**Sunday 18th July 2021 – Service of Worship**

Good morning

Welcome to Bamford Chapel and Norden United Reformed Church, Rochdale. Our church is part of the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Churches Missional Partnership. My name is David Watson and I am a serving elder of our church.

We are meeting for worship once more at our church but provide an online version to meet the needs of those who as yet are unable to attend in person.

**Call to worship**

O God, make the doorway of this church wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship but narrow enough to shut out envy, pride and strife.

Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block to children or a barrier to the elderly or disabled.

Let its doors be open, and inviting to all who enter here, and let its walls resound with the praise and worship of your people.

**Our first hymn is; 545 CMP Open our eyes, Lord**

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| Open our eyes, Lord,we want to see Jesus - to reach out and touch Himand say that we love Him.Open our ears, Lord,and help us to listen:O open our eyes, Lord,we want to see Jesus.  | Robert Cull©1976 CCCM Music/Maranatha Musicccli 169737 Streaming licence 595811  |

**Prayers**

Our prayers are based on a prayer by Nick Fawcett taken from his book, ‘Prayers for all seasons’.

Heavenly Father we come to you in reverent praise. We come to praise you for the way you have worked across the centuries; the way you have moved in so many lives to make your purpose known; the way you offer your guidance and express your love.

We praise you for the way you have spoken throughout history to your people Israel, to your church and to countless generations of believers.

We praise you for the great cloud of witnesses that surround us, for your fellowship here, for your church across the world and for all those who have kept the faith and run the race of life before us. We praise you for the example we have been given to follow, through the disciples and Apostles, through the early church and its life beyond, and through all the saints of old.

Forgive us that we sometimes forget all that you have done, losing sight of your purpose and the extent of your love. Forgive us that we fail to honour the heritage in which we stand because our love for you is weak, our trust is hesitant and our commitment is poor. Forgive us that we walk half-heartedly, casual in our discipleship, careless in our devotion, our hearts more concerned with what is trivial and unimportant rather than being focused single-mindedly on the work of you kingdom.

Sovereign God, as we remind ourselves together of your activity throughout history, as we reflect on your work through your people, speak now in our lives, that our love may grow, our faith be deepened and our resolve to serve you be strengthened. May we always live to your praise and glory.

Lord, your faithfulness is constant, even though our response is feeble.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

**Children’s Talk**

There was a lady, who was aged in her middle eighties, and she had gone, on the bus, to her local Asda store to do some shopping. When she had finished her shopping she paid and came out of the store to go and catch the bus back home. She had two bags in each of her hands, not overfull but with enough food and other things to see her through the week till her next shop. The bus stop where she would catch her bus was just outside the car park, and the stop where she would get off was just at the bottom of the hill where she lived. Her home was near the bottom of the hill so she would not have far to carry her bags before getting on the bus or when she got off it.

As she walked across the car park one of her bags snagged on a car bumper and caused her to stumble and fall. She hurt her knees and was quite shaken up by the fall but not badly hurt. A man was walking near by and helped her to her feet and someone else called a first-aider from the store. The lady did not like to be the centre of all the fuss, she just wanted to catch the bus and go home.

The man said he could not allow her to catch the bus and that he would take her home in his car and that it would be alright because his wife was waiting for him in the car. He carried the lady’s shopping to his car, helped her into the car and took her home.

When they got there he and his wife helped her into her home with the shopping and settled her in a chair with a cup of tea. He asked if there was anyone that he could contact for her but she said no as her daughters were away on holiday. Before leaving he left his telephone number just in case she needed anything later that day. The lady thanked him for his help and for his concern for her.

He called back the next day to make sure that the lady was alright and as she was feeling much better she was able to thank him properly for all that he had done to help her. The lady and the man had never met before that day and under normal circumstances would never have met. They would have walked past each other without a sideways glance. Anybody or nobody could have helped the lady. As it was one man did.

Jesus told a story to explain to a crowd, including an expert in the law, what it meant to be a neighbour. We call it the parable of the Good Samaritan. It is so much easier to help someone we know or someone we are friends with than to help a stranger. Jesus was saying that helping someone in need, whoever they are, is what God expects of us.

Oh, by the way, the story that I have just told you is a true story. The man was a Pakistani; and the lady? She was my mum.

The young people will leave during the next hymn so we pray that they will learn more of Jesus as they go outdoors with their leaders.

**Our next hymn is:1003 CMP My Jesus, my saviour**

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| 1.. My Jesus, My Saviour,Lord, there is none like You.All of my days, I want to praisethe wonders of Your mighty love.My comfort, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength, let every breath, all that I am, never cease to worship You. | *Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing,* *power and majesty, praise to the King!**Mountains bow down and the seas will roar,* *at the sound of your name!**I sing for joy at the work of your hands,* *forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.* *Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.* |
| Darlene Zschech © 1993 Hillsong Publishing/Kingsway Music ccli 169737 Streaming licence 595811  |

As we meet in church we don’t take up a collection, there is a plate at the back and any donations/envelopes are placed on that but, for those giving in this way and for those who continue to give by standing order we will have an offertory prayer.

Offertory Prayer

Wonderful God, we thank you for your gifts to us of mercy, freedom, joy and hope; your gift to us of life its-self. Please accept all that we offer to you in return; the gifts of our money, our time and our talents. However we give them, use all of these things, especially when we give them freely and unconditionally, to further your work and your kingdom. We pray that through them we may advance your kingdom and glorify your name in this place and beyond.

**Our first reading is: Luke, chapter 10 verses 25 to 37**

The Parable of the good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

**The second reading is: Colossians Chapter 1 verses 1to14**

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Thanksgiving and prayer

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints - 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. 10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

**Our next hymn is: 411 CMP Let there be love shared among us**

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| Let there be love shared among us,let there be love in our eyes;may now Your love sweep this nation,cause us O Lord, to arise;give us a fresh understandingof brotherly love that is real;let there be love shared among us,let there be love.  | Dave Bilborough © 1979 Thankyou Musicccli 169737 Streaming licence 595811  |

**Address**

Today, passing comments about peoples’ ethnicity can be classed as racist and therefore illegal but not many years ago it was not unusual to joke about assumed racial character traits, and the Englishman, Scotsman and Irishman jokes were many and oft repeated.

Jesus was not limited by our laws and so he was able to tell a story about a man who was set upon by robbers and what happened to him. His listeners, and particularly the one that he directly addressed, an expert in the law, a lawyer, would understand exactly where he was coming from and in what direction the story **should** go. Jesus, perhaps, should have said; there was a priest, a Levite and a normal everyday Israelite, but he didn’t. He introduced an element into the story that would have outraged everyone but particularly the lawyer. Jesus said in his story, there was a priest, a Levite and a SAMARITAN.

Jesus was in this position because of a question that the lawyer had asked him, not from wanting a reasoned answer but because he wanted to test and trick Jesus into giving an incriminating answer. “Teacher,” the man said, apparently showing Jesus some respect as a Rabbi, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” The man is an expert in the Law of Moses and is seeking to test Jesus’ ability to interpret it. He wants to know how he can be sure of a place in God’s new world when it eventually arrives. Jesus puts the question back to him referring him to the obvious source of authority and asks him, “What is written in the law and how do you read it?” Jesus asks him this as there were several ways to interpret what was written and each one depended on the stand point of the person reading it in deciding what it meant to be faithful to God. A Sadducee would see their loyalty in support for the temple, even if that meant compromising with their Roman rulers. Pharisees would, and did, apply the law to every detail of daily life and use it to highlight the boundaries around God’s holy people, the Jews, that kept them separate from everyone else, the Gentiles.

The man does not seem to hesitate as he replies, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’” He quotes Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 5 for the first and Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18 for the second. When Jesus himself was asked in Mark chapter 12 verse 28, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” He replied, “The most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

It is hardly surprising then that Jesus commends the man and tells him to do what he has said and he will live. We too must realise that the only way to be sure of a place in God’s new order is to act lovingly in the world now. However, maybe we are like the lawyer and need to ask the question, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ Who is it that we must love? Where do the limits of our obligation to love others lie?

To get back to the story that Jesus told we hear that the priest and the Levite, although perhaps intrigued by the man’s condition, looked, crossed over and passed by. The law, for them said that if they came in contact with blood or a corpse they would not have been able to worship in the temple or synagogue. They had no option but to cross over, that part of the law that covered their religion was of greater importance to them than the requirement of the law which told them to love their neighbour.

The Samaritan who, as far as the Jews were concerned, was of mixed race, had no such scruples. He saw only a person who was in need of help, rather than someone who was an inconvenience that could contaminate those who came in contact with him. Neither his nationality nor his religious status gave him cause for concern. All that mattered to the Samaritan was to ensure that all the person’s needs were met. So he treated his wounds and bandaged them and then moved him to a place of safety. He even used his own donkey. Having got the man to an inn he arranged with the innkeeper to care for him until he was fit to continue on his journey. This the Samaritan paid for out of his own pocket telling the innkeeper, ‘Look after him and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ As far as the Samaritan was concerned all that he wanted was to ensure that the man was cared for, whatever the cost.

We can learn from this parable that; firstly, lack of love is often easily justified, even though it is never right. Secondly, we can learn that our neighbour is anyone, of any race, creed or social background who is in need. And thirdly we can learn that love means acting to meet the person’s need.

Jesus asked, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The lawyer could not bring himself to even say, “The Samaritan.” He replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” This was not the answer that a little boy gave when asked the same question by his teacher. He said, “The innkeeper.” When the teacher asked him why he had chosen the innkeeper the boy replied, “He had to put up with the man bleeding all over his inn.”

Being a neighbour can often be difficult. It can be asked of us at an inconvenient time, or by a person we would least like to help, or perhaps by a person who might ask or demand quite a lot from us. Thinking back to the little boy’s answer we can see how the innkeeper becomes sucked into the story by the actions of the Samaritan. Suddenly he is faced with housing, caring for and perhaps even subsidising, the bloodied and badly injured man. We don’t hear what the innkeeper’s reaction is but we can use our imaginations to feel what it would be like if we were to be chosen to be a neighbour in this way.

Being a neighbour is reacting to a person’s need. Paul wrote his letter to the church at Colosse while he was in prison in Rome. He wrote it because he had been told that the church was going through a time of stress. Paul tells them that he prays for them, giving thanks to God for their faith in Jesus and for the love that they have for all the saints. Paul is unable to provide practical help like that provided by the Samaritan man but he can be a neighbour in the prayers that he offers on their behalf.

In verse 3, Paul thanks God for their faith and changed lives.

In verse 9, he asks God to help them know what he wants them to do.

In verse 9 he also asks God to give them deep spiritual understanding.

In verse 10, he asks God to help them live for him.

Also in verse 10, he asks God to give them more knowledge of himself.

In verse 11, he asks God to give them strength for endurance.

And, finally, again in verse 11, Paul asks God to fill them with joy, with strength and with thankfulness.

Paul had a great talent for prayer and he used it in these few verses. Just think how many people in our lives we could touch if we prayed for **them** like this.

We can do the same; we **can** thank God for our faith and the faith of those around us and for lives that have been or will be changed. We **can** ask God to let each of us know what he wants of us. We **can** ask God to give us a deep spiritual understanding. We **can** ask God to help us live for him. We **can** ask God to give us a deeper understanding of his ways. We **can** ask God to give each of us strength for endurance. And we **can** ask God to fill the lives of those around us with joy, with strength and with thankfulness. Let’s use the power of prayer to move our lives, and the lives of those around us, to fulfil the potential we each of us has within us.

One other great example of being a neighbour comes in Exodus and helps us to see what happens when God wants us to be a neighbour, when he wants us to do his will. God chose Moses from birth. He saved his life by using his family and the enemy, an Egyptian, in a most unusual way and by each party going against the law as laid down by Pharaoh. God did not desert Moses when he killed an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew, or when he hid his body in the sand. God knew the needs of the Hebrews, his chosen people, and he knew who was needed to fill those needs. Moses was a reluctant neighbour to the Hebrews and made all sorts of excuses to God for not doing what was being asked of him. He starts off by saying, “Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” and God says, “I will be with you.” “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say the God of your fathers has sent me and they ask me his name?” Moses continues, and God gives him the answer. “Tell them I AM WHO I AM has sent you”. “What if,” he says, “They still will not believe me?” God gives Moses miraculous signs to show them; a staff that changes into a snake and back into a staff; a hand that becomes leprous and then is healed; and the ability to turn water from the Nile into blood. Was this enough for Moses? Not on your life! Still he persists and says he is not and never has been an eloquent speaker. And finally he gets right to the point and says, “Please, Lord, send someone else!”

Do you recall the words of our offertory prayer? Let me repeat them again; ‘Wonderful God, we thank you for your gifts to us of mercy, freedom, joy and hope; your gift to us of life its-self. Please accept all that we offer to you in return; the gifts of our money, our time and our talents. However we give them, use all of these things, especially when we give them freely and unconditionally, to further your work and your kingdom. We pray that through them we may glorify your name in this place and beyond.’

All that we have comes from God! In the next few weeks we will, hopefully, be able to fully open up our churches. There are lots of things that will be needed if we are to resurrect many of the things that make our church the place it once was, or, even better, to make our church more relevant to ourselves and others who currently are outside our church. We can use our time, our talents and our treasure in a responsible manner. Being a neighbour is doing just that. The Samaritan did just that. He stopped, and so gave of his time; he helped, by using his talents; and he paid the innkeeper, and so used his treasure to ensure that the man received the care he required.

Each of these examples show how the Samaritan used the blessings he had received, for that is what our time, talents and treasure are, blessings given to us by God. We may not have the opportunity to go to the extent that is shown in these illustrations but we can use what we have and what we are good at for the benefit of our neighbour. Chances can be fleeting and can pass by very quickly as the priest and the Levite discovered. We as a church and as individuals have the opportunity NOW to fulfil our potential. Perhaps the easiest place to start, or maybe it’s the hardest, is to look at what we contribute each week or each month out of our pockets. This will enable us to consider our treasure, how we use it for our own needs and how we use it to help maintain our church. During lockdown our churches income has taken a tremendous knock, if you want to know how much just ask the Treasurer.

The URC is not a church that requires us to give a proportion of our net income to our church or to commit to an amount of time that comes to each of us from God. What we commit and what we do is down to our capabilities and our own individual consciences. Each of us is much blessed and each of us can pray individually using the words from our offertory prayer, ‘Please accept all that we offer to you in return for our blessings; the gifts of our money, our time and our talents. However we give them, use all of these things, especially when we give them freely and unconditionally, to further your work and your kingdom. We pray that through them we may advance your kingdom and glorify your name in this place and beyond.’

Jesus told the lawyer to go and be a neighbour. We need to consider how we too can, as Jesus put it, ‘go and do likewise’.

In Jesus name, Amen.

**Our next hymn is: 708 CMP To God be the glory**

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| 1.. To God be the glory!great things He hath done!So loved He the worldthat He gave us His Son,who yielded His lifean atonement for sin,and opened the lifegatethat all may go in.  | 2.. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!To every believer the promise of God;the vilest offender who truly believes,that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.  |
| 3.. Great things He hath taught us,great things He hath done,and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;but purer and higher,and greater will beour wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see. | Chorus: *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!**Let the earth hear His voice!**Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!**Let the people rejoice!**O come to the Father,**through Jesus the Son;**and give Him the glory,**great things He hath done!*  |
| Fanny J. Crosby ccli 169737 Streaming licence 595811  |

**Prayers for others - Intercessions**

Father God, we thank you for the opportunity to bring our cares and concerns to you in prayer. Often we are anxious and concerned about ourselves, our loved ones and others, not really knowing which way to turn and often forgetting that we can always turn to you. So now we do just that and bring all our concerns, all our worries and all our cares to you.

We pray for the world that you have put into our care and we are sorry for the feelings of helplessness that we have when we see, read and hear of the problems that abound. We remember before you those parts of our world that suffer from discord, war, famine, flood and despair. We particularly pray for all countries affected by Covid 19. We pray that each may have a fair share of vaccines for we know that until that happens then the virus can continue to spread unchecked. Where there is war and discord, Lord, we pray that you will guide the leaders and those in authority to seek and establish a just peace.

We pray for our own country. We have problems enough to fill the whole of our prayer time so we hold it up to you and pray that we may be up to the part that we can play to bring about reconciliation to all parts of life here. We are fortunate to have a wonderful NHS and we thank you for the amazing way they have worked during the past year and a half.

We pray for our church, your church, nationally and locally. May it always be a beacon of your light that shines out for you. Let the things that are done in your name by your churches so speak of your love for all humankind that others will want to know more of you because of them.

We pray for those whose names are on our hearts who are ill and those who grieve. (We name them silently) We know that the illness or loss of a loved one is something that does not come easy and often we do not know the words to express our feelings of love and concern for those who are in the midst of these situations. We just hold them all up to you now and pray that you will grant them the grace they need and the healing that they seek.

We pray for ourselves, for all that troubles us. Some of us have enormous problems and others have small ones that nevertheless make our lives difficult to cope with at times. We pray for the strength to live our lives as you would want and to remember to thank you for the blessings you give us personally and through others.

Heavenly Father, help us to also remember the love that Jesus showed for us on the cross and what that love can do for us each day and through eternity.

We bring all our prayers, spoken and unspoken to you, Heavenly Father, in the name of that same Jesus, our saviour, redeemer and friend. Amen.

**Our closing hymn is: 576 R&S God’s Spirit is deep in my heart (Go tell everyone)**

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| 1.. God’s Spirit is deep in my heart. He has called me and set me apart.And this is what I have to do, what I have to do. | 2.. And just as the Father sent me so I’m sending you out to be,my witnesses throughout the world, the whole of the world. |
| 3.. Don’t carry a load in your pack, you don’t need two shirts on your back.A workman can earn his own keep, can earn his own keep. | 4.. Don’t worry what you have to say, don’t worry because on that dayGod’s Spirit will speak in your heart, will speak in your heart. |
| Chorus: *He sent me to give the Good News to the poor**Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more**Tell blind people that they can see**And set the down trodden free.**And go tell everyone the news that the**Kingdom of God has come.**And go tell everyone**The news That God’s Kingdom has come.* | Hubert J. Richards arr. Betty Pulkingham and Paul BatemanWords © 1967 Oxford University Press. Music © 1969 Vanguard Music Company, New York, NY 10019ccli 169737 Streaming licence 595811  |

**Benediction**

Go now, with love in your hearts,

light in your eyes and

life in your souls.

Go, in the service of Christ,

to proclaim what he has done for you and share what he has given,

…… to his glory. AMEN

We will share the grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and

the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always. Amen

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The Church Meeting was postponed on Sunday 11th July. It will now take place on Sunday 1st August at 11.45am