**Bamford Chapel and Norden URC Project Launch Service – Sunday 13th September 2020**

*If following the service with a script the hymn lyrics may be slightly different as the songs are video recordings from the internet.*

**Welcome and Introduction**

Good morning and welcome to this service of praise, thanksgiving and challenge. I have taken for our call to worship the words of Psalm 100 (NIV):

**“Worship the LORD with gladness, come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us and we are his. We are the sheep of his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name”**

Our service today is being led by members of the Church in the World group which throughout the year encourages us to focus on the needs of other people across the world by supporting Fair Trade, Christian Aid and as in the case today, thought our annual project.

I don’t know exactly how many countries of the world have been supported by the members of Bamford Chapel and Norden URC but it must be over 30 and today we’ll be telling you about our Project for 2020. We hope to inspire you to be generous as we try to follow the command of Jesus to love our neighbour as we love ourselves recalling his words:

**“in as much as you did it for one of these my children, you did it for me.”**

But first we’re going to join together in the singing of a well-loved hymn of praise – King of kings, Majesty.

**Hymn/Song: King of Kings, Majesty (verse, chorus, verse, chorus)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1.. King of kings, majesty,  God of heaven living in me,  gentle Saviour, closest friend,  strong deliverer, beginning and end,  all within me falls at Your throne. | 2.. Earth and heaven worship You,  love eternal, faithful and true,  who bought the nations, ransomed souls,  brought this sinner near to Your throne;  all within me cries out in praise. |
| Chorus: *Your majesty, I can but bow. I lay my all before you now.*  *In royal robes I don't deserve I live to serve Your majesty.*  *I live to serve Your majesty.* | Jarod Cooper ©1996 Sovereign Lifestyle Music  Ccli 169737 Streaming Licence 595811 |

The prayers of Adoration and confession led by the Chaplain of the School (Luti [pronounced Luis] Teeruka)

**Prayers of adoration and confession**

Almighty Father, our provider, sustainer and protector of our lives, hear our prayer and we are your children and we are gathered here today to pray as we preserve your light due to your holiness and righteousness and humbly come before you this beautiful morning without our prayers of adoration and confession. Hear us as we pray:

Father, we love and praise you God for your great love that binds us all revealed by the beautiful colour in the sky and the ocean that’s around us. You are a great Father and mother for all nations, you provided everything to meet our demand and our needs. You give us the opportunity of happiness to stay and spend our time with our family no matter where Covid-19 exists. You are our Father, and you love us even as you love your Son Jesus Christ. We adore and thank you for all the many blessings you have blessed us with – the food we have, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the lives we live that enable us to enjoy and see the many wonders of your creation in the world.

Lord, may you continue pouring these blessings upon us and teach us to live our days with grateful hearts and loving ways. You are the great protector, our rock that we worship by singing wonderful songs of love. Merciful Father, we magnify you fore ever and ever.

As a sheep carries a lamb you have carried us close to your heart. You offer us more than our earthly father ever could. But still we fail you and continuously cause troubles to others in our wrongdoings in thought, deeds and words. We continue to do what we should not and we do not do the things we know your love should compel us to do. Lord, we need your mercy and grace upon us so. Almighty Father, we that we can walk in your righteousness and lead us home to your green pasture in order to become good followers of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Forgive us our sins, Father we pray. Amen.

**Introduction to the project**

It’s that time of year again…

Each year, for the last 33 years, the congregation of Bamford Chapel and Norden URC have supported a project in the developing world by raising money through personal giving and holding one or two fundraising events between Harvest and Christmas. We have helped projects and charities in countries as far afield as Sri Lanka, India, Namibia and Jamaica and have helped to provide clean water, raised money to allow a village to buy a boat and furnished a safe house for vulnerable young women amongst other things.

The project brings together young and old to learn how we can help others, and in doing so we learn about other countries, cultures, religions and the difficulties people face in other parts of the world. We always make sure that we choose projects where we are sure there will be good, sustainable outcomes for local people and usually we have a good UK based link to help us understand how we can best help.

Our aim is to show how we care for others and share the love of God.

So, the Church in the World group have been busy considering a 2020 project – a very different experience this year as obviously we have not been able to meet face to face (Zoom is a wonderful thing!).

A few months ago we were introduced to a school on the Kiribati Islands in the Pacific islands and this is the project which we have adopted for 2020 and which we hope that you will support.

Let me give you a brief introduction…

Where are the Kiribati Islands? Well, if you take a globe and spin it around so that you are looking at a point almost as far away from Rochdale as you can get, then you will find them there.

The first and most important thing you should know about **Kiribati** is that the people of **Kiribati**, **pronounce** 'ti' as 's'. Therefore, the correct **pronunciation** of '**Kiribati**' is '**Kiribas**'.

For those of you who are interested in flags, the flag of Kiribati is red in the upper half with a gold frigate bird flying over a gold rising sun, and the lower half is blue with three horizontal wavy white stripes to represent the ocean and the three archipelagoes. The 17 rays of the sun represent the 16 Gilbert Islands and Banaba.

The Republic of Kiribati consists of 32 atolls and one raised coral island, Banaba. Coconut palms dominate the landscape on each island, and are widely eaten along with other traditional food based on rice and fish. Kiribatis is most famous for its world class fly fishing, great scuba diving and the seabird wildlife. There is only one airline with service to the most famous of the country’s islands, Christmas island. Among the population volleyball and football are popular sports and, music and dancing are important.

The islands are only a few metres above sea level; as Global Warming progresses, these islands are likely to be some of the first places which will go under as sea levels rise, possibly in the next generation.

Now, the project itself…

The school which we are hoping to support is located on the Capital Island of Tarawa and serves children and adults with a wide range of disabilities from all the islands. The school is a non-governmental organisation but has some funding from the Kiribati Government, and is also supported by the Australian Government. Although the funding covers some of the salaries of the staff, they are in great need of additional funding to assist the children and young people to become more independent. Independence is vital to equip these children and young people with skills they can use in adulthood. The drive for independence is ever increasing as these children and their families may eventually have to move to new lands e.g. Fiji, unless there is a halt to Global Warming and an increase in sea levels.

The school would like us to help them to buy the following:

a photocopier, craft materials, electronic tablets for deaf children, Velcro, building blocks, raincoats, umbrellas, an embossing braille machine, puzzles, adaptive cutlery, cooking utensils and carpentry tools.

You will learn more as our service goes on…

**Interview with the school Principal**

Hello everyone, I would like to introduce you to Tinana who is the Principal of the Kiribati School and Centre for children and young people with special needs. You will see Tinana’s photograph and hear her answering questions about the school, we have added subtitles as Tinana has answered the questions in English her second language, her first being Kiribati. Well done to Tinana.

Tinana is from Kiribati originally and following her studies locally carried out further training in Fiji to equip her to run the school. Tinana lives with her own family on Tarawa Island where the school is located.

**My first question to Tinana was:**

**How was the school established and what are the health and disability needs of the children who attend?**

Answer: The school and centre for children with special needs was originally established under the Red Cross in 1991 in the old hospital. In the year 2002 the Red Cross funds were only available for staff salaries and the school was to be closed. A group of parents mainly mothers decided otherwise and after 3 months they took over the school with hope and were steadfast in their task.

The school itself is a Non Governmental Organisation under the day to day management and administration of the school board, an elected body from the parents’ membership.

At the time of inspection by the Ministry of Education there was 28 educational staff on contracts supported by 9 administration staff, the school also has the services of a watchman. At present the school is funded by the Australian Government with a fixed budget. This covers the normal operating costs, staff training, and a part contribution to other projects. In 2017 the Ministry of Education started paying the 12 teachers giving the school a total amount of 102,000 Australian dollars.

The school is the only institution catering for children with disabilities in Tarawa in the southern islands of Kiribati. The children’s conditions cover a wide spectrum including blindness, deafness, Spina Bifida, Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Muscular Dystrophy, learning disabilities, multiple physical disabilities, and autism.

**Question 2:**

**How does your community get involved in supporting the students?**

Answer: The school has created good relationships with the community to welcome them in to participate in school functions e.g. Culture Day and Caracas Day.

They can also be invited into school as school resources or speakers.

As already mentioned school board directors are our parents in which they involve together with management in decision making for the ongoing development of the school.

**Question 3:**

**What challenges do you face with regards to the climate crisis and how are you dealing with this?**

Answer: To clarify more regarding climate issues the school is located very close to the sea, coastal erosion is our main critical issue. During High Tide Sea water can damage the classrooms and the sea spray easily causing rusting. Most of the children are also affected during high tide and also the water is unsafe for our special children.

**Question 4 asked by Carole:**

**My final question to Tinana was focused on how she thinks we can best help the school and centre and the difference our contributions will make to the lives of the children, young people, staff and parents.**

Tinana talked to us about how limited the available resources are as any money provided by the statutory agencies goes on staffing costs. The money we raise can be directed to the funding of specialist equipment such as Braille embossing machines for children with visual impairments, and electronic tablets to support learning for those with hearing impairments. This will mean more children can sit their local exams and achieve a qualification.

Equipment which supports therapeutic involvement by teachers and therapists ‘is also needed to develop the children and young people’s physical and learning abilities in preparation for independent living. These are items such as specialist adapted cutlery, plates, cups and cooking utensils.

Additional equipment which the children and young people enjoy such as craft materials, tools for carpentry, puzzles, and Braille books also has to come from other funding sources. Tinana hopes we will be able to fund these items.

The school is also in constant need of funds to repair the school fencing and walls which are damaged as a result of the sea spray and the schools project manager is currently working with the local community and other agencies to raise funds for this repair work.

**Hymn/Song: Beauty for brokenness (verse 1, verse 2, chorus, verse 3, verse 4, chorus, verse 5, chorus)**

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| 1.. Beauty for brokenness,  hope for despair,  Lord, in Your suffering world  this is our prayer.  Bread for the children,  justice, joy, peace,  sunrise to sunset,  Your kingdom increase. | 2.. Shelter for fragile lives,  cures for their ills,  work for the craftsmen,  trade for their skills;  land for the dispossessed,  rights for the weak,  voices to plead the cause  of those who can't speak. |
| 3.. Refuge from cruel wars,  havens from fear,  cities for sanctuary,  freedoms to share.  Peace to the killing-fields,  scorched earth to green,  Christ for the bitterness,  His cross for the pain. | 4.. Rest for the ravaged earth,  oceans and streams  plundered and poisened -  our future, our dreams.  Lord, end our madness,  carelesness, greed;  make us content with  the things that we need. |
| 5.. Lighten our darkness,  breathe on this flame  until Your justice  burns brightly again;  until the nations  learn of Your ways,  seek Your salvation  and bring You their praise. | *Chorus:*  *God of the poor,*  *friend of the weak,*  *give us compassion we pray;*  *melt our cold hearts,*  *let tears fall like rain;*  *come, change our love*  *from a spark to a flame.* |
| Graham Kendrick ©1993 Vertical Worship Songs/Sovereign Music UK ccli 169737 Streaming Licence 595811 | |

**Bible Reading: 1 John 3:11-20**

*1 John 3:11-20 – Love One Another*

11 For this is the message you heard from the beginning: we should love one another. 12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

19 This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: 20 if our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Reflection**

*If I were to ask you what your favourite romantic film is – what would it be? Some people refer to these films as “chich flicks”. Whether you are a fan of that genre (type) of film or not I suspect many of us have seen one or more of them.*

But for me the “love” of the Hollywood romantic films is at odds with the “love” that we hear/read about in the Bible! For the films it is almost that love is a “feeling” rather than anything else. But in the words from the 1 John Bible reading today suggest that “love” is more about “action” rather than feelings even though feelings do come into the equation!

The Bible reading we had today from 1 John talks about “love” but not a romantic love but a love that shows itself in action not in feelings. As I selected this Bible passage I did for verse 17 & 18 – which I think speaks to us on this day when we launch our Project 2020 – the words of verses 17 & 18 are:

**“17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”** (NIV)

I don’t think John in this letter is suggesting that ‘words’ or ‘speech’ are not part of love but that in certain circumstances ‘words’ or ‘speech’ need to come after ‘actions’.

Saint Francis of Assisi is reported to have said: *“Preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words.”*

Friends we, today, as we have in many years that have passed have the opportunity to share the gospel of love to new friends in Kiribati. We have the opportunity to show our faith in giving financially to help those in a land (or island) far away. And even though this is a year like no other in our recent history we can still give of what we have to support the school in Kiribati because as we do we enact the love that John is his letter is stressing to his listeners/readers.

May we in loving action give, in this period from September to Christmas, a financial gift/s to change and transform young lives and to help those who need it at this time; for in so doing we profess our faith and trust in Jesus who gave his life that we might have life and in so doing we share the love of God as we read it in 1 John.

Amen.

**Video of school children**

We will now watch as we are led in song by some of the children at the school in Kiribati. I hope you enjoy this music. Perhaps pray for these young children as you listen to them sing.

**Children’s Address**

Children’s Address

In the beginning… hopefully you all know what comes next.

* First he created light and darkness or Day and Night
* He then created a dome above the water, called Sky
* Then the land appeared called Earth
* The earth started to grow lots of plants
* He made the sun to rule over the day, and the moon to rule over the night
* Then the water filled with lots of animals and the air with birds.
* Lots of animals started living on land, some were domestic, wild, large and small
* And then finally he made humans

And that’s the creation of the world. It’s sometimes quite hard to imagine the whole of creation, it’s a bit big. So let’s think of creation a bit closer to home. I’m going to call it our doorstep creation!

What has everyone being doing over lockdown? Have you been going for walks? Growing flowers in your gardens? Planting veg? Visiting parks and lakes? Anyone been stuck in the rain and got drenched? These are all examples of creation on our doorstep. I have asked the children of junior church to put together a collage showing their doorstep creation over lockdown. I hope to display them all in somewhere at some point. In classic Blue Peter style, here’s one I made earlier.



Everyone’s creation on their doorstep is different, imagine what it will be like for the children at the school in Kiribati. They go to school next to the sea, it can be really sunny and very rainy- even more than here! Hopefully the school will send us some photos so we can make their creation collage to share. The problem is the sea is rising over the world, because the planet is getting warmer and ice is melting. Kiribati is so low down that the sea is covering the Island, their gardens are getting flooded and wet, and buildings are breaking because the sea is hitting them. They may have to move to a different country soon because the sea will be covering the land and they won’t have a house or school. We have talked about looking after the environment and Gods creation before and making sure our carbon footprint is small like a sparrow and not like an elephant. Well every little thing we do to help the environment will look after our own doorstep creation as well as the rest of the world, especially Kiribati.

So next time you’re outside enjoying the fresh air, say a quick thank you to God for his wonderful creation and then let’s all try and do something to help protect it and make sure his Creation is beautiful everywhere in the world.

**How the money will be collected**

As Church will be opening for worship from Sunday 20th September we will be collecting the Project monies as we usually do via giving cash or cheques in the brown or white envelopes.

The brown envelopes are for non-tax payers and the white envelopes are for those who can Gift Aid their donation. Gift Aiding your donation is so important as we get another 25% from the Government – but you must fill out your details on the envelope.

If you are attending worship, you can place your project monies in the offertory plate in Church. If you don’t feel able to attend worship, you can still give by using the brown or white envelopes which you can get by contacting Carole Greaves who will make sure you receive one. Carole’s phone number is: 01706 527898.

If you are unable to attend worship but are able to get out you can push your donation (cash or cheque) through Margaret Ogden’s door (19 Hawthorn Road) or pushing it through the manse letter box.

Please note cheques must be made payable to **“Bamford Chapel URC”**

Thank you for supporting the project for 2020!

**Prayers for the Project and Intercessions**

As we come before God in prayer let us picture throwing a pebble into a pond and watching the ripples circle outwards

Thinking about ourselves as that pebble, we thank God for his support in these difficult times. We pray that our faith in him is strengthened and that we hear his voice speaking to us and leading us.

Look at the first ring and pray for our family and friends who perhaps we cannot see. Be with anyone who is sick or who is grieving. Bring comfort to those in care homes or those is in isolation who feel lonely. Help them to know you are always with them

As the ripples move outwards we pray for our church planning to open the building for worship next Sunday. We pray for those working hard to ensure the safety of everyone attending. We remember that our church is not just the people who come to worship together, but those who worship at home, too.

A wider circle and we think of our country and pray for the politicians making difficult decisions, for the scientists trying to find a vaccine against covid19 and for those working in the NHS and as carers. We pray for those who have lost their loved ones, their jobs, or who are abused, hungry or lonely.

As the ripples spread out we pray for our world; for everyone affected by this pandemic in any way, for the people of Beirut struggling to rebuild their lives, for refugees fleeing war torn countries and hoping to rebuild their lives in a safe place, for the people of Belarus in political upheaval and for people who rely on Fairtrade to be able to educate their children and buy medicines.

Lastly we pray for the Kiribati School and Centre for Children with Special Needs. Be with the Principal, the pastor Luti and all the staff and children at the school. Open our hearts to give generously to our project to buy equipment for these children. May we help to empower them to attain a secure future.

Open our eyes to see how our way of life can affect these tiny islands on the opposite side of the world; let us learn how to be more eco friendly.

Be with us Lord as we realise that as the little pebble has a large effect, so may we strive to do your work in our world.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

We will now sing our final hymn: In Christ there is no east or west.

**Closing Hymn: In Christ there is now east or west**

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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. | 2.. In Him shall true hearts everywhere  their high communion find;  His service is the golden cord,  close binding humankind. |
| 3.. Join hands, then, members of the faith,  whatever your race may be!  who serves my Father as His child  is surely kin to me. | 4.. In Christ now meet both East and West,  in Him meet North and South;  all Christly souls are one in Him  throughout the whole wide earth. |
| John Oxenham (1852 - 1941) ccli 169737 Streaming licenced 595811 | |

**Blessing**

As we close our act of worship we will join together in saying the grace. (On the video the Chaplain from the school spoke the words in the Kiribati language.)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the love of God and the fellowship or the Holy Spirit.

Be with us all, evermore, Amen.