

All-age worship for 12th February 2023

Love

Welcome to this place of worship, where we can meet with God in safety and love for God and each other. As we approach St. Valentine's Day which is this coming Tuesday, we are going to be looking deeper into Love as Christians in this church and beyond.

Let us meet with God now.

Dear God,

We are here to meet with you, on your terms.

We are here to worship you, and to express our love for you.

We want to spend time with you Lord, help us to concentrate on you as we hear the words from the bible, and as we praise and worship.

Amen.

And we're going to do the actions as we say the call to worship:

God stands with arms wide open,
ready to welcome us home with an enormous hug.

God sits with hands held out,
ready to listen to our troubles and sooth our worries.

God whoops with hands punching the sky,
ready to delight and celebrate all that we can be.

So come, worship the God who first loved us.

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Let's worship God with the song, '**Praise my soul the King of heaven**' missing out verse 3.

1. Praise my soul the king of heaven;
To his feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me his praise should sing?

Praise Him, praise him, praise him, praise him,
Praise the everlasting King!

2. Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress;
praise him still the same for ever,
slow to chide and swift to bless:

Praise him, Praise Him, praise him, praise him,

Glorious in his faithfulness.

4. Frail as summer's flower we flourish,
Blows the wind and it is gone;
But while mortals rise and perish
God endures unchanging on.

Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise the High eternal one!

5. Angels help us to adore him,
Ye behold him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before him,
Dwellers all in time and space;

Praise Him, praise him, praise him, praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

H.F. Lyte (1793-1847) altd, based on Psalm 103.

Quiz Activity:

Many, many songs have been written about Love, so we're now going to test our knowledge of some of these. I have taken out the letters L O V and E from the song titles and singers/groups from these songs, let's see if you can help me put them back!

Why do you think so many people sing about love?

Love is a big part of our bible too, in fact in the King James version of the bible the word love is mentioned 314 times! And now we're going to hear a passage from the bible, from 1 John 4 verses 7 to chapter 5 verse 3, where Love is mentioned a whole lot. See if you can count how many times you hear the word "Love".

1st Bible reading: 1 John 4: 7-19

International Children's Bible

⁷ Dear friends, we should love each other, because love comes from God. The person who loves has become God's child and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love to us: He sent his only Son into the world to give us life through him. ¹⁰ True love is God's love for us, not our love for God. God sent his Son to die in our place to take away our sins.

¹¹ That is how much God loved us, dear friends! So we also must love each other. ¹² No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us. If we love each other, God's love has reached its goal. It is made perfect in us.

¹³ We know that we live in God and God lives in us. We know this because God gave us his Spirit. ¹⁴ We have seen that the Father sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. That is what we teach. ¹⁵ If someone says, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then God lives in him. And he lives in God. ¹⁶ And so we know the love that God has for us, and we trust that love.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him. ¹⁷ If God's love is made perfect in us, then we can be without fear on the day God judges us. We will be without fear, because in this world we are like him. ¹⁸ Where God's love is, there is no fear, because God's perfect love takes away fear. It is punishment that makes a person fear. So love is not made perfect in the person who has fear.

¹⁹ We love because God first loved us.

Now let us sing:

Lord the light of your love is shining (Shine Jesus Shine)

Lord, the light of Your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth You now bring us
Shine on me, shine on me

[Chorus]

*Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light*

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence
From the shadows into Your radiance
By the blood, I may enter Your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me

Chorus

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness
So our faces display Your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here, may our lives tell Your story
Shine on me, shine on me

Chorus

Mickey the monkey talks about Love.

Sandy: Hi Mickey!

Mickey: Hey! I know all about love you know!

Sandy: Do you Mickey?

M: yeah, cos I Luvvvv bananas – they are the best and I love, love, love them.

S: okay, but that's not really the sort of love we are talking about today is it, Mickey?

M: umm, well, I do love bananas though.

S: I know you do Mickey, but there are all kinds of love, in fact some people say there are 8 different kinds of love.

M: ooo, does that mean I get 8 bananas to eat?

S: No, Mickey, but let's put your love of bananas to the test.

So, these are the 8 different kinds of love – Mania – where you have an obsessive love for someone – to the point of jealousy or anger.

M: Well, I am a little obsessive about bananas!

S; Yes, you are. The next one is; Ludos, which is playful love – this is where you might feel giddy with love when you see the one you love, and you can feel excited and alive – this is the kind of love people often experience when they first meet someone and fall in love.

M: I get very excited about bananas!

S: Indeed you do. Then there's pragma, which is enduring love. The kind of love that has developed over a long period of time. This is quite rare, but you can see it between older couples who have known each other all their adult lives and still hold hands.

M: I don't think I'm old enough for that kind of love, but I think I will love bananas all my life!

S: Hmm, the 4th kind of love is called Storge, and is familiar love, which is a strange term and means the kind of love a parent has for a child, a strong affection and familiarity between people.

M: Nah, I don't think that's me and bananas.

S: You are bananas Mickey! Anyway the 5th kind of love is Philautia, or self-love. This is a very important kind of love, which we all need so that we take care of ourselves. If we cannot love ourselves, how can we go on to love others?

M: Well, I do love myself, and that's why I love to give myself bananas!

S: I see. The Next kind of love is Philia – the kind of love that you have for your friends who you consider equals. This is sometimes called platonic love after the Greek philosopher, Plato.

M: Me and bananas are not equal!!

S: No Mickey, and this is because bananas are food and we can't be friends with our food or we wouldn't be able to eat it, I guess.

M: And that would be bad. Is that all the kinds of love?

S: No there are 2 more, Eros and Agape. Eros is romantic love, the kind of love that is passionate and physical. And Agape is unconditional love.

M: So, what's that then.

S: Well, this one I left until last, because it is the one we find talked about in the bible. Here is part of the passage that Isha read to us: "This is how God showed his love to us: He sent his only Son into the world to give us life through him. ¹⁰ True love is God's love for us, not our love for God. God sent his Son to die in our place to take away our sins.

¹¹ That is how much God loved us, dear friends! So we also must love each other."

M: Well, I don't think I love bananas enough to die for them, but I do love bananas!

S: Well, Mickey I think we can definitely say you like to eat bananas anyway.

M: Yeah.

Let's sing again as the offertory is taken up

Here is love vast as the ocean SOF 168, MP 87

Here is love vast as the ocean,
Loving kindness as the flood,

When the prince of life, our ransom
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten
Throughout heaven's eternal days.

On the Mount of Crucifixion
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And heaven's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.

William Rees. SOF 168

Prayer: Thankyou God that we have so much to give. Our talents, our voices, all the wonderful things you have given us. Help us to use all these things in your name God. Amen.

God who turns the world's values up-side-down,
we think of our world
where un-needed luxuries
are sold with promises
of increasing our feelings of self-worth.
And we thank you that you love each one of us
here and now, as we are.

God who turns the world's values up-side-down,
we think of our world
where beauty's secret,
we are told,
is hidden in a jar of face cream.
And we thank you that beauty comes from within
and is a reflection of your love for us.

God who turns the world's values up-side-down,
we think of our world
where love is shown
by the size of the bouquet,
or packaging of the chocolates.
And we thank you that your love is shown
in flesh and blood, community and stories.

God who turns the world's values up-side-down,
forgive us when we look to the world
to find our self-worth,
forgive us when we value others,
according to their looks, or their age, or their mobile phone.
And we thank you that we receive your forgiveness and your love
and hear you say to us, 'You are worth it'!
Amen.

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Amen.

And now the family version of the Lord's prayer:

Our Father in heaven, you are awesome!
Show us who you are and how you want us to be.
Make earth more like heaven.
Please give us what we need to keep going each day.
Help us when we are wrong and clean us up on the inside.
Help us to let other people off and move on.
Keep us from bad stuff.
You're in charge!
You're strong and powerful and always there.
Forever!
Amen.

Now let's sing again: **Jesus' love is a-bubblin over.**

Jesu's love is a bubbling over (X3)
Hallelujah!
Oo, Love is bubbling over
Oo, ahh, bubbling over
Oo, ahh, sssh over
Oo, ahh sssh, eek

2nd bible reading: Psalm 103 International Children's Bible

**Praise to the God of Love
Of David.**

103 All that I am, praise the Lord.
Everything in me, praise his holy name.
² My whole being, praise the Lord.
Do not forget all his kindnesses.
³ The Lord forgives me for all my sins.

- He heals all my diseases.
- ⁴ He saves my life from the grave.
He loads me with love and mercy.
- ⁵ He satisfies me with good things.
He makes me young again, like the eagle.
- ⁶ The Lord does what is right and fair
for all who are wronged by others.
- ⁷ He showed his ways to Moses
and his miracles to the people of Israel.
- ⁸ The Lord shows mercy and is kind.
He does not become angry quickly, and he has great love.
- ⁹ He will not always scold us.
He will not be angry forever.
- ¹⁰ He has not punished us as our sins should be punished.
He has not repaid us for the evil we have done.
- ¹¹ As high as the sky is above the earth,
so great is his love for those who respect him.
- ¹² He has taken our sins away from us
as far as the east is from west.
- ¹³ The Lord has mercy on those who fear him,
as a father has mercy on his children.
- ¹⁴ He knows how we were made.
He remembers that we are dust.
- ¹⁵ Human life is like grass.
We grow like a flower in the field.
- ¹⁶ After the wind blows, the flower is gone.
There is no sign of where it was.
- ¹⁷ But the Lord's love for those who fear him
continues forever and ever.
And his goodness continues to their grandchildren
- ¹⁸ and to those who keep his agreement
and who remember to obey his orders.
- ¹⁹ The Lord has set his throne in heaven.
And his kingdom rules over everything.
- ²⁰ You who are his angels, praise the Lord.
You are the mighty warriors who do what he says.
Listen to what he says.
- ²¹ You, his armies, praise the Lord.
You are his servants who do what he wants.
- ²² Everything the Lord has made
should praise him in all the places he rules.
My whole being, praise the Lord.

Sandy: This is the Psalm that our first hymn came from. In this reading we see David praising the God who loves us, and showing us how God's actions to us show us what God is really like. This is a great Psalm if you are finding life hard at the moment as it gives us a list of things to praise God for, like counting your blessings. Who remembers that song, "Count your blessings"? Praising God means remembering all God has done for us. Let's talk to God now with our prayers of intercession.

Prayers of Intercession, taken from World vision

Heavenly Father, our hearts are moved by the events we see unfolding in Turkey and Syria. The grief felt by families who have lost loved ones, or await news of loved ones, is unimaginable. We turn to you, God of all comfort, and ask that you be close to people in the days ahead and that they might know your peace.

Lord God, we pray for those who have lost their homes or have moved to safety. Please keep them warm in the midst of this harsh winter and provide all they need. We pray especially for children who are confused and frightened by what is happening. May you be for them an oasis of peace in which to take shelter.

Lord God, we thank you for the swift action of those who are responding. For the rescue teams searching for survivors, we ask for strength and resilience. For those providing temporary shelter, we pray for the swift delivery of equipment. And for all those offering support, amid their own personal loss and grief, we pray that you help them to cope.

Lord, we pray for world leaders as they decide how to respond, that assistance might be freely and generously given to all who have need. We pray that you stir each of our hearts in generosity towards the people of Turkey and Syria.

And we pray for our own community. For all those who are ill or awaiting results or appointments, give them strength and if it is your will Lord, heal them. We pray for our church and leaders, that you will guide them in all they do.

We pray for all the families who are attached to our church in any way, that they will feel the love of this church community.

Lord, we ask you now to listen to our hearts as we think of those we know, who may need your help.

Be with each one of them.

Amen.

Let's sing again: Love songs from heaven SOF 914, MP 1002

Love songs from heaven are filling the earth,
Bringing great hope to all nations.
Evil has prospered, but truth is alive;

In this dark world the light still shines.

Nothing has silenced this gospel of Christ;
It echoes down through the ages.
Blood of the martyrs has made Your church strong;
In this dark world the light still shines.

For you we live,
And for you we may die;
Through us may Jesus be seen.
For you alone we will offer our lives;
In this dark world our light will shine.

Let every nation be filled with your song:
This is the cry of your people.
We will not settle for anything less,
In this dark world our light must shine.

Noel & Tricia Richards SOF914 CCL License No. 63352

Talk: Sandy:

In the book and film, *Chocolat*, written by Joanne Harris, the central character, Vianne Rocher, arrives in a French village and sets up a Chocolaterie, a chocolate shop situated across the square from the austere medieval-style church. Much to the dismay of the priest and the mayor, she arrives at the beginning of Lent, when they are urging their community to repent and to fast. Somehow this seems to bring out the worst in everyone and the cracks in relationships are starting to show.

In contrast, Vianne and her daughter set about their chocolatière's craft with great enthusiasm and love, cleaning and painting the little shop and creating delicacies never before seen in the village.

One by one, Vianne welcomes the reluctant but curious villagers into her shop, gives them chocolate and hears their life's stories, their problems, their pain. And gradually, gently, as the story unfolds, she encourages them to make changes in their lives, to rebuild relationships or move on from broken ones. She welcomes those others reject and treats them with the same love and respect. And the more the church condemns her lack of restraint or respect for the church's teachings, the more people are drawn to her and to one another.

The grumpy grandmother gets to know her grandson and appreciate his talent for drawing, the elderly man after decades musters up the courage to date his childhood sweetheart. The young woman escapes from her violent, drunken husband and a little girl makes new friends. A married couple rekindle romance, travellers are met with a smile and music and dancing are heard on the edge of the village.

Isn't this what the God of love is about: the healing of relationships, the blossoming of love, the helping out of friends in need of a home, the welcoming of outcasts and foreigners, the quashing of prejudice and discrimination? Isn't this what a celebration of Valentine's Day should be about – our demonstrating God's love for each person that says very clearly, 'You are worth it!'

Song ; My Jesus, My Saviour SOF 935

My Jesus, My Saviour
Lord there is none like You
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love

My Comfort, My Shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord, all the earth Let us sing.
Power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of your name!
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You

Repeat verse

My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord, there is none like You
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Darlene Zschech SOF 935

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Summary:

On Monday as the parents and children were leaving, I stood by the front door to say goodbye, and make sure no little ones escaped through the door without their accompanying adult. As I was standing there, a little voice rang out down the hallway – “I

love you". Three small words that mean so much to the receiver. I called back – "Love you too" which is the expected reply. Of course, this little one has her own concept of what the words mean. She relates them to her own experience of the world so far. The love she has received from parents, grandparents and other carers and friends.

But we shouldn't negate that – the experiences she has had have given her knowledge that love is a good thing, a thing to be shared and a thing to make people smile. We all love to make people smile! This young girl has already learnt that love is a thing to receive and to give, and she is already using that knowledge.

Some might think we use the word love too easily now, it slips out without much thought as we say goodbye on the phone or we leave kisses at the end of message. But I really don't see anything wrong with this. Love is something we can share and spread, and it's a good thing. God is Love, as our bible reading said. If we can spread a little happiness by telling someone we love them, we are, in a very modest and understated way, giving out little parcels of God to people. Like giving people a blessing. I am no theologian, and don't have a degree in understanding the bible – but I do know that being loved is one of the most wonderful things we can have. a feeling that you belong and are cared for, that you are not on your own, and that someone will put your needs before their own. This is God. God loves each one of us, cares for us deeply and wants to have that relationship with us. If you haven't realised this yet, and would like to talk more about it, there is a prayer room available after the service, please speak to one of our elders or myself.

Chocolat Blessing

May the God who created chocolate and laughter,
shared stories and friendships ,
go with us.

May the God who embraced the vulnerable
and healed the broken hearted,
go with us.

May the God who challenges injustice
and encourages us to love our neighbour,
go with us.

And may we live our lives as Jesus lived,
celebrating life in all its fullness.

Amen.

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Let's finish by saying the blessing together.

And now may the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Love of God

And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all, Now and always,

Amen.