

**DORSET SOUTH & WEST CIRCUIT WRITTEN SERVICE,
5TH SEPTEMBER 2021, BY REVD JEAN QUICK.**

Happy New Year....New Methodist Connexional year!

What a year it has been! But before we get caught up in the very real negatives of this past year in the life of our church and the nations. Let's take a moment to reflect on and name the 'Unnumbered blessings', then let's give our spirits voice as we sing;

STF 186 Tell out my soul

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;
his holy name - the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926) Based on the Magnificat

Prayers of adoration and Confession.

Dear Lord Jesus as we look back on this past Methodist year despite all the difficulties we know we have so much to be thankful. To praise you for and to adore you for your never failing love for us.

When all seemed hopeless you were and still are our strong hope, always beside us and never leaving us.

When all has seemed changed and unknown territory you have inspired your church to find new ways of being church and keeping us connected to your unfailing love and message.

When all has felt so very challenging in the world we felt so sure in, you have shaken us out of our complacency and shown us how to respond to a world wide need to care.

We praise you for the greatness of your love that can and does respond to our every need. A love that is so great that it cannot be contained, is unrestricted and but must be shared with all.

We bring you our heartfelt love, praise and thanksgiving. **Amen**

Dear Lord Jesus as we bring you our praise for all that is past we are mindful of how easily we let ourselves fall into negative thinking and feelings. We doubt too easily and forget to trust in your love. Forgive us and renew us.

We thank you that when we turn to you and ask for forgiveness you do forgive and not only forget but recommission us. May our acceptance of your forgiveness drive us on in your spirit to 'feed your sheep', in this new year in our churches life. **Amen**

Before we sing our next hymn ..do you like a puzzle? Well this interesting hymn, found on the singing the faith website, should feed our prayers and actions. The suggestion is we sing it to StF 495 'Dear Lord and father of mankind', but you will need to repeat the last line of the tune in each verse. That's the puzzle part and I guess the words will challenge and inspire your dreams and prayers.

HYMN:

"I have a dream", a man once said,
"where all is perfect peace;
where men and women, black and white,
stand hand in hand, and all unite
in freedom and in love."

But in this world of bitter strife
the dream can often fade;
reality seems dark as night,
we catch but glimpses of the light
Christ sheds on humankind.

Fierce persecution, war, and hate
are raging everywhere;
God calls us now to pay the price
through struggles and through sacrifice
of standing for the right.

So dream the dreams and sing the songs,
but never be content:
for thoughts and words don't ease the pain:
unless there's action, all is vain;
faith proves itself in deeds.

Lord, give us vision, make us strong,
help us to do your will;
don't let us rest until we see
your love throughout humanity
uniting us in peace.

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GOSPEL READING:Mark 7:31-37

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

A word for the new Methodist year...Ephphatha

How do you pronounce it? I was taught at College, 'with conviction!' It's not the pronunciation that's important but the meaning and that of course is 'be open'.

So what are you going to be Ephphatha to in the New Methodist Year Ahead?

What will you be open too?

In the Bible passage from Mark 7,

Some couldn't hear and Some couldn't control their tongues.

'Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it.'

I can almost hear my parents all those years ago still saying, when I did something they had told me not to do, "are you deaf, what did I just say?"

We hear that the deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Don't you just hate it when people don't speak plainly?

If they are not speaking plainly what do you see as the way they are speaking? What annoys you about people who don't speak plainly? Do they embroider the facts, or try to be clever, or what?

Why do they, or even, we do that? To make us look good, to boost up ourselves, to gain some sort of credit from others?

The poor man in the passage had a speech impediment so could not until Jesus' invention speak plainly. Sometimes Those who never speak can also be so annoying. They stay mute when we wish they would speak up and say plainly what's on their mind. But that takes courage! Maybe in this new Methodist year ahead we might need to pray 'lord give me courage to speak plainly about what you have put on my mind.' "Help me to be open in what I can and should say in your name."

Were the onlookers speaking plainly when they disobeyed Jesus' command? Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. Note the use of the word zealously. You can imagine them, the way they would have told the story. They don't mention Jesus' name, just 'he'. So possibly the most important thing for them in the retelling is the credit they received by being present. But remember they were excluded from being present! So all they had was that they had witnessed the changes. Note that they didn't add, "but he did tell us not to tell anyone about it," Now that would put them in the realms of being gossips!

There is also a disdainful action on Jesus' part 'he spat'! One of the despicable things that has been evident in the pandemic is the spitting that people have engaged in. I guess as an act of defiance against those trying to enforce good protection against the virus and social distancing. But 'spit', is known to have health giving properties. We bash our thumb in an accident and immediately our response is to suck it better.

So Jesus is using the healing properties of spit to give the deaf and mute man restoration. Sadly in a time when we needed so much to be released from the pandemic some chose to corrupt what is meant for health.

In this year ahead there may be new challenges as the church meets and communicates the gospel. How will we be open to what is happening? Will we try to be open and health giving even to that which is new and perhaps not always to our taste? It maybe just what someone else needs to hear. Will we speak plainly so that God's intentions are in the forefront and not ours? Happy new Methodist year.....Ephphatha.

Prayers of Intercession.

On this new Methodist year Sunday we pray for all Ministers, Deacon's, stewards and office holders. We pray for those taking up new appointments and for the congregations they serve together with.

We pray for our President Revd Sonia Hicks and Vice President Barbara's Easton. Guide and sustain them as they seek to inspire and lead our churches in the coming year.

We pray for the needs of our nation and the needs of our world. The challenges of the pandemic and its eradication. The needs to control our damaging effects on the climate and to find fairer ways to support all in need.

We pray for ourselves and our loved ones and we bring to you any in special need at this time.

We offer these our prayers as we remind ourselves of your faithfulness in the words of
.....**the Lord's Prayer.**

A hymn to be our prayer and inspiration for all time.

STF 249 Jesu Jesu fill us with your love

*Jesu, Jesu,
fill us with your love,
show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.*

Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet,
master who acts as a slave to them.

Neighbours are rich folk and poor,
neighbours are black folk and white,
neighbours are nearby and far away.

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love.
All these are neighbours to us and you.

Kneel at the feet of our friends,
silently washing their feet,
this is the way we should live with you.

North Ghanaian song adapted by Tom Colvin (1925-2000)

Prayer of Blessing.

The The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you,
The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you always.... **Amen.**

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