simple phrase ‘show me’. Perhaps today you will join me in inviting God to ‘show me’ what is mine to do?
- Who is it you are being invited to get alongside? How are you with people who need your help or support?

The role of justice

This brings us to justice, and to Isaiah 58. In verses 6 and 7 we read:

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice ... Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house.” (NRSV).

This continues a theme which is first encountered in chapter 1 of Isaiah:

“bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me”(verse 13 NRSV).

What does God’s rejection of worship in Jerusalem mean for our own worship? Rather than thinking about ‘fasting’ which is not so common in a modern Christian’s discipleship, we might find it more helpful to think about Sunday worship; the thing we do when we feel disconnected from God, our default spiritual activity. Which makes Isaiah 58 ask the question, ‘what kind of Sunday worship does God choose?’

- Isaiah’s prophecies do not only condemn. They also offer an invitation: “if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall

rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday” (verse 10 NRSV).

- We are also invited to go and do justice, to go and stand with the needy, and to make that our priority. Then, in the act of helping those in our local community and beyond, we meet God and learn more about the divine.
- So let’s not wait around. What is yours to do? Who could you help today? Locally? Globally? The invitation is to find out more to learn in order to understand the needs of our communities and our whole world, and then to put that learning to good use.

As Ephesians 2:10 puts it:

“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” (NRSV).

Further information

The kind of acts of hospitality described in Isaiah 58 are challenging, to our very way of life. How do we invite the homeless poor into our homes? It runs counter to the message that much of Western civilisation has indoctrinated us into – a preservation of ourselves and our small family unit. Yet the promise of Isaiah 58 is incredible. For all that the challenges of the first few verses in the reading are difficult, the promise God makes through the prophet is that all that has been lost and broken will be restored. We are invited to see the reward that comes with putting justice first, with seeking to be a people who put justice at the heart of all we do.

For more on how we can be ‘with’ people in need, and that Jesus’ ministry was expressed as a kind of ‘with-ness’, see Sam Wells’ book *The Nazareth Manifesto*.

For an example of how living alongside people and learning much more about them before acting is the best, most transformative and most gospel-based way to live out this part of a **Methodist Way**

of Life, see Shane Claiborne’s book *The Irresistible Revolution*.

To find out more about how All We Can exemplifies this commitment to being with our global neighbours see: allwecan.org.uk/partnership

For excellent resources around how the Church is engaging with a range of social justice issues, explore the Joint Public Issues Team website and social media: jointpublicissues.org.uk

Story

The Sant’ Egidio Community in Barcelona was established after a visit to Rome by its founders, during which they met the Sant’ Egidio Community there, and were struck by the simplicity of a commitment to prayer, the poor and peace. Upon deciding to set up their own community, they had a clear idea how prayer might function as a core practice in their community, and had some views about how to strive for and practise peace. They soon realised, however, that they didn’t really know anyone who was poor. As a result, they went out of their way to meet with, sit with and listen to some of the poorest people living in and around the city.

Rather than plan a project for ‘the poor’, they sought to listen first, to get alongside, and to act out of a spirit of partnership and relationship.

When we help those in our communities and beyond, will we do the same?

For reflection...

- Is there a group of people in our local community or the wider world with whom you feel a particular affiliation, or a sense of anger about their plight?
- How much do you know about the social justice issues you are involved with (eg how much research do you do into the charities you support)?
- Is there something you could find out more about, in order to try to make a difference?

Sarah Hooks is a lay pastor in the Bramhall and Wythenshawe Methodist Circuit.

Bible readings

- Genesis 1:26-28

Sermon outline

Interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28

Genesis 1:26-28 has been taken to mean that humans are the most important of all God's creations, and have been given the job to rule over and subdue creation. This thereby diminishes the importance of creation, as it is seen as only being important in service to humanity. There are still some Christians who have this focus within their theology, but it is much less common now.

What options do we have for interpreting this passage?

Dominion: Human beings are the pinnacle of creation and can treat the environment as they wish. If treated in this way it is clear that our environment will suffer, to the detriment of all.

Stewardship: We are meant to care for God's creation; to make sure that it is looked after well and flourishes. This is clearly a much better attitude, and quite a common view today. It ensures that the world is taken better care of. However some have suggested 'stewardship' does not go far enough. That it still leaves room for a view of creation as separate from us; that we are cultivating it as though it were an asset.

Humans made in the image of God

Key to this is our understanding of being made in the image of God. This is what sets us apart from the rest of creation. To be made in God's image means that we represent God in our world; that we act towards the world in the same way God does.

How does God treat us and creation?

If we are to be like God, we need to understand what God is like. The Bible relates how God brings

restoration and healing to all of creation (Isaiah 65:25, 66:22; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:22-23).

God cares for, nurtures and loves. God doesn't give up on creation when things look dismal, but instead finds a way for re-creation. Therefore, our job as image-bearers is to be looking at how we can restore creation; help creation to flourish. This brings glory to God, and also helps us live restored lives.

So, what next?

The way people respond to this is deeply personal and depends on their current involvement, as well as their resources, time, gifts and talents. But everyone can start somewhere. Preachers may know and be better able to judge the situations and interests of their congregations. We can:

- **Grow in our love of creation:** Go for walks. Grow some herbs on our window ledge, know by name the trees, plants and wildlife in our area. Plant trees to mark special events.
- **Support creation with our financial decisions:** Let ecological considerations affect our spending and living. Buy local produce, try to shop organically, consider animal welfare and fair trade. Reduce water and energy use, find alternative transport to cars.
- **Lobby for change where we can:** Write letters to our MP supporting recycling, green transport, renewable energy initiatives. Joining local ecological groups can help in discovering what action we can take. There are many more resources online.

Further information

Human beings as co-creations: instead of emphasising the uniqueness of humanity, we should focus on how we are part of creation. The Hebrew *v'yirdu* can mean 'dominion with', but never 'over' so we are meant to be alongside creation; our well-being is intrinsically linked with creation, not separate from it. God looked at all of creation and saw that it was good. But this still begs the question what Genesis means when it tells us that God mandated us to have 'dominion' (Genesis 1:28). How might you interpret this verse?

Story

It is easy to feel despondent about the state of the environment; that it is too big a problem for us to make a real change. It is important to uphold our belief that God's purposes will prevail in the end.

There are many stories of ecological hope to draw on, including these three (you may want to do further research to find out more):

- Humpback whales are coming back from the brink of extinction.
- Iceland is transforming from coal reliance to sustainable energy.
- A million seagrass seeds have been planted off the Pembrokeshire coast to combat carbon emissions.

For reflection...

Have a conversation about the three areas listed under **So, what next?** – grow in our love of creation, think about how our finances affect the environment and lobby for change when we can.

- What are some simple actions you could take personally?
- What could you do as a church?

Look at the Carbon footprint calculator to raise awareness of your own impact on the carbon levels in the atmosphere, and therefore on global climate change: carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx

The Revd Michaela Youngson is Chair of the London Methodist District, author and broadcaster.

Bible readings

- Matthew 20: 1-16

Sermon outline

“It’s not fair!!”

The cry of most two-year olds when they cannot get their own way, as well as the cry of the campaigner for justice.

Ask the congregation how many of them think the parable is fair.

- When have we cried ‘It’s not fair?’
- Who is it that challenges injustice in this parable?

Perhaps it is the workers who have laboured all day and feel cheated because others who have worked for less hours are paid the same – they certainly feel unjustly treated and, by the world’s standards, perhaps they have been.

The twist in the tale?

Like the prophets of the Old Testament (eg Isaiah 5 and the Song of the Vineyard), Jesus tells a story with a twist. He catches his audience out because they think they know who the ‘goodies’ and ‘baddies’ are, or who the righteous and unrighteous are. They find themselves drawn in, taking sides and then – the twist.

He tells stories to people who live in a story-telling tradition, they recognise the stereotypical characters – landowners, workers, managers; in other parables we meet widows and judges, rich and poor, party hosts and party guests. Often the story has an element of unequal power. In the parable of the workers in the vineyard, the more normal telling of a story of a powerful landowner and oppressed workers is undermined. The one with power chooses to be generous and those who think they are entitled, those privileged because of health, strength, reputation, or who they know, find they are worth no more and no less than everyone else. This is a shock and results in that age old cry, ‘It’s not fair!’

Reading between the lines

This parable is followed by Jesus predicting his death and his resurrection. The first will be last and the last will be first – the Alpha and Omega will become as one of the lowest of the low, dying an ignominious death. There is a link between the unfairness of what is done to the Son of Man and the theme of our parable – one who deserves everything, yet has everything taken away. As in the parable though, there is a twist – the desolation is not the end of the story – life will come.

If we look again at the parable and imagine that God is the landowner, God desires that all will have life. (John 10:10) To pay less than the daily wage was to condemn people to hunger, even death. God who wants all to have life, however the world measures their worth, is the same God who brings Jesus back from death to a new life, which marks the beginning of the new kingdom of love and grace.

Grace abounding

Our story is about love and grace – no one can work hard enough or long enough to earn God’s love. It is given – and we see that in Jesus Christ. The way that the world often works, those who are chosen last are the poor, the disabled, members of minorities, refugees, the broken and unwanted. In the kingdom of heaven, these are the honoured guests – those who sit at the top table.

The story makes many of us uncomfortable because our default mode is to assume we must earn our way into God’s love, or be good enough to pass some test of righteousness – it’s not easy to shift our thinking.

Grace is often uncomfortable – we find it hard to accept that God loves us, just as much as God loves those we hold in high esteem. It can be even more uncomfortable when we realise that God loves those we disregard or find despicable just as much as God loves us. Surely we have earned more love, more grace than those who hurt others, damage creation or don’t see the world the way we do?

Application

We might pat ourselves on the back and say, ‘We have God’s grace, there is nothing left to do’.

And, in terms of earning salvation, we would be right.

However, we know from Scripture and from Methodist teaching that we are called to respond to God's grace – as recipients of the gift, we are transformed by love and grace – God's Spirit works within us to bring about a new life, a fuller life, a life in which it troubles us that others are treated unfairly.

When did you last cry 'It's not fair!'?

- Was it because you found out that people in your community are going hungry?
- Was it because asylum seekers and refugees are left to live without the means to support themselves and their families because of Government policies?
- Was it because you saw a person treated unfairly because of their colour, sexuality, disability or gender?
- What makes you want to challenge injustice?
- How do we as individual followers of Jesus and as part of the Methodist Family choose to challenge injustice?

Further information

Visit www.jointpublicissues.org.uk to find out more about how Methodists and other Christians are responding to injustice – and how you can get involved.

Visit www.allwecan.org.uk to learn about how the Methodist relief and development charity addresses issues of injustice worldwide and find out how your church can give generously.

Check out www.secondhelpings.org.uk/about-us to see how Stamford Methodist Church welcomes all, no matter their circumstances, to have food and to build community.

Story

Who would be the last to be chosen to work in the vineyard today? We like to think the world has changed, that things are fairer, more just. Yet in many contexts there are still people who are chosen last – considered to be of less worth because of discrimination. The moment human beings see others as worth less than themselves, injustice follows.

We see this in the killing of George Floyd and the shooting of Jacob Blake. We see this when women's refuges are daily having to turn women and children away because there is no room. We see this when children, women and men die attempting to cross rivers and seas to find asylum.

Living as people who recognise that every other person is precious to God calls on us to challenge injustice. Not one of us can solve these issues alone, but we can work out together how to respond to the injustice we see locally or globally – by letter writing, actions of generosity or joining campaigns. Each one of us can play a part in building the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus described in the parable – not to earn our place there, but to celebrate that all are welcome.

For reflection...

- Where do you see injustices or unfairness in our world today?
- How do you and your church community seek to challenge injustice?
- What do you need to help you with keeping this commitment?

The Revd Faith Nyota is a Deputy Chair of the London Methodist District.

Bible readings

- Ephesians 3:16-19

Sermon outline

What?

- We are being invited to verbalise the love of God, but our verbalisation must explain what this love is. Jesus' love and death for us can seem extremely distant, so it is best to illustrate it through our own experiences and by telling real stories of encounters with this love.
- We may be aware of a time when God felt very close and real. This is what we want to draw out today. Encourage members of the congregation to share times when God's love was poured out upon their lives.
- There are also moments when things are tough. I remember visiting a woman whose husband had just died, I was overcome with the beauty of her spirit in the face of her tragedy, for as I hugged her she said, "I know, God is still good! God is good!"
- We may also be aware of doubting this love (eg Psalm 22). As a preacher, sharing your own stories of doubt may help people.

There are times when, to show God's love, we need to know when not to speak; when to simply walk alongside.

These words from prayers for a funeral may help: "Help us to love and comfort each other in God's love; to know when to speak and when to be silent".

Who?

When we ask 'who?' we mean both who should speak, and to whom should they speak?

- Emphasise that each of us has a role in speaking of God's love – the entire congregation. It is not a special job reserved for ministers or preachers. He is calling us, as a Body of Christ,

to speak – and hopefully we want to, in the way that is right for us! As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:15 NRSV).

- To whom should we speak the love of God? The entire world, starting with those closest to us.
- "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?" (Romans 10:14 NRSV).
- Do people see Christians as agents of God's love?

Where?

Where should this speaking happen?

The answer might be 'everywhere', but give some specific examples of your own:

- in your neighbourhood
- at work
- at home
- where else?

Help the congregation to be alert to opportunities when they may feel able to speak of God. These often arise at unexpected times.

Speaking on behalf of God is arguably more important than ever in a society in which there is palpable anger about structural inequalities, systemic racism, and widespread fear for the future amongst many who are in a precarious economic or social position.

- How can we help to create a more just and inclusive society, and demonstrate that God's love is at the heart of that new society?

When?

Always! As Psalm 89: 1-2 puts it:

"I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, for ever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

I declare that your steadfast love is established for ever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens." (NRSV).

Explore what this means in the context of countries like the UK, in which Christian faith seems to be completely out of fashion. China and other countries have seen a tremendous growth in people of faith, despite restrictions on religion. Share any examples of your own.

It is important we challenge the tendency to equate God's love with a trouble-free life, as this can lead to doubting God when we face trouble - at times of uncertainty, as was caused by Covid-19.

We must remember that we have a certain God, who died and was raised again, and by his Spirit he is with us always.

How?

By using words, of course. Help the congregation to realise the importance of verbalising how we feel in order to help other people to capture and make that love of God their own. Our words must be powerful and persuasive so that God's love touches listeners at the core and causes a strong reaction in them.

And through practical actions – what action could you take today to help demonstrate God's love?

Conclusion

All this is summed up in words attributed to St Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel at all times and, if necessary, use words."

- To speak of God's love is to reinforce it in our lives.
- Speaking of our faith prompts action.
- Speaking of God's love emboldens our desire to share it.

Further information

In 2 Timothy 4:2 we are told: "proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or

unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching." (NRSV).

Speaking prophetically in this way takes courage, whether it is 'speaking truth to power' or challenging our society and communities with truths which people would rather not hear.

But speaking about God's love may mean little unless it is accompanied by actions in which we live out God's love. Jesus is our example. After preaching to a large crowd of people, he fed them with bread and fish (Matthew 14:13-21). How are we feeding people today? Refer also to Matthew 25:36-40 where Jesus says that acts of kindness and mercy which we do for others are done to him.

Story

When Julian of Norwich (born 1342) saw the plague devastate her community, she became a hermit. She was the first woman (as far as we know) to write a book in English – it was about her visions of Christ.

Consider some of her words: "God loves us and enjoys us, and so he wills that we love him and enjoy him... he is our clothing. In his love he wraps and holds us."

How can we show this same love, tell others of this same love, today?

For reflection...

- Do you feel like you are the right person to spread God's love with your voice or your actions? Do you sometimes try to delegate that responsibility to others?
- Who do you know with whom you could share something of your faith this week?
- What are the situations in the news that you need to talk about, or the situations in your local area where you need to make your voice heard, as an individual or a church?

The Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel is a minister in the Southend and Leigh Circuit. Former roles include Principal of London School of Theology and Director of the Wesley Study Centre, Durham.

Bible readings

- Matthew 5:14-16

Sermon outline

Unlike some Christian traditions which are sometimes inclined to underestimate the value of good works, supposing that “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth” (Isaiah 64:6 NRSV), Methodists have long been persuaded that good works are a necessary outworking of Christian faith.

John Fletcher (John Wesley’s intended successor who unfortunately predeceased him) famously argued this very point in 1772 against hyper-Calvinists of his day, Richard and Rowland Hill, who contended that human goodness was so debased by sin that we could do no good work in the eyes of God. Moreover, to attempt to do so was to attempt to seek salvation by works and not by grace through faith.

In stark contrast, Methodists esteem good works, for at least three very good reasons.

- First, any truly good works are necessarily works of grace, for “every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above,” (James 1:17 NRSV). So, any good works we might perform are themselves an outworking of the grace of God. Moreover, “a city built on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14 NRSV). Its very nature and activity produces light that can be seen in every direction. Jesus puts it another way in Matthew 7:16: “You will know them by their fruits” (NRSV). Good works essentially provide practical evidence of the grace of God in our lives. Where good works are absent one might appropriately enquire how far God’s grace has truly been experienced.

- Second, good works are a restraint against lawlessness. This was the primary point that John Fletcher made strenuously against the Hills. As people of Christ we are not free to live in any way that we like. We are called to live as people of Light, reflecting something of the light of Christ wherever we are. So, you are to “let your light shine before others.” (Matthew 5:16 NRSV) The word ‘let’ here is important. It means more than ‘allow’, it’s closer in meaning to ‘ensure’. This is why “no one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand: and it gives light to all in the house” (Matthew 5:15 NRSV).
- Third, and perhaps most importantly to the people called Methodist, good works have a missional outcome. We seek to live in a way that draws others to Jesus: “that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 NRSV).

Methodists have long been committed to social justice. We pursue justice because it is one way of responding to God’s grace and to living in obedience to Christ’s command to love our neighbours as ourselves. But we have also always been aware that our witness for Christ and our hope of sharing our faith are strengthened when preceded by good works.

The pursuit of holiness – for this is what it means to seek to live in a way that draws others to Jesus, that is, to live like the people of God, reflecting something of God’s goodness and glory in the world – is therefore not reserved for super-spiritual or Advanced Level Christians. It’s what essential Christianity is about for us.

That so few British Methodists still believe this, is perhaps an indication of how much further we’ve yet to go in recovering a *Methodist Way of Life*.

Further information

Lots of us feel we’re inadequate Christians. So, the idea of living in a way that draws others to Jesus feels uncomfortable for many, if not most, of us. We’re inclined to think to ourselves: ‘What could I do that would draw anyone to Jesus?’

Here are a few suggestions and challenges that might be helpful.

- We're not called to change the whole world, just our part of it.
- We're not called to sinless perfection but Christ-like reflection. In other words, our job is not to try to be perfect. Our job is to try to imitate Jesus.
- Falling short is not an insurmountable problem. The Bible is full of flawed characters who were, nonetheless, used by God. (King David in the Old Testament and the Apostle Peter in the New Testament are prime examples.) What they have in common is that they tend to try to hold on to God even after they've failed spectacularly. Your failure is not big enough to derail God's plans.
- It's called a *Methodist Way of Life*, and this should be a clue. We'll spend our lives working out how to be good Methodist Christians. Don't expect to find a shortcut to spiritual growth. There aren't any.

Story

John Fletcher was a remarkable Methodist. He was an Anglican priest who came to prominence after a controversy in 1770 when John Wesley and Methodism were accused of preaching salvation by works, because some of the Minutes of Conference that year were unfortunately worded.

The outcome of the controversy was that Methodism experienced its first major doctrinal split and prominent Methodists ended up on opposing sides. George Whitfield, a lifelong friend

of the Wesleys, for example, was on the side of the Calvinists. Fletcher, in contrast, sided with the Wesleys, which was costly for him. He had to resign from a job he loved, as President of Trevecka College, an early Methodist Theological College, part of what would later become the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.

Fletcher then spent the next several years defending Methodist doctrine and theology against Calvinistic Methodists and Anglicans alike.

Despite his deep disagreements with his theological opponents, and often sharp disputes, Fletcher somehow managed to live a life that even his opponents recognised as exemplary.

Few of us can be a Fletcher. That's OK. We're not called to be him.

But here was someone who managed to find ways to disagree profoundly and deeply, to engage in uncompromising arguments, and yet somehow to embody something of the character of Christ.

To live in a way that draws others to Jesus when our own life is messy and hard, is the ultimate demonstration of a living faith.

For reflection...

- In what ways do you sometimes hide behind your own imperfections as an excuse not to be involved in bringing others to faith?
- Which flawed character from the Bible most appeals to you as a story of God using someone for God's mission?
- In what ways do other people you know 'let their light shine before others'?

Anne Browse is a former President of Methodist Women in Britain and a local preacher in the Tiverton and Wellington Methodist Circuit.

Bible readings

- Colossians 4:2-6
- 1 Peter 3:15

Sermon outline

The extract from the letter to the Colossians talks of sharing faith, but also of sharing life – it concerns behaviour as well as belief.

This commitment to share is not necessarily about standing up in front of a crowd, but about sharing our faith with others, where we find ourselves, when it seems appropriate. Not about preaching at, but sharing with. About sharing our story, honestly, as someone who has discovered that Christian faith makes a difference to life.

Sharing faith implies that the other person is given the opportunity to partake or not, and perhaps also to share their own story of life and faith with us. Sharing faith can be a little like sharing food.

When we share food with others we are respectful and mindful of their needs and preferences. A gracious host would never insist that food is eaten, but would prepare and present food with care.

My grandmother had a strange turn of phrase which always made us smile. “Can I press you to a piece of cake?” she would ask. Of course we were not forced to eat the cake, but it was there if we chose to try it.

A few years ago I was at a meal table with young people on a summer camp. As I served the apple crumble one turned it down. “I don’t like crumble” she said. I asked gently “Have you ever tried it?” “No, but I don’t like it!” “You might like this crumble...” I suggested, and then waited. She cautiously tasted a little, and then devoured two full helpings!

How many people do we meet who have ‘never tried it’, or perhaps been put off by past experience, of crumble or of church? How many people have

‘tried’ church and been hurt or disappointed, or vowed never again to sit through services, like school assemblies, once they could choose for themselves?

According to the words from 1 Peter, we share our faith with others who are willing to engage, who are curious to hear the reason for the hope that we have. We share our faith with gentleness and respect - we do not force it on someone whose mouth is clearly and firmly shut! Whether or not a person appears open to what we have to share may not be down to us.

(You may like to use the story of the woman at the beach at this point - see below.)

If we are given an opportunity to share our faith, we might choose to tell a story of how God makes a difference to us. We can share honestly how our faith helps us in the ups and downs of life, and our declaration may be as simple as saying ‘I felt/knew that God was with me when...’ and give an example of something we have experienced.

If you find it hard to talk about your faith, why not begin by chatting regularly with another Christian friend about where you sense the presence of God in your lives? Use ordinary everyday language, and tell it how it really is, doubts and all! Then perhaps pray for each other, that you will each notice the opportunities to share your own faith with others, with gentleness and respect.

It is claimed that the Methodist minister, D T Niles, once said that evangelism (sharing good news) is “just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread”.

Sharing our faith is like sharing where we have found ‘food’; where we have found a hope that sustains us.

Further information

We cannot be sure that St Francis ever actually said “Preach the gospel at all times and, if necessary, use words”, but whether he did or not, the words remind us that our actions might sometimes speak louder than our words! Our actions might even negate our words, if we fail to be consistent and ‘practise what we preach’. This is not an excuse for not sharing our faith in words, but for maintaining a

watchful balance between what we say we believe and how we behave.

As we read in the letter to the Colossians, our role is to pray, for ourselves and for other Christians, and to do the best we can to ensure that our own 'walk and talk' will be Christ-like and perhaps open up an opportunity for conversation. If there seems to be no hunger for an explanation of the hope that we have, we can still continue to 'preach the gospel' in the way we behave.

Stories

Mark's story

Mark grew up in a Christian family and attended a local church and youth group until he went to university. Sadly he moved away from the Christian group he encountered there, because he felt that if other students were not 'open' to the message of the gospel then all the welcome and attention devoted to them during Freshers' Week evaporated. This attitude left Mark disillusioned with church, although he continues to hold to high moral standards and Christian principles.

- Do we sometimes do things with 'strings attached', in the hope that people will respond positively to the message of the gospel?
- How do we react when no interest is apparently shown?

Woman on a beach

A Christian friend and I were sitting beside the sea. A woman approached us and asked, rather

embarrassed, whether we had noticed her stumble and fall as she came up the pebbly beach. We reassured her that no, we had not. She proceeded to share her story with us.

She was suffering from terminal cancer, but went out every day to walk and pick up litter. That morning she had noticed the most beautiful butterfly, which had made her exclaim "Wow, isn't the world amazing?" Having shared her story she carried on up the cliff path. My friend and I were both quiet for a while, each of us, unbeknown to the other, silently praying a blessing on the woman.

- Should we have shared our own faith with her, we wondered?
- What might you have done in that situation, and why?

For reflection...

- Do we only share our faith when it is strong and resolute? What do we do in those periods when our faith feels shaken and shaky? Do we stop sharing honestly with those who ask us about our faith?
- Over recent years some Christians have described how they have 'lost' their faith, or how their faith has been 'deconstructed'. Have you read any of their stories or listened to their journey?
- As we listen to others we need to acknowledge the hard stories, the stories of hurt and of pain. What if those are sometimes our own stories, currently or in the past? What exactly do we choose to share? Our story is ours to share, and we decide when, and with whom, to share it!

WORKING IN SMALL GROUPS

Following up the sermons by working in small groups, reflecting on the relevant commitment, will always be a useful exercise. Groups should choose to work with the sermon notes in whatever way suits them best, but leaders may find the outline below helpful, particularly if they are not working with established groups which already have a standard format for their meetings.

Icebreaker

Ask someone to read aloud the relevant *Methodist Way of Life* commitment for the session, then ask each member of the group to say one word that comes to mind in response to that particular commitment. (If any members of the group wish to say more about the words which came to their minds, opportunity for this can be made during the main discussion of the session.)

Opening prayer

The group leader may offer an informal prayer, (or prayers relevant to the sermon topics can be found in pages 29-36 of this resource).

Scripture reading

Ask a member of the group to read aloud the Bible reading or readings listed in the sermon notes for the relevant commitment.

Discussion

Allow some time for the group to discuss their responses to the sermon topic. Depending on how this discussion develops, pose some or all of the following questions to the group:

- Were there points in the sermon that you were surprised by or that you found particularly interesting?
- What points in the sermon did you find helpful?
- What points in the sermon did you find challenging?
- With regard to this sermon topic, what do you need to ask God for in order to be more faithful in your daily walk?

Conclusion

Either close with a prayer which touches on some of what has been discussed, or ask the group to say the 'grace' together.

The following offers a pattern of prayer based on the Worship section of a *Methodist Way of Life*. You might choose to use the first week of this Worship section and then the first weeks of each of the other three sections in turn, before coming back to use the second week of the Worship section, and so on. Use whatever scheme of Scripture readings you wish – a daily lectionary can be found within the *Methodist Prayer Handbook*.

These resources can be used for personal prayer or in a group context.

Opening Words

Give thanks to God,
Tell all people the story of salvation.

Sing praises to God.

Sing glory to God's holy name;
God is with you in all things.

Sing praises to God.

Music or Silence

Scripture sentence

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. *Romans 12:1-2 (NRSV)*

Prayer – of approach and recollection

Allow the silences to be more than just a few seconds, so that there is time to reflect on the day which is ending, or to look forward to the day that is to come.

Loving God,
As I come before you in prayer,
help me to focus my thoughts on you,
letting distractions fall away.

Silence

I offer you my words,
those of kindness and support,
those which have wounded,
those offered with care,
and those carelessly spoken.

Silence

I offer you my actions,
those of generosity and care,
those of selfishness,
those done from love
and those neglected and undone.

Silence

I offer you my thoughts,
those of an open mind and heart,
those closed by prejudice,
those of love
and those of fear.

Silence

I offer you myself,
you know me
and love me.
Help me to love others
as you have loved me.

The Psalm of the Day

Reading of the Day

(or 1 Thessalonians 5:16-25)

Questions about the Reading

- What in this reading connects with me?
- What in this reading do I find difficult?
- How does this reading relate to my life or the world as I see it?
- What might I do to respond to what I've understood this reading to mean?

Music or Silence

Questions for Reflection

- How have I worshipped God today, or in recent days?
- Where can I see God present in the world?

Prayer

I worship you, loving God,
you who created the heavens and the earth,
who has carved my name on the palm of
your hand
and even knows how many hairs are on
my head.
In worship, I come before you to pray,
for the things you already know:
the needs of the world;
the needs of your people;
the needs of the church;
my own needs and the needs of those I love.

Accept these prayers in the name of Jesus
Christ, your son.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Music or Silence

Blessing

As a hen gathers her chicks beneath her wings,
so God longs to gather her children together.
Know that you are loved with the intimate love
of the nursing Mother.
Know that you are saved with the passionate
love of the caring Son.
Know that you are blessed with the inspiring
love of the gentle Spirit.
Go in the peace of God.

Amen.

The following offers a pattern of prayer based on the Learning and Caring section of a *Methodist Way of Life*. You might choose to use the first week of this Learning and Caring section and then the first weeks of each of the other three sections in turn, before coming back to use the second week of the Learning and Caring section, and so on. Use whatever scheme of Scripture readings you wish – a daily lectionary can be found within the *Methodist Prayer Handbook*.

These resources can be used for personal prayer or in a group context.

Opening Words

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.
It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

(Psalm 100 – Jubilate NRSV)

Music or Silence

Scripture Sentences

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. *John 13:34-35 (NRSV)*

Prayer – of approach and recollection

Allow the silences to be more than just a few seconds, so that there is time to reflect on your day which is ending or to look forward to the day that is to come.

Loving God,
As I come before you in prayer,
help me to focus my thoughts on you,
letting distractions fall away.

Silence

I offer you my words,
those of kindness and support,
those which have wounded,
those offered with care,
and those carelessly spoken.

Silence

I offer you my actions,
those of generosity and care,
those of selfishness,
those done from love
and those neglected and undone.

Silence

I offer you my thoughts,
those of an open mind and heart,
those closed by prejudice,
those of love
and those of fear.

Silence

I offer you myself,
you know me
and love me.
Help me to love others
as you have loved me.

Psalm of the Day

Reading of the Day

(or Philippians 4:8-9)

Questions about the Reading

- What in this reading connects with me?
- What in this reading do I find difficult?
- How does this reading relate to my life or the world as I see it?
- What might I do to respond to what I've understood this reading to mean?

Music or Silence

Questions for Reflection

- How have I cared for myself and others today, or in recent days?
- What have I learned about my faith, the world and other people today, or in recent days?
- How have I practised hospitality and generosity today, or in recent days?

Prayer

Caring, loving God,
your son taught that we should love you with our whole being
and that we should love our neighbours as ourselves.

Help me to love you and my neighbours.
Teach me to care for myself, cultivating the gifts you have given to me
and looking after my own well-being, that I might care for others.

Help me to learn more of you, my faith and the world around me, each day.

Help me to pray:

for the things you already know:
the needs of the world;
the needs of your people;
the needs of the church;
my own needs and the needs of those I love.

Accept these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, your son.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Music or Silence

Blessing

Generous God,
Bless each one of us.
Bless those we love.
Inspire us with your Spirit,
that we might grow:

deeper in wisdom,
more passionate in faith,
more committed in our loving.
For the sake of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The following offers a pattern of prayer based on the Service section of a *Methodist Way of Life*. You might choose to use the first week of this Service section and then the first weeks of each of the other three sections in turn, before coming back to use the second week of the Service section, and so on. Use whatever scheme of Scripture readings you wish – a daily lectionary can be found within the *Methodist Prayer Handbook*.

These resources can be used for personal prayer or in a group context.

Opening Words

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew
their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:28-31 NRSV)

Music or Silence

Scripture Sentences

I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn
assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings
and grain-offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted
animals
I will not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

(Amos 5:21-24 NRSV)

Prayer – of approach and recollection

Allow the silences to be more than just a few seconds, so that there is time to reflect on your day which is ending or to look forward to the day that is to come.

Loving God,
As I come before you in prayer,
help me to focus my thoughts on you,
letting distractions fall away.

Silence

I offer you my words,
those of kindness and support,
those which have wounded,
those offered with care,
and those carelessly spoken.

Silence

I offer you my actions,
those of generosity and care,
those of selfishness,
those done from love
and those neglected and undone.

Silence

I offer you my thoughts,
those of an open mind and heart,
those closed by prejudice,
those of love
and those of fear.

Silence

I offer you myself,
you know me
and love me.
Help me to love others
as you have loved me.

Psalm of the Day

Reading of the Day

(or Revelation 22.1-5)

Questions about the Reading

- What in this reading connects with me?
- What in this reading do I find difficult?
- How does this reading relate to my life or the world as I see it?
- What might I do to respond to what I've understood this reading to mean?

Music or Silence

Questions for Reflection

- How have I helped people in my community or beyond today, or in recent days?
- How have I cared for creation today, or in recent days?
- How have I challenged injustice today, or in recent days?
- What do I need to help me with keeping these commitments?

Prayer

Creator God,
you love all that you have made. The heavens
and the earth are full of your glory.

Help me to work with others to help my
community, local and global.

Help me to care for the world you have made,
so that future generations and all that lives
upon the earth might flourish.

Help me to challenge injustice and to recognise
the dignity of every person.

Help me to pray:
for the things you already know:
the needs of the world;
the needs of your people;
the needs of the Church;
my own needs and the needs of those I love.

Accept these prayers in the name of Jesus
Christ, your son.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Music or Silence

Blessing

May you rise up on wings like eagles.
May you run and not be weary.
May you walk and not be faint.
And may the blessing of the everlasting God,
Father, Son and Spirit
remain with you always.

Amen.

The following offers a pattern of prayer based on the Evangelism section of a *Methodist Way of Life*. You might choose to use the first week of this Evangelism section and then the first weeks of each of the other three sections in turn, before coming back to use the second week of the Evangelism section, and so on. Use whatever scheme of Scripture readings you wish – a daily lectionary can be found within the *Methodist Prayer Handbook*.

These resources can be used for personal prayer or in a group context.

Opening Words

Let [us] thank God for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things.

(Psalm 107 NRSV)

Music or Silence

Scripture Sentences

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

(Matthew 28:16-20 NRSV)

Prayer – of approach and recollection

Allow the silences to be more than just a few seconds, so that there is time to reflect on your day which is ending or to look forward to the day that is to come.

Loving God,
As I come before you in prayer,
help me to focus my thoughts on you,
letting distractions fall away.

Silence

I offer you my words,
those of kindness and support,
those which have wounded,
those offered with care,
and those carelessly spoken.

Silence

I offer you my actions,
those of generosity and care,
those of selfishness,
those done from love
and those neglected and undone.

Silence

I offer you my thoughts,
those of an open mind and heart,
those closed by prejudice,
those of love
and those of fear.

Silence

I offer you myself,
you know me
and love me.
Help me to love others
as you have loved me.

Psalm of the Day

Reading of the Day

(or John 10:11-18)

Questions about the Reading

- What in this reading connects with me?
- What in this reading do I find difficult?
- How does this reading relate to my life or the world as I see it?
- What might I do to respond to what I've understood this reading to mean?

Music or Silence

Questions for Reflection

- How have I spoken about God's love today or in recent days?
- How have I lived in a way that will encourage others to be curious about my faith and about Jesus?
- How have I shared my faith with others today or in recent days?

Prayer

Loving God,
You long for all people to know your love.
You sent Jesus to show us the height, breadth
and depth of your love,
and your Spirit to inspire us to share that love
with all people.

Help me to be willing to share my faith with
others and to live in a way that inspires curiosity
about Jesus.

Help me to find confidence in your promises.

Help me to pray:
for the things you already know;
the needs of the world;
the needs of your people;
the needs of the church;
my own needs and the needs of those I love.

Accept these prayers in the name of Jesus
Christ your son.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Music or Silence

Blessing

May God bless you with,
the imagination of the Creator,
the love of the Son
and the courage of the Spirit;
that you might go forth in confidence to speak
Love's name.

Amen.

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For further worship resources, sign up to *The Vine* from Twelvebaskets at www.theworshipcloud.com/view/written/Thevine

A good place to begin to explore more about a *Methodist Way of Life* is on the Methodist Church website. It has a variety of helpful resources including videos, webinars and downloadable materials.

www.methodistchurch.org.uk/MWoL

The **Methodist Church** 

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