

BASINGSTOKE AND READING CIRCUIT WORSHIP FOR WESLEY DAY 24 MAY 2020
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Today the world- wide Methodist Church recognises its origins and gives thanks for the way God has led and used us.

Today is known as "the conversion of John Wesley". However, he was already a very deeply committed Christian, an ordained priest in the Church of England and had been a missionary. So what changed on 24 May 1738? From that point on his faith became personal, of the heart as well as the head, with a deep experience of forgiveness and joy. His restlessness moved into resolution. New beginnings can happen at any stage in our lives.

Prayer

At the beginning of this day we turn to you, grateful that we belong to you, and you to us; grateful for yesterday and for the gift of sleep; coming to draw strength and inspiration for the challenges and opportunities of this day. O Lord we love you. It is your love that sustains us day by day. Awaken our spirits; concentrate our minds; clarify our priorities; inspire our imagination: deepen our understanding; extend our compassion; energise, heal and relax our bodies; guide and guard our thoughts, words, actions and reactions. Help us to use and live the hours of this day well. May we meet with you, learn from you and live with you through the whole of the day before us. Amen.

Hymn Singing the Faith 134, Hymns and Psalms 457

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FpmaYlluuA>

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| 1 Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
triumph o'er the shades of night ;
Day-spring from on high, be near ;
Day-star, in my heart appear. | 2 Dark and cheerless is the morn
unaccompanied by thee ;
joyless is the day's return,
till thy mercy's beams I see,
till they inward light impart,
glad my eyes, and warm my heart. | 3 Visit then this soul of mine ;
pierce the gloom of sin and grief ;
fill me, radiancy divine ;
scatter all my unbelief ;
more and more thyself display,
shining to the perfect day. |
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Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

The Methodist movement from the beginning combined a strong disciplined devotional life with a compassionate practical involvement in seeking to meet the needs of others-which included visiting prisons, raising money for the poor, founding schools, campaigning against the slave trade.

Is that same balance – a strong life of prayer and a compassionate commitment to justice – seen in our own lives?

A prayer

Deepen the quality of our own relationship with you, Living God. Help us to take the opportunity of this lockdown period to give greater concentration to the nurturing of that relationship and to our own growing as spiritual beings.
We pray for all for whom this is a time of great challenge-those who are ill...those who have been bereaved...all medical workers in hospitals, care homes and general practice...all key workers...all who struggle with loneliness...those who are abused at home...those who are worried about their future work...those unsure about the next step in their education...
Deepen our compassion and show us creative ways of responding to the needs of others, through Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Reading: Romans 12: 1 - 2

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, ^[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual ^[b] worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, ^[c] 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.

Hymn Singing the Faith 707, Hymns and Psalms 776

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2svZhZT6Pro>

1 Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me
bring your love ;
where there is injury, your
pardon, Lord ;
and where there's doubt, true
faith in you :

*O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console ;
to be understood as to understand ;
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

3 Make me a channel of your peace.

It is in pardoning that we are
pardoned,
in giving unto all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to
eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997)
from the *Prayer of St Francis*

2 Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there's despair in life,
Let me bring hope ;
where there is darkness, only
light ;
and where there's sadness, ever
joy :

Refrain

One of the strengths of the Methodist movement has been its sense of connectedness. A member of the Methodist Church is linked with every Methodist Church -in the Circuit, the District, the United Kingdom and the world. Being "in Connexion" unites us together. But connectedness can go much further than that. I am reading "The Book of Joy", which distils the wisdom of two great spiritual leaders who are dear friends from a week- long meeting together. Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaks of the African understanding of Ubuntu- "I am because we are". "We are bound up together and can only be human together". His friend, the Dalai Lama, agreed, saying "everything is interrelated, and meditation brings us into a deeper realisation of our belonging together, as the basis of compassion." The current health crisis affecting the whole world should be making this very clear to us – how much we all belong together and need each other.

Prayer

May this current crisis make us more aware of our belonging to one another as members of one world. Lead us beyond narrow nationalism into wider universal vision. Help us to act together to tackle the challenges that face us all-the overcoming of diseases, the protection of our planet, respecting the rights of all, lifting the world's life from disease, hunger, deprivation and dire poverty. As a Methodist Connexion we pray for our Church in these uncertain times -for our Superintendent Minister David and our Deputy Superintendent, Ruth and all who lead our Circuit, District and Connexion; for all decisions relating to the Church's on-going and future life; for Ministers due to be ordained; for Circuits anticipating a change of Minister. Lead us forward Living Lord, Amen.

Reading Romans 12: 4 - 5

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

Hymn Singing the Faith 685, Hymns and Psalms 758

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfNIbxvXbus>

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| 1 In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth. | 3 Join hands then all the human race,
whate'er your nation be ;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me. |
| 2 In him shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find ;
his service is the golden cord
close-binding humankind. | 4 In Christ now meet both east and
west,
in him meet south and north ;
all Christlike souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth. |

John Oxenham, pseud. (1852–1941)

John Wesley once said "Religion is nothing but love" and one of the strong emphases of the Methodist movement has been to explore the significance of this insight, kindling, not only our social concern, but also our evangelical passion. All love originates in God. Jesus embodies that love. That same love can be energised in us through the Spirit within and among us. Love for God, and for our neighbour are the essence of what human life is about. The more effectively we live out that love the more effectively we will bear authentic witness as followers of Jesus.

As John Wesley was discovering from May 24th 1738 onwards, the heart of religion is not our rules and rites, (important as they might be) but our basic disposition of openness to receive and to live out the life-transforming love of God.

The current lockdown doesn't have to be a lockdown on love. Although we may not get to see family members, friends, people of our community and church, there are many ways of being in touch. Although we might not all be able to directly help in hands-on ways, we can offer our appreciation, our voice, our giving and our prayers for those who are.

There are aspects of this crisis which are unnatural, especially not being able to physically see or touch one another, yet surprisingly positive outcomes can emerge -individually and globally.

When the people of Israel were taken into exile in Babylon it seemed like an unmitigated disaster as so much that seemed central and familiar was lost. During that period some of the most profound insights and some of the finest writing in the Hebrew scriptures emerged. People's concept of God began to enlarge and expand beyond some tribal deity to the universal Creator of all.

Who knows what may yet emerge for us-medically, scientifically, technologically-but also in terms of human community and the insights of faith?

Every day, whatever our circumstances, brings the challenge and opportunity of growing, moving on in the life of faith and of love.

Reading Romans 12: 9-13

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.^[e] ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Hymn Singing the Faith 503, Hymns and Psalms 267

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGGcqhKShQ8>

- 1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

- 2 Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive ;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without
ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.
- 3 Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be ;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee :
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise !

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayers from the Methodist Worship Book

Give us, O God, a vision of your glory,
That we may worship you in spirit and in truth,
And offer the praise of glad and thankful hearts;
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us call to mind our sins.

Lord Jesus, you came into the world to save sinners:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We have brought sorrow and hurt to you,

To others and to ourselves:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

You give yourself to heal and renew us,

And to bring us strength:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

God, the source of all wisdom,

You teach us in your word

That love is the fulfilling of the law:

Grant that we may love you with all our heart

And our neighbours as ourselves;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks to God.

For the love of our Father, the Maker of all, the giver of all good things: let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the world's beauty and the changing seasons, and for the life that we have been given: let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lived and worked among us: let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For his suffering and death on the cross and his resurrection to new life: let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For his rule over all things and his presence in the world: let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, who teaches and guides us: let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

For the grace of the Spirit in the work of the Church and the life of the world: let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven

hallowed be thy Name;

thy kingdom come;

Thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,

For ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn Singing the Faith 81, Hymns and Psalms 566

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItfKjxkXhMk>

1 Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices ;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

2 O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessedè peace to cheer us ;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

3 All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart (1586–1649)
*translated by Catherine Winkworth
(1827–1878)*

Prayer of Blessing

We say together:

The love of the Father enfold us,
The wisdom of the Son enlighten us,
The fire of the Spirit enflame us;
And the blessing of God, the Three in One,
Be upon us and abide with us now and for ever. **Amen.**