

The Bridgwater Drive Church, 12 Sept. 2021. Written service circulated to all

Welcome to worship from The Bridgwater Drive Church. Today will be a Communion service here at Bridgwater. If you are a member of Christ Church watching at home and wish to celebrate the Lord's Supper, you may, however the Christ Church monthly communion will be celebrated next week.

Call to worship (inspired by Psalm 19)

Incline your hearts to the wisdom of God;

seek integrity and understanding.

The testimonies of God are wonderful;

God's law gives light to all who hear it.

If you accept God's words and store up the Holy One's commands within you,

if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,

If you look for it as for silver

and search for it as for hidden treasure,

Then you will find the knowledge of God,

for the Lord gives wisdom

and from God's mouth comes truth and understanding.

God holds victory in store for the upright

and is a shield to those whose walk is blameless.

Hymn Sing for God's Glory Tune – MP 564 (Lobe den Herren)

1) Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation,

Racing across the sky, trailing bright clouds of elation;

Sun of delight succeeds the velvet of night,

Warming the earth's exultation

2) Sing for God's power that shatters the chains that would bind us,

Searing the darkness of fear and despair that could blind us;

Touching our shame with love that will not lay blame,

Reaching out gently to find us.

3) Sing for God's justice disturbing each easy illusion,

Tearing down tyrants and putting our pride to confusion;

Lifeflood of right, resisting evil and slight,

Offering freedom's transfusion.

4) Sing for God's saints who have travelled faith's journey before us,

Who in our weariness give us their hope to restore us;

In them we see the new creation to be,

Spirit of love made flesh for us.

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Opening Prayer from the URC Prayer Handbook p57

Prayer of Confession (inspired by James 3)

O God, we live our lives as best we can -

dealing with difficult relationships and situations,

putting failures and disappointments behind us,

and moving into each new day with as much energy,

goodwill, and optimism as we can muster.

But here, right now, we seldom have the right answers,

we seldom seek your higher wisdom in our lives, we just move ahead.

Forgive us for not asking for your insight.

Fill us with your wisdom, that we may live lives of goodness and peace. Amen.

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Words of Assurance (inspired by James 3)

When we come before God in humility and honesty,
God draws near to us with forgiveness and renewed blessing.
Thanks be to God!

~ Adapted from *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009*, © 2008 Abingdon Press.

Offertory

You are reminded to send in your gifts for the work of the church.
Holy One, receive our gifts by your grace.
Multiply and use them through the power of the Holy Spirit
to accomplish Christ's work of love in the world. **Amen.**

**Bible readings: Proverbs 1:20-33
James 3:1-12**

'How long will scoffers delight in scoffing and fools hate knowledge?'

How long indeed Lord?! We seem to hear on an almost daily basis, from one source or another, about demonstrations by anti-vaxxers and those who scoff at the scientists, while those now in hospital or dying from Covid-19 are almost all unvaccinated. And you've heard enough from me lately about climate change, so I won't dwell on climate change deniers, but that is another good example of people ignoring not only the evidence from science, but what is plainly before their own eyes and bodies. The heat of this past Tuesday and Wednesday is just one example, which should speak clearly for itself...

While our first passage highlights the disasters that lie await in not listening properly and not respecting and paying attention to God. Our second reading from the Letter of James, highlights the dangers of speaking without thinking, the dangers exaggerated in our modern world of fast communication – email, texts and Whatsapp groups, not to mention social media and the storms of abuse that rage on platforms like Twitter, mainly because people do not think of the consequences of their words before firing off an email or a Tweet, or sharing something someone else has posted, and because of the invisibility these forms of communication provide. Even if people know the name of the writer, you are one step removed. It is much harder to be rude to someone's face, or better said – it is much easier to be rude, unkind or unthinking when the person you are 'talking' to is not in front of you, looking you in the face, but off in the distant ether of the internet. In many ways we are more connected than ever, but we have also lost that connectedness of a close community – people who saw each other every day – chatted over the garden fence, or to the milkman, the postman, the local green-grocer. I doubt many of us have conversations with the check-out staff in supermarkets. And many of us order online or check-out ourselves, without a word to anyone. We can now get most of our needs met without speaking to another human being or even leaving our own houses.

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We all make mistakes in communication, whatever form it takes, even if it is in person. It is impossible to think about every word that you say before it comes out of your mouth – you would never say anything – perhaps that would be better, though people can also be hurt by silence, or feeling that they are ignored. Even Jesus did it – we heard last week how he essentially racially abused the Syrophenician woman. If even Jesus can't be careful with his words, what hope for us? But have you ever noticed how the wiser people in our society, often, but not always, religious leaders, seem to pause before they speak? How they rarely give definitive answers to questions – they do not tell the questioner what to do, but ask questions back in an effort to help the person come to their own conclusions. And how this differs so vastly from most politicians, for example, who find it impossible to answer questions; who make pronouncements, often with little knowledge of the topic they are talking about, and often seem to have trouble with telling the truth. How it differs from the people who trade insults on social media, how it differs from the people who hit send on the email before reading it properly?

James tells us, in this and other sections of his letter, that the tongue is a dangerous weapon. And like most weapons, and tools, it can be used for good or for evil. 'The tongue is a fire.' It can prophesy and it can set a whole forest ablaze. With it we can praise God, and in the same breath 'curse those who are made in the likeness of God', our brothers and sisters. James says this ought not be so, but he stills talks of how difficult it is to tame our tongues, to think before speaking. He doesn't seem to have much hope that anyone will ever be holy enough to tame their tongue. Nevertheless, it seems he is passionately exhorting his community to at least try. My father used to often say, 'if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all' and it is a good maxim to live by. We will all fall short, we all make mistakes, but how much wiser and more Christlike might we all be if we were to listen more and talk less?

Now, in the hope that I might have listened to my own sermon, I'm going to stop talking and read part of a poem by the Church of England priest Malcolm Guite, who is someone who chooses his words very carefully. After which we will listen to a version of the hymn 'Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders' © Christopher Martin Idle.

What if, by Malcolm Guite

What if every word we say
Never ends or fades away,
Gathers volume, gathers way,
Drums and dins us with dismay,
Surges on some dreadful day
When we cannot get away
Whelms us till we drown?

What if not a word is lost?
What if every word we cast;
Cruel, cunning, cold, accurst,
Every word we cut and paste,
Echoes to us from the past,
Fares and find us first and last,
Haunts and hunts us down?

...

Better that some words be lost,
Better that they should not last,
Tongues of fire and violence.
Word through whom the world is blessed,
Word in whom all words are graced,
Do not bring us to the test,
Give our clamant voices rest,
And the rest is silence.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was in the beginning with God... And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”

‘Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders’ For those of you reading this at home, here are the words. If you are able, you can watch the same video at: <https://youtu.be/M59Khg3ob0s>

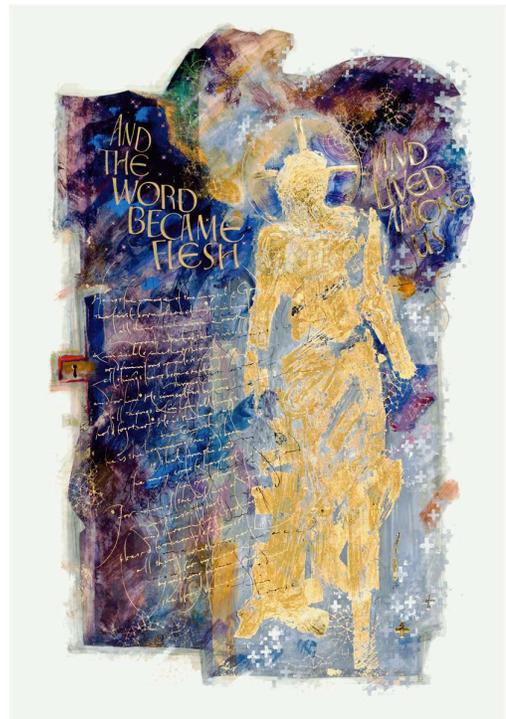
1 Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders
unmistakable and clear;
mighty signs to prove your presence,
overcoming doubt and fear

2 Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers,
still and small and scarcely heard;
only those who want to listen
catch the all-important word.

3 Lord, you sometimes speak in silence,
through our loud and noisy day:
we can know and trust you better
when we quietly wait and pray.

4 Lord, you love to speak in Scripture:
words that summon from the page,
shown and taught us by your Spirit
with fresh light for every age.

5 Lord, you always speak in Jesus,
always new yet still the same;
teach us now more of our Saviour;
make our lives display his Name.



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Hymn (to actually sing!) Put peace into each other's hands Tune MP 649

Put peace into each other's hands
and like a treasure hold it;
protect it like a candle flame,
with tenderness enfold it.

Put peace into each other's hands
with loving expectation;
be gentle in your words and ways,
in touch with God's creation.

Put peace into each other's hands,
like bread we break for sharing;
look people warmly in the eye:
our life is meant for caring.

As at communion, shape your hands
into a waiting cradle;
the gift of Christ receive, revere,
united round the table.

Put Christ into each other's hands,
he is love's deepest measure;
in love make peace, give peace a chance
and share it like a treasure.

Fred Kaan © Stainer & Bell Ltd

Lord's Supper

We remember, as we do at every communion service, the gift of the life and death of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ. Come, not because you must, but because you may.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.

You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.

You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people throughout the generations, and the gathered wisdom of many years.

You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up in difficult times where there was little peace.

He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.

He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.

He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.

For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.

And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.

You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us, to remind us of Jesus Christ and to make us one in him.

For all these gifts we thank you, and join with all your people on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise, saying:

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**Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**
This is the mystery of faith:
**Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.**

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant 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 the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

Most gracious God, we thank you for what you have given us.
You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.
Now we give ourselves to you, and ask that our daily living
may be part of the life of your kingdom,
and that our love may be your love
reaching out into the life of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Prayers of intercession

Wisdom cries out in the street, help us to listen.
We ask for your wisdom to discern your ways and path for our own lives.
We ask for wisdom to discern how to deal with others we meet in our daily lives.
We ask for wisdom to bridle our tongues, to listen more and speak less.
We ask for wisdom in the difficult situations we may have to deal with as we go
through life and even this next week.
We ask for wisdom in dealing with injustices in our world.
We ask for wisdom for the leaders in our world, our country, and our community.
We ask for wisdom for our church leaders, worldwide and local, as they preach your word and help
us grow as disciples.
We ask for wisdom and compassion as we reach out to those in need, as we minister to those who
are housebound and in nursing homes; in hospitals, in recovery and in rehab.

Guided by Your scripture, we pause in silence to reflect on our failures and mistakes; our need to
listen for Your small still voice of calm and grace...

We pray for those whose daily need for healthy food, clean water and proper shelter goes un-met,
and for those misusing the gifts that they have in the vain pursuit of pleasure.
Have mercy on those whose lives have been broken by violence and crime. Feed them with hope
and a new life in Christ. Be with those who through anger, mistake or bad timing are now in prison.
Bless their families and all those who minister to them.

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At the end of suicide awareness week, we pray for all those afflicted with mental illness and those who care for them; and for those who are desperate for a listening, non-judgmental ear. Hear our prayer for our congregations to respond with Jesus' compassion and understanding to all people in need.

We ask for your wisdom that not only enlightens us but transforms us and guides us in our daily walk with you. And may our words, thoughts and actions be a blessing to all around us. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn Come, Holy Spirit, come! Tune MP 109 (Diademata)

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
Inflame our souls with love,
transforming every heart and home
with wisdom from above.
Let none of us despise
the humble path Christ trod,
but choose, to shame the worldly wise,
the foolishness of God.

Spirit of truth, arise;
inspire the prophet's voice:
expose to scorn the tyrant's lies,
and bid the poor rejoice.
O Spirit, clear our sight,
all prejudice remove,
and help us to discern the right,
and covet only love.

All-knowing Spirit, prove
the poverty of pride,
by knowledge of the Father's love
in Jesus crucified.
And grant us faith to know
the glory of that sign,
and in our very lives to show
the marks of love divine.

Give us the tongues to speak
the word of love and grace
to rich and poor, to strong and weak,
in every tie and place.
Enable us to hear
the words that others bring,
interpreting with open ear
the special song they sing.

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Blessing

Go out, clothed in strength and dignity.
Ready to submit yourselves anew to God.
Open your hands to the poor and oppressed,
and let your actions arise from the wisdom of God.
And may God draw near to you and strengthen you;
May Christ Jesus teach you the ways of simplicity;
and may the Holy Spirit fill you with wisdom
and make your fruitful in peace and righteousness. Amen

The Bridgwater Drive Church sung Blessing.

Hymns used under The Bridgwater Drive Church CCLI licence 257182