

Call to Worship

Come, let's praise God!
Sing a new song—a song of God's goodness and mercy, faithfulness and love.
For God delights in His people, crowning them with honor and glory!

Hymn: Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven (*Singing the Faith*, #83)
Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like thee his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour
to his people in distress;
praise him still the same for ever,
slow to child and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Scripture: Psalm 149, Romans 13:8-14

Prayer

God of light and life, you set before us today the challenges of laying aside the works of darkness. Forgive us when people do not see any evidence in us of Jesus' love. Let us put on the light of Christ and live as you have called us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Help us so that everything we do reflects Christ's light and our lives radiate faith active in love. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Reflection (Resource: article by Rochelle A. Stackhouse in *Feasting on the Word*)

This Sunday is the first in our new Methodist year, and we celebrate that we have four churches that have joined our circuit: Leiston United Church and Peasenhall & Sibton, Knodishall, and Kelsale Methodist Churches. We welcome them as we join together to sing a new song, although as singing in our churches would cause harm, we will love each other now by singing remotely, and our new song will be through the new ways that we will work together.

There is an urgency in Paul's words to the young churches in Rome as he says, "The day is near." Paul expected Christ's return immanently and the church's task was immense as they worked with God toward the transformation of the world. Two millennium later and that task is still is no less urgent. Instead of setting out an organizational chart for transformation with grand plans, Paul sees that our mission will only be fulfilled if we begin with how we interact with our neighbours. Jesus defined our neighbours to include anyone with whom we interact. Love is central. In our English language, the word 'love' refers almost exclusively to emotion. For Paul, love has little to do with emotion, but is about behaviour. Our neighbours will know that we love them by how we treat them; love does no harm to a neighbour. 'Do no harm' is the first of John Wesley's three rules.

There is to be no mystery in how we act in God's name. As Christians, we are called to live so everyone can see clearly who we are. Drunkenness and sexual immorality are a problem, but so are quarreling and jealousy. Had you thought of quarreling and jealousy as being a problem on the same level as the other things in that list? How we act towards each other is seen not only by God but also by those outside the church. As the South African freedom song puts it, 'We are marching in the light of God,' and how we march makes all the difference to the end of the journey. We live in a world so full of darkness

and brokenness. Our mission this year is as urgent as ever. Our daily journey is both simple and the complex. Love is the essence of discipleship and the basis for transformation. May we grow in love. May we do no harm.

Prayers of Intercession (Rev. Paul Wood, adapted)

Loving God, at the start of this connexional year, we pray for the church and hold before you today:

Those who have just begun their period as a Probationary Minister.

Those ministers who have moved home this summer.

Those ministers from other churches who have just arrived from abroad.

Those preachers, who have not led worship for many months.

For churches who are struggling to know when to re-open and those who have opened.

We pray for those we love:

For those who mourn...

For those who have been ill...

For frontline workers.

For those struggling to find work.

For those who have started or who are about to start school.

We pray for your world:

For those parts of the world devastated by COVID19.

For refuges and those living in fear.

For those affected by climate change with hurricanes, tornadoes and fires.

We pray for ourselves – *in a moment of quiet hold before God what is on your heart today.*

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray saying: *Our Father ...*

Offering

You are invited at this time to remember your local church and to give generously of your time, treasure and talent.

Generous God, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, you have shown us what it means to love. And you've called us to follow your example, to love our neighbours and to offer our lives and our resources in your service. Accept the gifts we offer today. May they help to spread the love we have received to the world around us. Amen.

Hymn: We are Marching in the Light of God (*Singing the Faith, #483*)

South African Traditional – v1 Anders Nyberg (b.1955), v2&3 Andrew Maries (b.1949)

We are marching in the light of God (x4)

We are marching, oh,

we are marching in the light of God (x2)

We are living in the love of God ...

We are moving in the power of God ...

Blessing

We go now to love our neighbours as ourselves. And may God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with us all, now and always. Amen.

Printed Service prepared by Rev. Joan Pell

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