**Sunday 3rd October 2021, Service of Worship led by Andy Platt**

Hello and welcome to our service. My name is Andy Platt and I am a lay preacher at Bamford Chapel and Norden URC. There are two themes to our service today. The first is youth and family work in our church and the second is the Environment. In junior Church today they will be doing a litter pick. Children across the country and in many countries are learning about how they can protect the world, the world that God gave to and for all people.

We are going to start our service with a Bible Reading from the lectionary which is

**Mark 10:13-16 NIVUK**

**The little children and Jesus**

13People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ 16And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

**Our first hymn is Abba Father, let me be yours and yours alone**

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| Abba Father, let me be  Yours and Yours alone.  May my will for ever be  evermore Your own.  Never let my heart grow cold,  never let me go,  Abba Father, let me be  Yours and Yours alone. | Dave Bilborough  © 1977 Thankyou Music/Capitol CMG Publishing/Integritymusic.com  Ccli 169737  Streaming licnece 595811 |

**Communion:**

We are now going to have our communion and today I am going to spend some time explaining the language we use, so that our young people can feel more included.

The word communion is that part of our church services where we remember. We remember the bread and wine which are eaten and drunk to remind us of what Jesus did for us. By using the bread and wine to help us remember, we can remember Jesus every time we eat and drink – not just during special services. So what do the bread and wine mean to us?

Jesus told us that the bread was to remind us of his body. It is to remind us that Jesus came to earth to save us, even though that meant that he would suffer and die. So every time we eat we remember Jesus and what he did for us.

Jesus told us that the wine was to remind us of Jesus’ promise that whoever believed in Jesus and trusted in him would not dies but have eternal life. So when we drink we remember how lucky we are that Jesus has promised us eternal life.

As it says in the Bible in a letter written by Paul to the Corinthian Church (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

We pray for your Holy Spirit to come upon the bread and wine that for us these earthly elements may have heavenly significance and be symbols of the body and blood of Jesus.

So we eat the bread to remember Christ, his life, his deeds, his words – we remember, so we, his church, can carry on his work, until he comes.

Distribute Bread and Wine.

As we heard from the Bible reading when Jesus was with his followers he took bread (lift the bread) he broke it (break the bread saying…) and said, “this is my body that is for you.” (place the bread back on the plate)

Let us take, eat, remember and give thanks. (we break a piece of bread, eat the bread, pause and give thanks)

As we heard in the Bible reading, after supper, Jesus took the cup (lift the cup) and said, “Do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.” (we lift the cup, sip from it, pause and give thanks)

Let us pray, Lord we meet as your family. As a family we share in one bread remembering your life and your promises to us. Your family is all ages, all races, all people. Help us to come you as little children, trusting in you and following you. Lord be with our young people as they leave to start their work repairing our damaged world. Be with the Lord and help them to be better caretakers of your creation than we have been. AMEN

**Our second hymn is You shall go out with joy**

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| You shall go out with joy  and be led forth with peace,  and the mountains and the hills  shall break forth before you.  There'll be shouts of joy  and the trees of the field  shall clap, shall clap their hands | and the trees of the field  shall clap their hands,  and the trees of the field  shall clap their hands,  and the trees of the field  shall clap their hands,  and you'll go out with joy. |
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**Second Reading Psalm 8 (NIVUK)**

1Lord, our Lord,  
    how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory  
    in the heavens.  
2Through the praise of children and infants  
    you have established a stronghold against your enemies,  
    to silence the foe and the avenger.  
3When I consider your heavens,  
    the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
    which you have set in place,  
4what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
    human beings that you care for them?

5You have made them a little lower than the angels  
    and crowned them with glory and honour.  
6You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
    you put everything under theirfeet:  
7all flocks and herds,  
    and the animals of the wild,  
8the birds in the sky,  
    and the fish in the sea,  
    all that swim the paths of the seas.

9Lord, our Lord,  
    how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**Talk**

I’m going to tell you a little story. A working party of elders and youth leaders has been looking at what we can do to focus our youth and family work here at Bamford Chapel and Norden URC. As part of this we thought it was vital to get the congregation to be part of this vision and the plan moving forward. It was decided that we should bring it to both the congregation as part of an act of worship and to the church meeting. So as I was leading today’s service I volunteered to do that. I was also told that Junior Church were going to be doing a litter collection today as part of raising awareness of the environment. So two themes – Youth Work and the Environment. Now a few weeks ago I started pulling the service together. Worship leaders use an online resource called Roots which tells us the Bible reading for the day, suggested prayers, hymns and so on. I thought I would have a look at roots even though I had the subject matter already given to me. Imagine my surprise (actually surprise isn’t quite a strong enough word) to see that the Bible Readings were the ones you have had – Let the little children come to me and Psalm 8 - I am guessing this is what is meant by God moving in a mysterious way! Two Bible readings which are perfect for the two themes!

At the next Church meeting we will have the opportunity to discuss the subject, of Youth and Family work in more detail, but we wanted to introduce it as part of an act of worship, to ask for God’s guidance and support. So why do we need a new approach to family and youth work. Bamford Chapel and Norden URC have traditionally had a reputation as having a very healthy children and youth population and activities. Originally in the 70s/80s this was based on a strong youth club and then on having a large number of young families. However, over the last 10 years we have seen a decline in numbers of both young families and the associated children. If we then add this to the impact of churches going into a prolonged shutdown during Covid, then we have an even worse position. Chapel has stated an intent to put in place a plan to try and reverse this trend, which may even include the recruitment of a children’s worker as part of a wider strategy.

The initial vision for youth work is that Bamford Chapel and Norden URC is viewed as being a community resource, with members of the community using the facilities, including the building and grounds, leading to an increase in youth and families having the opportunity to start experiencing deeper church related activities.

Specifically our objectives would be:

* To increase the number of families and youth using chapel facilities.
* To increase the number of families and youth getting involved in church and/or discipleship activities.
* To provide for specific needs in the community, but not necessarily becoming an extension to social services i.e. we are doing these things because we are church.
* To ensure we appeal to a wide range of youth, defined in terms of ages and church background i.e. we appeal to youth from infants to young adults, with a range of backgrounds from born and raised in the church to those with no church background.

Obviously it’s not all bad – the uniform organisations have started up again and seem to be healthy, toddlers group is popular. We had a family fun day back in August. But we need to make sure these are all co-ordinated and we are focussing on the right areas.

So why am I bringing this up here, as part of worship. Well it was seen as a key point in our discussions that to make this focus on Family and Youth Work be a success we need the backing of the Church. We are doing this as part of Church and therefore the rest of the Church needs to support it.

So what do I mean by support. Well one proposal is that we could employ and youth and family worker. But even if we do that, the worker would need support. They can’t run groups and events on their own. They will need helpers. If we are successful in our efforts, then we will need more volunteers than we currently have. Those volunteers will come from the Church. Likewise if our efforts are to be successful then we will need the spiritual support of the church, in terms of prayer and guidance. Also if we are to be successful, there may be a requirements to change some of the things we do in Church, stopping some things to focus on new things. Sometimes change is hard.

So – do you agree we need to do more with young people and families. If you do, then how are you going to support it? Ask God, is your role to encourage and pray for the work. Are you being called to provide time and effort? Lastly do we all need to be open to any proposals for change, to welcome new ideas and initiatives.

**Let us pray**

Dear Lord – you called on your followers to let the little children come to Him.

Help is to understand how this applies to us. What do we need to do?

Lord guide us all. Give us new ideas. Show us what you want us to do. Give us the strength and the stamina to do Your work as You guide us.

Lord, help us to be fruitful in bringing more people to a knowledge of You.

Amen

**Our third hymn is One more step along the world I go**

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| 1.. One more step along the world I go,  one more step along the world I go;  from the old things to the new  keep me travelling along with you: | 2.. Round the corner of the world I turn,  more and more about the world I learn;  all the new things that I see  you'll be looking at along with me: |
| 3.. As I travel through the bad and good,  keep me travelling the way I should;  where I see no way to go  you'll be telling me the way, I know: | 4.. Give me courage when the world is rough,  keep me loving though the world is tough;  leap and sing in all I do,  keep me travelling along with you: |
| 5.. You are older than the world can be,  you are younger than the life in me;  ever old and ever new,  keep me travelling along with you: | *Chorus: And it's from the old I travel to the new;*  *keep me travelling along with you.* |
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**Family Time and Lord’s Prayer**

**Talk 2**

In the Psalm 8 reading, we hear how we are given dominion over the whole world, over all the creatures of land and sea. Well that went well didn’t it. And who is left to clean up the mess that we and previous generations have caused? Our children and grandchildren. It is they who will have to undertake the hard work of cleaning up God’s creation and it is they who will suffer if they don’t. We have driven our polluting cars, we have used the polluting chemicals that destroy the o-zone, we who have increased our planet’s temperature. AND it is our young people who are out there at the moment cleaning up a little bit of the mess. If the Church is to appeal to young people, then we need to be relevant and what is more relevant to young people than the environment. Here at Chapel, we have already done a lot, with our ECO Church activities. As a church we are told that we have been given dominion, by God, over His creation. Let’s make that challenge a fundamental part of our Christian life. Let’s take it further. Show the young people in our area that the Christian Church has taken its responsibilities over the environment seriously. Show our young people that we are sorry for the mess we’ve left them. We are sorry for not being good protectors of God’s world. Let us show our young people that we believe they are important, that we are committed to the world that they will inherit from us.

Sometimes the issues with the environment can seem too massive for people – too big for politicians to fix. But there is good news. We believe in a great God, an omnipotent God. Sometimes the state of the environment seems too much for us. Anything we can do seems too small and futile. But our God is a great God – in His power we can do anything.

**Our fourth hymn is Think of a world without any flowers**

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| 1.. Think of a world without any flowers,  think of a wood without any trees,  think of a sky without any sunshine,  think of the air without any breeze:  we thank you, Lord, for flowers and trees and sunshine;  we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name. | 2.. Think of a world without any people,  think of a street with no-one living there,  think of a town without any houses,  no-one to love and nobody to care:  we thank you, Lord, for families and friendships;  we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name. |
| 3.. Think of a world without any worship,  think of a God without his only Son,  think of a cross without a resurrection  only a grave and not a victory won:  we thank you, Lord, for showing us our Saviour;  we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name. | 4.. Thanks to our Lord for being here among us,  thanks be to him for sharing all we do,  thanks for our church and all the love we find here,  thanks for this place and all its promise true:  we thank you, Lord, for life in all its richness;  we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name. |
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**Let us Say our Prayers of Repentance (sorry prayers)**

Lord God, sometimes we find it so hard to come to you,

to confess our sins to you.

Sometimes our relationships – with you and with each other – aren’t right.

Sometimes the problems that we have created seem too big.

We know our faults, but they seem too great to be forgiven.

It can be all too easy to let other people, or things, keep us away from you.

And sometimes we try and keep others away. Please forgive us,

Lord, and teach us what truly matters to you.

But we know,

God will take us in his arms and bless us like little children.

God loves us and protects us like little children.

When we come to God in a true spirit of repentance,

from the littlest ‘sorry’ of the youngest child,

to the biggest ‘Father forgive’ of those old enough

to know better,

God hears us and welcomes us with open and loving arms.

We are truly blessed.

Amen.

**And a prayer of intercession (please prayers)**

Lord, we pray for all who have decisions to make today,

or who face difficulties or challenges in their lives.

We pray for those who are making decisions on behalf of others,

and those whose decisions affect lives other than their own.

We pray that they may have courage to do what is right,

and the vision to see what is important,

when there are so many other distractions.

We pray that they may all have the wisdom that comes from you –

pure, peace-loving, gentle and merciful.

We pray for your Church, in all her diversity,

that she may seek you above all,

that you may grant her discernment and compassion.

We pray that we may yield good fruit in our lives,

not ‘lording’ it over others or squabbling about what we deserve

but instead considering the needs of others first.

Help us to be seen as a light in the darkness, giving hope to the young people around us.

Help us to be good stewards of your creation, not giving in to despair.

Let us receive as we have been received,

forgive as we have been forgiven,

and love as we have been loved.

For Jesus Christ’s sake.

Amen.

**Our final hymn is What a friend we have in Jesus**

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| 1.. What a Friend we have in Jesus,  all our sins and griefs to bear!  What a privilege to carry,  everything to God in prayer!  Oh, what peace we often forfeit,  Oh, what needless pain we bear-  all because we do not carry  everything to God in prayer! | 2.. Have we trials and temptations?  Is there trouble anywhere?  We should never be discouraged:  take it to the Lord in prayer!  Can we find a friend so faithful,  who will all our sorrows share?  Jesus knows our every weakness;  take it to the Lord in prayer. |
| 3.. Are we weak and heavy laden,  cumbered with a load of care?  Precious Saviour, still our refuge!  Take it to the Lord in prayer.  Do Thy friends despise forsake Thee?  Take it to the Lord in prayer!  In His arms He'll take and shield Thee,  thou wilt find a solace there. | Joseph M Scriven  Ccli 169737  Streaming licence 595811 |

**Closing prayer of blessing**

Loving Lord, as we leave this place,

knowing that we are valued and loved as little children,

help us to know this so deep in our being

that we live it in our words and actions,

and especially in our openness and welcome to others of all ages.

May Jesus’ invitation shine through our lives.

Amen.