



Opening Prayer

Holy God, we gather with people in every time and place to worship you.
Grant us the assurance that you are with us and join us all together by your Spirit.

Amen.

Hymn: StF 117 "Sing praise to God who reigns above"

[Sing praise to God who reigns above \(StF 117\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk)

Sing praise to God who reigns above,
the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love,
the God of our salvation;
with healing balm my soul he fills,
and every faithless murmur stills:
to God all praise and glory!

What God's almighty power has made
that will he ever cherish,
and will, unfailing, soon and late,
with loving-kindness nourish;
and where he rules in kingly might
there all is just and all is right:
to God all praise and glory!

The Lord is never far away,
but, through all grief distressing,
an ever-present help and stay,
our peace, and joy, and blessing;
as with a mother's tender hand,
he leads his own, his chosen band:
to God all praise and glory!

O you who name Christ's holy name,
give God all praise and glory:
O you who own his power, proclaim
aloud the wondrous story.
Cast each false idol from its throne:
the Lord is God, and he alone:
to God all praise and glory!

Johann Jakob Schuetz (1640-1690), Frances Elizabeth Cox (1812-1897) and Honor Mary Thwaites (1914-1993)

Let us join with one heart and mind to give God praise and glory.

Let us pray

To the God-in-community, we praise you. We are held in your palm and connected within your great company.
To the God of undiminished light, we praise you that in the depths of our night, you are light.
To the God of infinite love, we praise you that all love is sourced in your fathomless depth.
To you, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, we offer our praise to your glory. **Amen.**

Scripture: Matthew 5: 1-12

Poem: Reality in Afghanistan, by Phil Williams, Camp Bastion, 1 Jul 2009

My pain feels cold and selfish,
My anguish very small,
My reality insignificant,
Compared to ones that fall.
Young men with broken bodies,
Their comrades lie in sacks.
Devastated parents,
Their sons will not come back.

My pain will ease and lessen,
My anguish slip away.
Reality in Afghanistan –
Two brave men died today.
Young men with shell-shocked faces,
Growing old before their time,
Are living, breathing testament
To this shallow pain of mine.

Silence: Spend a short while in silence, light a candle or look at an image if it helps, but spent a couple of minutes remembering those who have fallen and the many more who still live with the scars of war.

Reflection: The good news at the moment is that the Covid infection rate has dropped over the last couple of weeks, there may be a multitude of reasons for this, school holidays, booster vaccinations, increased awareness of the risks, who knows? People have said frequently over the last twenty months that this feels like the war. I understand the sentiments, but the stats are hardly comparable, seventy five million people died in the second world war, to date, just over five million people have died worldwide from Covid 19.

I confess that I have always struggled a bit with the sermon on the mount, there have been times in my life when I have struggled and, on those occasions, I have felt far from being blessed. Prior to the time of Jesus, blessedness was

associated with wealth, status, authority, and power. Jesus, in his teaching turns that concept right on its head, blessed are the ordinary folk, the underdogs.

War was a great leveller, indiscriminate and in a similar way the coronavirus has been indiscriminate, it hasn't mattered about the status of people all people are equal at times like this. It strikes me that in the times of war, we weren't particularly interested until it hit us, over generations we have watched conflicts around the world on the soil of other nations, we have witness scenes of horror and remained detached, the message at remembrance time is that war is evil, and we hunger for peace.

Consider:

- How do you feel about today? Is this simply a ritual? Or do we really value what our forebears did for us that we might live in peace?
- The first world war has been referred to as "the war to end all wars" and we often talk about living in times of peace. Does this nation feel to be living in peace to you? How do you value peace?
- How do you understand the Churches role in being protectors of peace in the world and the nation?

A time of Prayer:

By a monument of marble,
or a simple wooden cross,
here we gather to remember
sacrifice and tragic loss.
Blood-red poppy petals flutter,
each a symbol for a life,
drifting in a crimson curtain,
shadow of our constant strife.

Solemn silence now surrounds us
as we stand in memory.
Why must factions stir up conflict?
This eternal mystery
troubles hearts and stirs the
conscience,
urges us to think again;
face the curse of confrontation,
yet reduce this searing pain.

For the sound of war still thunders
through our planet, on this day.
Every hour new victims suffer,
even as we meet to pray.
God, we need your help and
guidance
in our constant search for peace.
Move us on to new solutions
as we pray that wars may cease.

Marjorie Dobson (b. 1940)

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn: Listen to Beauty for brokenness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08utbDFP9AE>

Beauty for brokenness,
hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world
this is our prayer.
Bread for the children,
justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset,
your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives,
cures for their ills,
work for all people,
trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed,
rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause
of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray:
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars,
havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary,
freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields,
scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness,
his cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth,
oceans and streams

plundered and poisoned —
our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness,
carelessness, greed;
make us content with
the things that we need.

Refrain

Lighten our darkness,
breathe on this flame
until your justice burns
brightly again;
until the nations
learn of your ways,
seek your salvation
and bring you their praise.

Refrain

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

A prayer of blessing:

May the peace-pursuing God be gracious to us and bless us, and make God's face to shine upon us. **Amen.**