**Service of Worship for Homeless Sunday – Sunday 10th October 2021 led by Cameron Baines.**

**PRIOR TO THE SERVICE, IF YOU ARE ABLE, PLEASE LISTEN TO “STREETS OF LONDON” BY RALPH McTELL, AND BE MORE KIND MY FRIEND BY FRANK TURNER**

**LET US PRAY.**

**WE PRAY TODAY FOR ALL WHO ARE HOMELESS, FOR THOSE SLEEPING UNDER BRIDGES, ON PARK BENCHES, IN DOORWAYS OR BUS STATIONS, OUTSIDE HIGH STREET SHOPS AND MANY OTHER INAPPROPRIATE PLACES.**

**FOR THOSE WHO CAN ONLY FIND SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT BUT MUST WANDER IN THE DAYTIME.**

**FOR FAMILIES BROKEN BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO PAY THE RENT.**

**FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO RELATIVES OR FRIENDS WHO CAN TAKE THEM IN.**

**FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO PLACE TO KEEP POSSESSIONS THAT REMIND THEM WHO THEY ARE.**

**FOR THOSE WHO ARE AFRAID AND HELPLESS.**

**FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN LET DOWN BY OUR SOCIAL SAFETY NET.**

**FOR ALL THESE PEOPLE, WE PRAY THAT YOU WILL HELP TO PROVIDE SHELTER, SECURITY AND HOPE.**

**WE PRAY THAT THAT THOSE OF US WITH WARM HOUSES NOT BE LULLED INTO COMPLACENCY AND FORGETFULNESS, THAT WE CLAIM TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR WHILST WE CONSTANTLY WALK BY ON THE OTHER SIDE AND ARE PREY TO DECEPTION.**

**JESUS, HELP US TO SEE YOUR FACE IN THE EYES OF EVERY PERSON EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WHO WE MEET, SO THAT WE MAY BE EMPOWERED THROUGH WORD AND DEED, AND BY YOUR GRACE, TO BRING JUSTICE AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO ARE HOMELESS.**

**AMEN.**

**LET US SING CMP 1359**

**THERE IS AN EVERLASTING KINDNESS**

**VERSE 1**

**THERE IS AN EVERLASTING KINDNESS YOU LAVISHED ON US,**

**WHEN THE RADIANCE OF HEAVEN CAME TO RESCUE THE LOST.**

**YOU CALLED SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD TO LEAVE THEIR DISTRESS,**

**FOR YOUR STREAMS OF FORGIVENESS AND THE SHADE OF YOUR REST.**

**VERSE 2**

**AND WITH COMPASSION FOR THE HURTING YOU REACHED OUT YOUR HAND,**

**AS THE LAME RAN TO MEET YOU AND THE DEAD BREATHED AGAIN.**

**YOU SAW BEHIND THE EYES OF SORROW AND SHARED IN OUR TEARS;**

**HEARD THE SIGH OF THE WEARY, LET THE CHILDREN DRAW NEAR.**

**CHORUS**

**WHAT BOUNDLESS LOVE, WHAT FATHOMLESS GRACE**

 **YOU HAVE SHOWN US, O GOD OF COMPASSION**

**EACH DAY WE LIVE AN OFFERING OF PRAISE**

**AS WE SHOW TO THE WORLD YOUR COMPASSION**

**VERSE 3**

**WE STOOD BENEATH THE CROSS OF CALVARY AND GAZED ON YOUR FACE,**

**AS THE THORNS OF OPPRESSION AND WOUNDS OF DISGRACE;**

**FOR SURELY YOU HAVE BORNE OUR SUFFERING AND CARRIED OUR GRIEF,**

**AS YOU PARDONED THE SCOFFER AND SHOWED GRACE TO THE THIEF.**

**CHORUS**

**VERSE 4**

**HOW BEAUTIFUL THE FEET THAT CARRY THIS GOSPEL OF PEACE**

**TO THE FIELDS OF INJUSTICE AND VALLEYS OF NEED;**

**TO BE A VOICE OF HOPE AND HEALING, TO ANSWER THE CRIES**

**OF THE HUNGRY AND HELPLESS WITH THE MERCY OF CHRIST.**

**CHORUS**

**READINGS**

**Isaiah 25. 1-5**

## Praise for Deliverance from Oppression

**O Lord, you are my God;
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
the palace of aliens is a city no more,
it will never be rebuilt.
Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.
For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
and the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,
the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.**

**Matthew 25:31-40** **The Sheep and the Goats**

# “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

**WE ARE ALWAYS BEING TOLD IN WORSHIP THAT WE SHOULD ALWAYS LISTEN BECAUSE GOD MAY BE SPEAKING TO US, IF YOU DO YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF LEADING WORSHIP.**

**THREE MONTHS AGO AFTER DROPPING OFF CJ AT SCHOOL I WAS DRIVING HOME WITH CLASSIC FM ON THE RADIO, FOR THOSE WHO KNOW ME THIS MAY COME AS A SHOCK AS I AM PROBABLY BETTER KNOWN FOR MY RATHER PHILISTINE CHOICE IN MUSIC, THE PRESENTER SAID “ TODAY IS WORLD HOMELESSNESS DAY” MY MIND IMMEDIATELY SAID “ NO IT ISN’T, IT’S IN OCTOBER. AFTER HE HAD PLAYED THE PIECE OF MUSIC HE JUST CASUALLY SAID “ I GOT THE DATE WRONG FOR HOMELESSNESS DAY BUT IT PROBABLY MEANT SOMETHING TO SOMEBODY”, SO MY IRE WAS LIFTED, AS SOON AS I GOT HOME I CHECKED THE CALENDAR TO FIND THE DATE AND LO AND BEHOLD IT SHOWED THE DAY WAS ON A SUNDAY, A VOICE SAID YOU NEED TO LEAD WORSHIP THAT DAY.**

**I RAN THE IDEA PAST MY WIFE WHO SAID I SHOULD PROBABLY LISTEN TO THE VOICE AND DO AS I AM TOLD. THAT’S A NEW ONE**

**MY MIND THOUGHT WE HAD BETTER PUT THIS VOICE TO THE TEST, I RANG MY ELDER TO SEE IF ANYONE LEADING WORSHIP HAD TO HAVE HAD DONKEYS YEARS OF TRAINING ETC BEFORE BEING ALLOWED. “ NOT THAT I KNOW OF” WAS THE UNHELPFUL REPLY, BETTER CONTACT KEN WHO SORTS OUT THE PREACHING ROTA, WHO IS SO EFFICIENT HE WILL BE BOOKED UP TILL NEXT YEAR AT LEAST, “ NO THAT DAY IS FREE, AND VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME” THANKS FOR THE HELP. SO HERE I AM WITH YOU.**

**HOMELESSNESS.**

**THE TRUE MEANING IS CLASSED AS NOT HAVING A HOME. YOU ARE HOMELESS IF YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO STAY AND ARE LIVING ON THE STREETS, BUT YOU CAN BE HOMELESS EVEN IF YOU HAVE A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD. YOU CAN COUNT AS HOMELESS IF YOU ARE STAYING WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY, IN A HOSTEL, SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION OR B&B.**

## ROUGH SLEEPING -THE NUMBERS

Compared to the general public, people sleeping rough…

* **are almost 17 times more likely to be a victim of violence**
* **die 30 years younger on average**
* **The average life expectancy for men sleeping rough is 47 and 43 for women**

When growing up…

* **2/3 of people who sleep rough experienced violence between parents/carers**
* **Just under 60% had a parent/carer with a drug or alcohol problem**
* **About half have been sexually and/or physically abused**
* **1/3 have been bullied or have been suspended or expelled from school**
* **25% have been taken into the care of a council as a child or young person**
* **A quarter were brought up in a workless household living on welfare benefits**
* **15% reported that they often did not have enough to eat each day**

**When you read the statistical numbers regarding homelessness it is important to recognise that official figures often significantly and conveniently underestimate the number of people sleeping rough. For example, the latest government figures state that around 2,688 people in England are sleeping rough on any given night, but since the lock down began almost 20,000 people who were at risk or living on the streets were moved into emergency accommodation, and by the end of March 2021, there were 95,450 households in temporary accommodation.**

**The song Streets of London was released in 1969,frighteningly things have got worse rather than better since then.**

**A minister once spoke in a sermon about one of his first interactions he had on his doorstep was with a rough sleeper who also happened to be blind, who had knocked on his door asking for assistance. His shoes were falling apart and his trousers were heavily soiled, and he left with a set of fresh clothes, including a pair of trainers.**

**Later on, feeling slightly smug he related this experience to someone else who was heavily involved in several outreach projects to rough sleepers, and it turned out that all may not quite have been what it seemed. He was told that this man was well known around the area, wasn’t actually blind as he had presented himself and, in fact, had received an offer of permanent accommodation, which had failed to stick.**

**The minister finished that conversation feeling really downhearted. Part of him felt taken advantage of — if he had known then what he found out would he have still offered help? And had it even made a difference anyway — given how complex his situation and how unwilling he seemed to take up the opportunities he had been given?**

**How often do we pass people begging in the street asking for money, is our first reaction well they will only spend it on drink or drugs, actually who appointed us as judge,or are we passer byers on the other side as in the parable of the good Samaritan, would we say serves him right should have had more sense coming down here on his own.**

**In the words of the song we sang, God forgave those around him, the scoffers and the thief, the judge and the jury.**

**Is the same true of our attitude as the Church towards those who are in extreme need. We ask ourselves: How can we ensure that our generosity isn’t taken advantage of? And how could our small efforts possibly make a difference?**

**What should our attitude be, and how should we respond to the complex issues surrounding homelessness in our society?**

**A lot of our issues around responding to the needs of others revolve around the concept of ‘worthiness’. How do we determine those who are worthy of our assistance, and those who aren’t?**

**Often this idea is even extended to our understanding of poverty. Especially in recent times, TV series like Benefits Street and other media and social media portrayals of poverty encourage us to separate the poor out into two camps. The deserving and the undeserving poor.**

**In the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew’s gospel, Those who were originally invited on the first two attempts ‘were not worthy’, the King tells his slaves, ‘Go therefore… and invite everyone you find.’**

**Who is worthy to receive an invite? It turns out that those who seem worthy may not be as deserving as we thought. And those who appear unworthy may actually be the best guests of all. When it comes to God’s kingdom, thanks to the work of Jesus, none are to be excluded. All are welcome.**

**In fact, as we dig deeper we discover that Jesus is less concerned about the worthiness of the invitees before they are invited, and more about their response afterwards.**

**We should be careful that we prepare ourselves correctly to respond to God’s invitation. That, in words elsewhere in the scriptures, we clothe ourselves with service, compassion and, most of all, love.**

**So how can we clothe ourselves correctly, in response to the invitation to God’s kingdom? How can we respond to Christ’s call to love and serve those who are poor, those who are marginalised, those who find themselves homeless?**

**Should the church, and I use the term globally, sit on it’s rainy day reserves or act now on God’s purpose? If we claim to love our neighbour while the hungry beg for food, are we prey to self deception?**

**This calling is more important than ever in the light of the last nineteen months. What will be the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on those who are homeless? What new support will the government provide, now the initial crisis funding provided to support rough sleepers through Covid-19 has been expended?**

**And as we approach winter, how can we support Night Shelters across the country, to meet the additional requirements they face. How will rough sleepers be enabled to access additional support with mental health issues or addiction?**

**The church has to become proactive, not stay reactive, we are blessed with such a forgiving love from our Lord, in the words of the Be more kind song, we know who our lighthouse is when we are lost and even when we are not, however are we beacon ray soaker uppers, do we act as magnifying glasses to carry on spreading those rays into our community or keep them to ourselves.**

**I don’t know if it irritates everyone as much as me when I drive past our church and the blinds are pulled down, no matter what wonderful work our gardening team does round the building I feel the church looks shut.**

**Since March 2020, we, as a family, have been hosting young people who, for whatever reason have become homeless, who would have thought that God would have provided an isolation unit, our camper van, on our drive for ones who had tested positive, his power is constantly there in our lives.**

**Some have only been for a couple of nights others for several months, all, bar none, have been seeking answers of some kind, one knew the bible nearly word perfect but hadn’t a clue what faith was or what God’s love for him, personally, meant, it always seems ironic to me that we have the answer to everyone’s need but keep it to ourselves, it seems easier to find solace paying to sit under a paper pyramid, have a spa day or join meditation classes, if you read neighbourhood Norden than go to any Christian meeting and find the true answer.**

**Due to keeping the gloriousness of our redeemer under wraps we have created a rather worrying impression.**

**When talking about the ‘church‘ to these young people and what they thought about it, they were pretty much unanimous in their answer.**

**The church is a club, run by old folk for the benefit of old folk, with no place there for us, a damming condemnation if ever there was one.**

**A few years ago at Bamford our service leader, who shall remain anonymous, Margaret, was speaking about Christians being persecuted across the world and said we would never be persecuted here as we didn’t do anything to worry people, lets break those shackles, lets stop being the butt of television comedians jokes, we will all campaign against building houses on green belt land, but when was the last time we campaigned to build affordable housing, do we ever think about using investments to help the funding of such building projects, or are we more concerned about keeping our club going.**

**After a long discussion with one of our guests, they asked me why we did what we are doing, and instead of my usual sort of fudged answer and lets move on quickly, I said, “because God wants us to”, and I felt like a load had been lifted from my shoulders.**

**We must learn and listen, we have no idea at all about the hardship a homeless person faces. Often homelessness means identity less. No permanent address, no access to bank account, no bank account no access to work or universal credit, no money no phone no broadband to apply for anything, no access to healthcare, life is a constant downward spiral, no wonder drink and drugs are a way out.**

**LET US SING CMP 1378**

**YOU HOLD THE BROKEN HEARTED**

You hold the broken-hearted
You stand beside the weak
You go to those in darkness
And so must we

Your heart is for the outcast
For those we call the least
You lift the broken spirit
And so must we

God of hope
God of futures
You can take a broken heart and make it sing
God of life
New tomorrows
You can shine the light that changes everything

You go to those forgotten
The faces we don't see
You give Your life to save them
And so must we

God of hope
God of futures
You can take a broken heart and make it sing
God of life
New tomorrows
You can shine the light that changes everything

 God who speaks, opens graves
With one word our God saves!(x2)

God of hope
God of futures
You can take a broken heart and make it sing
God of life
New tomorrows
You can shine the light that changes everything

**We can pray. And we can use our voices to speak out, we can use God’s grace to help lift them up, we can show caring and compassion, annoy your local council or MP on their behalf, lets make ourselves useful and spread the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**It is so easy to go online to learn about some of the difficulties homeless people face, check out the charities and find ways to help, however large or small, there are so many charities helping, doing the work that our community needs to do, as people in power do not see it as a priority, seeking people to act as mentors, ring people on the behalf of others, provide a listening ear, campaign for them.**

**If we work on the assumption that what is accepted really is true, then there is little hope for advance. Those were the words of Orville Wright when asked why he was so driven to achieve the dream of taking to skies in powered flight.**

**To move forward into something new, like Orville Wright, it needs more than just courage, it takes a healthy dollop of imagination, to be able to see beyond the way things are to the way they could be, we must believe that the way things are does not mean it is the way things have to be.**

**Those who have courage, and more importantly, imagination, can look beyond the status quo to a brighter better future, easy to say, more difficult to put into practice.**

**Do we believe in the inevitability of of homelessness, no matter how many donations, how many soup kitchens, how many nights volunteering at night shelters there will always be people sleeping rough in Britain. This belief can shape our response to the injustice of homelessness.**

**To fully eradicate it, we have to have the courage and imagination and total belief this can be done, if we don’t have that belief we become less proactive and more reactive which is a form of making it a little easier for people to live on the streets rather than getting rid of it altogether.**

**The EVERYONE IN strategy started in March 2020, by November 2020 over 30,000 had been brought in off the streets or out of unsuitable accommodation.**

**EVERYONE IN signalled a change in mentality, a belief that it was not only desirable but actually achievable to offer everyone living on the streets a safe place to live, if we look to get back to where we were this will be undone.**

**God calls us to be prophetic, to be brave, to evangelise in deed as well as word, to upset the status quo not just accept it.**

**As Christians we need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, not accept the way things are but to see the way things can be, using his guidance we have to recognise the way to move from the way things were to the way they should be, Jesus paid the ultimate cost for this vision, but rose again to dwell as the Holy Spirit in his followers, to use us to fulfil his vision.**

**So I pray that we keep those who are so often last and least at the forefront of our minds in the coming months. Let us not look back after Covid and pray for a return to the way things were but look forward to what it may be.**

**LET US PRAY**

**Today we offer our thanksgiving and gratitude to the giver of all good and perfect gifts. For the kindness of authorities in moving thousands of people experiencing homelessness off the streets during the Covid pandemic and they have the vision to keep up this good work.**

**For the army of staff and volunteers from NHS to night shelter volunteers who helped everyone. For the volunteers who continue to support those in hotels, those newly in accommodation and those who have unfortunately returned to the streets.**

**For the partnerships forged between local authorities, voluntary and charitable organisations, faith and local communities working together to end people’s homelessness. For the hands of friendship that have been extended to us and the grace we have received.**

**For your continual provision in our lives, may we be generous to those in need. For your mercies that are new at dawn and sustain us through the day, echoing through the night. For the gift of your son and his blood, poured out. Amen**

**I would like us to sing the last part of this prayer to the tune of Away in a manger.**

**Unfortunately, the old saying that yesterdays news is today’s chip paper, is still very true if not in a literal sense, when I was writing today’s service, to meet the editorial and production deadlines, Afghanistan was on the front page of every paper and on every news bulletin, it now seems long gone, yes we reacted but how many refugees ended up on our shores and are now living in poverty or soon on the streets, after we have sung it Addie is going to have a few words about the work of RADAR.**

**LET US SING THE PRAYER**

**We pray for Afghanistans people today,**

**for those who are fleeing who know they can’t stay,**

**for those who face terror by day and by night,**

**for those who can’t leave and whose dreams can’t take flight**

**We pray for the people who fear what’s in store,**

**for dreamers and poets who grieve a closed door,**

**for those who are hiding so no one will see,**

**the people they are or who they hope to be.**

**We pray for girls facing a world they don’t know,**

**who still long to read and to learn and to grow.**

**We pray for young women who live with the fear**

**their bodies their voices, may soon disappear.**

**We pray for young children whose first lullabies**

**were bombs and explosions and wounded ones’ cries,**

**and for those who served there, who see how it ends,**

**who ponder their service, who grieve for lost friends.**

**We weep for the places where war leads to war.**

**We pray for your hand there to heal and restore!**

**Bless all who seek justice and peace as your way.**

**We pray for Afghanistan’s people to day.**

**ADDIE**

**Our closing worship song is at least one you know. Let us sing**

**CMP 806 BEAUTY FOR BROKENESS
Verse 1**

**Beauty for brokenness**

**Hope for despair**

**Lord, in the suffering**

**This is our prayer**

**Bread for the children**

**Justice, joy, peace**

**Sunrise to sunset**

**Your kingdom increase!**

**Verse 2**

**Shelter for fragile lives**

**Cures for their ills**

**Work for the craftsman**

**Trade for their skills**

**Land for the dispossessed**

**Rights for the weak**

**Voices to plead the cause**

**Of those who can't speak**

**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**

**Verse 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**

**verse 4**

**Rest for the ravaged earth**

**Oceans and streams**

**Plundered and poisoned**

**Our future, our dreams**

**Lord, end our madness**

**Carelessness, greed**

**Make us content with**

**The things that we need**

**Chorus**

**Verse 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**

**WE CLOSE WITH A HOMELESS LORDS PRAYER**

**OUR FATHER**

**Draw those who feel abandoned, orphaned, and alone into the embrace of your welcoming love. Embolden us to live as brothers and sisters with all people, especially those among whom we may feel threatened and out of control.**

**GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD**

**Provide through us the resources and new structures, so that no one seeks their daily bread in garbage bins, and no one goes to sleep hungry.**

**FORGIVE OUR TRESPASSES**

**Liberate us from the paralysis of being overwhelmed by needs. Pour your mercy into all hearts so that we may experience your healing and transforming love.**

**LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION**

**May your love bar the way to indifference and self-preoccupation. May your truth overcome prejudice and racism. May your mercy bring order to emotional and mental confusion. May your power bring deliverance from addictions. May your Spirit lead us into your light.**

**DELIVER US FROM EVIL**

**Protect us from walling ourselves off from others through fear and greed. Protect those on the street from being attacked tonight and any night.**

**FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY**

**Bless this day all who struggle to survive**

**WE NAME BEFORE YOU THOSE WE KNOW WHO STRUGGLE TODAY**

**Bless this day all who have dedicated their lives to bring hope to those who feel marginalized.**

**WE NAME BEFORE YOU THOSE PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WE KNOW WHO ARE BEARERS OF HOPE.**

**Bless this day all people, pouring into us your kindness and hope. Give us the courage this day to live the truth we know. Give us the commitment so to live that all people flourish in your great love.**

**Now and forever**

**Amen.**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**Ccli 169737 Streaming Licence 595811**