

# worship notes



from the United Reformed Church

The Seventh Sunday after  
Pentecost  
24<sup>th</sup> July 2022  
The Rev'd Andy Braunston

## Opening Music

Try and find a recording of *The Touching Place* by John Bell and Graham Moule and play as a starter to worship. There are lots of recordings online and it's ok to use these in physical worship as the Performing Rights Society give a waiver for Divine Worship.

## Call to Worship

Come, let us ring out our joy to the Eternal One; **hail the rock who saves us**. Let us come into God's presence, giving thanks; **let us hail the rock of our salvation with a song of praise**. A mighty God is the Most High, a great king above all gods. In God's hands are the depths of the earth; **the heights of the mountains belong to God**. To God belongs the sea, made before time began; **to God belongs the dry land shaped by God's own mighty hands**. O come; let us bow and bend low. **Let us kneel before the God who made us**, for the Most High is our God and we the people of God's pasture, **the flock that is led by God's hand**.

*From the Grail version of Psalm 95*

## Prayers of Approach, Confession and Forgiveness

O Most High, source of all truth,  
we come to worship, learn, and reflect.

O Most High, love embodied in radical action,  
You lifted up the lowly,  
showed concern to the marginalised,  
and dignified the shamed,  
we come to be changed that we may be agents of change.

O Most High, energy of all creation,  
You inspire and lead us to see what is really going on,  
to uncover that which has been hidden,  
to bring to light to those things which are done in the dark,  
we come to be empowered that we may bring Your healing.

O Most High,  
You are faithful and we are unfaithful;  
You expose the truth, yet we prepare to turn away from it;  
You embody dignity and worth, yet we prefer sin and shame;  
You free and heal the victims, yet we prefer to blame them;  
You invite us to be disturbed, yet we prefer the comfort of ignorance.

We are sorry,  
give us the grace to turn our lives around,  
and the time to bring about real change. Amen.

Here is good news:  
Like a father God runs to welcome home the estranged,  
like a mother God gathers us into a tender loving embrace,  
like a rock God is trustworthy and secure.  
Know that God forgives you; have the strength to forgive yourselves. Amen!

## A Prayer of Illumination

Open your Word to us, O God,  
as we listen to Scripture and introduction,  
proclamation and challenge,  
words - ancient and modern,  
that in our hearing and thinking,  
our reflecting and resolving,  
we may see how to change our world. Amen.

## Readings

*Hosea 1:2-10*

## Sermon Notes

Today's reading is striking, famous and uncomfortable; Hosea – we are told - is called to marry Gomer who, many translators insist, was a prostitute. The disastrous marriage between Hosea and Gomer parallels the unfaithfulness of Israel in its relationship to God.

The problem is that translation is an inexact science and the Hebrew word for prostitute, *zonah*, is not used of her. Neither is she called a *kadesha* – a holy one whom the male prophets saw as sex workers in pagan temples. Some think, like the translators of the *Douai Rhiems* and *New International Version*, that the writer of Hosea saw Gomer as a licentious woman, an adulterous partner.

In many ways an unfaithful wife was more of a threat to an ordered society than a sex worker – it was men, after all, who used prostitutes. Women, on the other hand, were to allow no one into their beds except their husbands. Then, as now, poor behaviour

which might be tolerated in men was not accepted in women. Women who were, through abandonment and poverty, forced into sex work, then and now, are stigmatised and condemned but the men who buy their sexual services aren't. Women who tried to leave loveless arranged marriages were seen as out of control and challenging the social order. If Gomer was a woman who sought love and fulfilment outside her marriage she would have been portrayed as a prostitute.

The image of Israel as God's unfaithful wife is superimposed onto this difficult marriage but leaves us with many questions. Maybe these are a matter of perspective. Perhaps we can read Hosea and see Gomer's infidelity as a metaphor for our infidelity and Hosea's fidelity as a model of God's own fidelity. However, Chapter 2 has God punishing Israel for her sins – in much the same way that an abusive husband would treat his wife- Israel is denied money, food and protection. She is stripped naked. In Chapter 3 Hosea provides for Gomer with money, food, clothing and means but, whilst the text doesn't say he treated her as God was supposed to have treated Israel in Chapter 2 it's a possibility. The silence in the text reflects the silence around domestic violence.

Is this a text we take as a model for the divine/human relationship or is it a model for seeing how men often treat women? Women's Aid say the police take 100 calls an hour reporting domestic violence. In the year up to March 2020 1.6 million women reported domestic abuse. What might that mean? Our churches have women who are being abused. Our churches host groups which include women who are being abused. Might we put, at the very least, Women's Aid posters up in the loo cubicles - a place women can be alone.

This is a passage that disturbs us; as such it needs to be treated with care but not ignored.

## An Affirmation of Faith

What is your only comfort  
in life or in death?  
That I belong body and soul  
to the Lord who gives me breath,  
to the Lord who gives me breath.

2. He has fully paid for my sins  
with his own precious blood.  
He has set me free from the tyranny  
of the ruler of this world,  
of the ruler of this world.

*Oh I am not my own,  
I am bound to Christ alone.  
My only comfort in this life*

*is belonging to the Lord,  
is belonging to the Lord.*

3. I believe in the resurrection  
and the promise that was made,  
that my body & soul will be made whole  
on the Lord's Anointed Day,  
on the Lord's Anointed Day.

4. No eye has fully seen,  
no ear has fully heard,  
no human heart can imagine  
the world that is to come,  
the world that is to come.

This rather haunting song is based on some verses of the Heidelberg Confession of Faith by Joe Deegan of Reformed Youth Ministries in America. He graciously allows it to be used. You can hear it here – you might want to play it and get people to sing along or you might wish to get a musician to teach it to your congregation.

<https://tinyurl.com/my-only-hope>

Again the Performing Rights Society give a waiver to play recorded music in worship – on site. Online worship needs various licences!

## Prayers of Intercession

Eternal One,  
we bring before you the praises and pains  
of our Church,  
of our world and  
of our lives,  
knowing you hear our prayers  
and enable us to do Your will.

We pray for the Church around the world,  
sustain her in hard places of persecution,  
nurture her in places of growth and vitality,  
comfort her in places of indifference,  
that, in the end, despite suffering and pain  
She may rise triumphant in Your glory. (pause)

We pray for our world,  
thanking You for its beauty, diversity, and vitality,  
we acknowledge our part in the majesty of creation,  
yet realise the ways in which we pollute and harm our world.  
Bless with Your love and knowledge,  
those who work to change our world for the better,  
those who teach us to be responsible sharers of this planet,  
those who seek to mitigate the worst effects of climate change, and  
those who urge us to change our ways before it's too late. (pause)

We pray for those we know who are in any form of pain,  
women abused by men,  
children going to bed hungry,  
those worrying about how to heat their homes,  
those seeking to work for peace in a world plagued by war,  
those known to us who are ill in mind, body, and spirit (pause)

Help us to know and do Your will, O God,  
inspire us to be Your people,  
both proclaiming and living Your Kingdom until it comes,  
praying, with Jesus, Our Father...

## Offertory Prayers

Giving is a hallmark of our faith – the theologians of liberation reminded us that living the right way is as important as believing the right things. One of the most important reflections of how we live is how we use our financial resources. What we give to reflects our values; the charities and causes we support reflect our deepest desires for how the world should be – whether that’s preserving historic buildings and landscape or working to alleviate suffering; whether it’s supporting the lifeboats or our veterans, giving to support the work of a campaign or a political party – our finances tell our story. In worship we are reminded to give as God gave. As part of our faith we realise that not all we are given is really ours, that God has the first call on our resources and so, now, in worship we give thanks.

We give thanks, O God,  
for all You’ve given us,  
for the loving kindness we experience  
through love and fellowship,  
through word and song,  
through bread and wine,  
through movement and silence,  
and so we give back to you something of what You’ve given us,  
bless it and enable us to use it wisely,  
to your glory which is found, always,  
in the poor and marginalised. Amen.

## A Communion Liturgy

The Lord be with you; **and also with you!**

Lift up your hearts: **we lift them up to the Lord!**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God: **It is right to give our thanks and praise!**

O Most High we give You our thanks and praise,  
for before the ages You created our world and all that is therein,  
in the dawn of time You created women and men to reflect your glory,  
to be integral to Your created order.  
In due time You called a people to be Your own,  
You rescued them from slavery and led them dry shod through the sea,  
in the wilderness You led them by fire and cloud,  
fed and gave them drink,

nurtured them through precious Law,  
and taught them to honour Your ways of justice.  
In the Promised Land You raised up judges to protect Your People,  
You gave them kings when they asked and,  
through the prophets, taught them to hope for salvation.  
You sustained them in the bitterness of exile,  
and reformed Your people in new found freedom.  
In the fullness of time You raised up Jesus from them.

Jesus proclaimed:

good news to the poor,  
release to the captives,  
recovery of sight to the blind,  
freedom for the oppressed,  
and the year of God's favour.

yet he was

ridiculed and doubted,  
tried and tortured,  
mocked and killed,  
and placed in a borrowed tomb.

But You, O Most High, raised him from the dead,  
breaking the power of injustice and sin,  
and seated Him in glory at your side.

And so, with all the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven,  
we praise Your holy name as we sing:

**Holy, holy, holy the Lord! God of endless power and might.  
The earth, the heavens are full of your love, sing hosanna! Glory to God.**

**Blest is He, the One who is sent, in the name of God the Most High,  
O holy, holy, holy our Lord, sing hosanna! Glory to God.**

*(Sanctus by URC Minister the Rev'd Michael Forster  
and set to the folk tune Scarborough Fair)*

On the night before he died,  
Jesus shared in the simplicity of a meal with his friends,  
taking the common things of bread and wine,  
he prayed the ancient blessings,  
broke the bread, gave it to His friends saying:

take this all of you and eat it,  
this is my body which is broken for you.

After the meal Jesus took the wine, gave thanks for it and gave it to his friends saying:

take this all of you and drink from it,  
this is the cup of my blood,  
the blood of the new and everlasting covenant,  
it will be shed for you and for all,  
so that sins may be forgiven.  
Do this in memory of me.

Let us proclaim the central mystery of our faith:

**Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again**

Come, O Holy Spirit and transform these simple gifts of bread and wine,  
that as we eat and drink we are lifted into your presence.

Come, O Holy Spirit, and transform us,  
that as Your people we will see the world as it really is, and seek to change it.

Come, O Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the Earth.

These are God's gifts for God's people; come and join the feast!

**O Lamb of God, you take away our sins;  
Have mercy, Lamb of God, have mercy.**

**O Lamb of God, You take away our sins;  
Have mercy, Lamb of God, have mercy.**

**O Lamb of God, you take away our sins;  
have mercy, Lamb of God, and grant us peace.**

*Lamb of God (traditional liturgical words)  
arranged by John Ballentine for the tune Plaisir D'Amour*

## Post Communion Prayer

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless God's holy name!  
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all God's benefits.

Loving God,  
we thank you that you have fed us in this sacrament,  
united us with Christ,

and given us a foretaste  
of the heavenly banquet in your eternal realm.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work to your praise and glory,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Post communion prayer from the Presbyterian Church of the USA*

## Blessing

May the One who  
created women and men in the divine image,  
taught the people to respect the dignity of all creation,  
and drove the People to seek justice,  
create you anew that you may recognise your worth,  
teach you anew that you may respect the dignity of all  
and drive you to seek justice.

And may the blessing of Almighty God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you all now and always, Amen.

## Closing Music

Try and find the, very short - and striking - song by Tracy Chapman: *Behind the Wall*.  
The Performing Rights Society give a waiver for recorded music in onsite worship –  
online worship needs licences.

## Hymn Suggestions

Hymn	RS	StF	CH4	MP
Let Us Build A House		409	198	
Here In This Place			623	
O Jesus I have promised	509	563ii	644	501
Sent By the Lord Am I		239	250	
For Your Generous Providing			655	
I Come With Joy	447	588	656	
Let All Mortal Flesh	454	591	666	
Forth in the Peace of Christ I Go <i>(Double the verses and sing to Jerusalem if you fancy a change)</i>	602		646	
Come All You Vagabonds	Sheet music available here <a href="https://www.scoreexchange.com/scores/130542.html">https://www.scoreexchange.com/scores/130542.html</a>			
<i>Psalm 85 4 – 13</i>	Words: <a href="https://freechurch.org/praise-resources/">https://freechurch.org/praise-resources/</a> Tune Ebenezer (RS 360) or			



	Before the Throne of God (CH4 466)
<i>My Only Comfort</i>	Written by Joe Deegan and recorded here <a href="https://tinyurl.com/my-only-hope">https://tinyurl.com/my-only-hope</a>
Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord	Text above to the tune Scarborough Fair found in <i>Tunes We Know</i> published by Kevin Mayhew Ltd
O Lamb of God	Traditional liturgical words set to the tune Plaisir D'Amour – in <i>Tunes We Know</i> as above
Bless the Lord O My Soul (10,000 Reasons)	Sheet music available here <a href="https://tinyurl.com/ten-thousand-reasons">https://tinyurl.com/ten-thousand-reasons</a>
<p><i>Key:</i>  <i>RS = Rejoice and Sing, StF = Singing the Faith, CH4 = Church Hymnary 4, MP = Mission Praise</i></p>	

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