

worship notes

from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 25th October
Proper 25 | Ordinary 30
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Call to Worship

Out of our lives and into your presence we come.

Lord God, into your dwelling place we come.

We come just as we are to worship you today.

We will give thanks to the Lord with our whole hearts.

We come to grow in faith and learn of your wonderful deeds.

We will be glad and exult in you.

Let us sing praise to the Lord Most High.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of love, you are our foundation and source.

Knowing that your great love is given freely

and in abundance for all,

wherever we have come from,

and whoever we are,

we cannot help but be in awe.

We give thanks this day for the commandment, to love and to be loved.

Guide us in our journey to truly live as you have commanded,

teach us to love you,

to love our neighbour,

and to love ourselves.

It is the greatest of your commands,

and though we strive to live each day attempting to fulfil it, all too often we fail.

Forgive us for being fickle,

or for those moments when we are impatient and unkind.

In a world of conflicting allegiances and distractions,

hating can be easier than caring,

blaming others easier than taking responsibility for our own actions.

In a world where money feels like the one thing

that everyone seeks to hoard and multiply,
may we go against the grain
and give freely to help those in need.
Instead of seeking the path of least resistance,
teach us to know a love that is patient and kind;
and by giving may we strive for justice and equality for all.
Parent God, lead your children
towards a world that shuns the easiness of discrimination and prejudice
for the brilliance of a world and a life lived
in the warmth of true love,
given freely, for all and to all.

In the name of Christ who taught us to pray: Our Father...

All Age Activities

Option 1

Object lesson. Paper chain People.

This works best if you can multitask and ask the questions while folding and cutting, then reveal the paper chain as you make your point.

Ask who their next neighbours are. Start with the closest relational circle and build outwards - Who has the room next to theirs? House next to theirs? House next to the house next to theirs? Do they get on with the neighbours? Do they do nice things for their neighbour? What about their friends? Teachers? People they know? Take a piece of paper and keep it oriented to landscape. Then fold from left to right in half three times. Take a pair of scissors and cut out the outline of half a person taking care to leave a torso. The left side of the paper is where all the magic happens! Open out to reveal your 4 paper people just as you get to your point. This could be given in advance for anyone leading Junior Church to help engage with younger folks as an activity. Can be given in advance for anyone leading Junior Church to help engage with younger folks as an activity. [There is an easy to use free printable link here](#) or for other folding and cutting options try [WikiHow here](#).

Option 2

Get 2 people to touch or hold hands, ask them to hold hands or touch 2 other people. Repeat until the entire congregation is connected. Moving is encouraged! The point is simple. God says our neighbours are everyone and we should treat them the same way that we like to be treated.

Readings

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 | St Matthew 22:34-46

Sermon Notes

We cannot separate our love of God and our love for one another. The command to love is a way to help us strive to be more Godlike in our approach to life. It may not be fully sustainable but it does not mean we should not try.

Leviticus

The Levitical rules were aimed at helping to keep order and help God's people remain apart from the cultures and people around them, while most of the rules were centred around the purity of the priests, some of them were for the people to follow as a community. Following God's commands helped to keep the people holy - holiness is next to Godliness... Verses 15-18 cover themes of social justice: Equality, honesty, empathy, accountability and mercy are all seen as character traits that emulate God's love. Verse 15 states that people should not be given special treatment due to their social standing or lack thereof. It connects with many social issues today when someone with enough money seems to think the rules should not apply to them, or when someone pleads poverty as a reason to excuse behaviour. Verse 16 states that one should not go around spreading gossip or lies which could destroy someone's reputation, if your neighbour is in trouble you should stand up for them. Verse 17 advises mediation. When you perceive someone as having wronged you, have an honest conversation with them, keeping it in is just as bad for you as whatever they may have done. Verse 18 tells the people not to bear grudges, or plot or take revenge on someone, instead to love them as much as most people love themselves.

St Matthew 22:34-46

Jesus is being tested. By now his reputation far precedes him and the powers that be do not like being told that they clearly have not understood the Scriptures and the law. The lawyer does not ask Jesus the question about the greatest commandment out of anything other than a desire to trap him into saying something they can use against him, yet Jesus not only answers him, but he also uses the Scriptures and the Law to do it. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 and uses them to show that not only is knowing the law important, but knowing that God created these laws out of love and not control is essential in our understanding. Once Jesus has answered their question he then turns the tables by asking them a question which they are unable to answer and thus silencing any future questions by their own inability to do what he had done.

Offering & Dedication

Holy One, we come before you
offering you all that we are and all that we have.
We offer you what we can,
knowing that they are given in response to the gifts of love already received from you.
We offer our whole lives to you for the building of your Realm
of love and justice throughout the earth.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Intercessory Prayers

Ever loving God, mother and father of all.
Creator and sustainer of everything that we perceive,
we come together today in praise and joy
to give thanks for your love and to rejoice in the gifts you have given us.

God of all kindness,
through Christ you offer us a meaningful connection to you.
In gathering in person or online at church
we also find a meaningful connection to one another.
And so we come before you in this moment,
thanking you for the chance to connect with you and with one another today.
We are here, seeking to know your support,
to feel your presence in our lives
so that we may go and be a source of goodness and justice
in a world in which we so often see cruelty and injustice.

God of all people,
we pray for nothing short of peace in our world.
A huge undertaking when we see the destruction
of war, greed, and corruption all around us.
We seek a breaking down of the barriers
of fear, suspicion, and hatred that separate us from one another.
Heal this human family of our division –
in particular we pray for all trans and/or non-binary folks,
and anyone who stands out in this society
that so often excludes anyone who does not fit in
or differs from them in some way.

We pray for anyone suffering mentally or physically.
The refugees and the homeless who are among us

and yet so often treated as invisible,
pushed out of sight and out of mind.
There are so many people, going through so much
that we could bring so many names before you today:
so send your Spirit, that they may guide us, bless us,
surround us all with your love, support us with your strength.
Console us with your comfort,
and give us hope and courage beyond ourselves.

God of all Creation,
unite us in pursuit of a world where kindness and co-operation are normal
and diversity is not just tolerated but celebrated.
Let us use what we have to strive to look after this world,
to undo the damage that has and is being done
to the natural wonder that is all around us,
to make this world a better place in any small way we can.

Let us work towards a better future,
one where we live in mutual love and understanding of our neighbours.
We pray for those in our community who are not here with us,
and ask for your blessings to be upon them,
may we not forget those who cannot be here with us today.

As we each chart our own path through life,
seeking to do good - at times succeeding and at times failing -
may each of us find strength in your love to live well
and show the radical love offered in, and commanded by, your Son
today and every day. Amen.

Blessing

As we close our time together and return to our daily rhythms.
Let us find ways of loving God with our hearts, our minds and our souls.
Knowing that first we are loved by God, totally and completely.
Let us pay love forward to all that we meet.
Go now, with the love of the Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit
sustaining you today, tomorrow and always.
Amen.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
<i>General</i>				
Father, we love you	30		6	142
Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty	34	111	11	237
The Lord is King! Lift up your voice	76	129		656
Christ from whom all blessings flow	561		676	
Thy hand, O God, has guided	567			705
Beloved, let us love: for love is of God	610			
<i>Leviticus</i>				
When I needed a Neighbour		544	256	
Judge Eternal, Throned in Splendour	626	264		395
For the Fruits of His Creation				153
Help Us Accept Each Other	646			
Beauty for Brokenness		259	693	806
Kyrie Elieson (Townend and Getty)				1321
<i>Matthew</i>				
Take My Life and Let It Be	371	502	566	624
Jesu Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love	648		249	
Come Now Is The Time To Worship		196	24	1040
When I Needed a Neighbour		544	256	
Lord of creation, to you be all praise!	532	500	449	440

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*