

**FORTH VALLEY METHODIST CIRCUIT WEEKLY SERVICE
SUNDAY 10th JANUARY 2021**



Opening sentences

- ¹ Praise the LORD, you heavenly beings;
praise his glory and power.
- ² Praise the LORD's glorious name;
bow down before the Holy One when he appears.
- ³ The voice of the LORD is heard on the seas;
the glorious God thunders,
and his voice echoes over the ocean.
- ⁴ The voice of the LORD is heard
in all its might and majesty.
- ¹⁰ The LORD rules over the deep waters;
he rules as king forever.
- ¹¹ The LORD gives strength to his people
and blesses them with peace.

*From Psalm 29:1-4, 10-11 (Good News Translation)
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Hymn: [God, whose almighty word](#) (CH4 112 or another version at STF 106)

1. God, whose almighty word,
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight:
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel-day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light!

2. Saviour, who came to bring
on your redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind:
O now to all mankind
let there be light!

3. Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy dove,
speed on your flight!
move on the water's face
bearing the lamp of grace
and, in earth's darkest place,
let there be light!

4. Gracious and holy Three,
glorious Trinity,
wisdom, love, might:
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride
through the world far and wide,
let there be light!

John Marriott (1780-1825) and Thomas Raffles (1788-1863)

Prayer of Approach, Confession and Thanksgiving

In these dark days of winter we come to seek your Light. We come to hear your words, to offer our prayers for ourselves and others. And most of all Lord, we come that you might fill our lives with your strength and purpose, overcoming the chaos of the world today.

We praise you Lord, as we realise that minute by minute our days are becoming longer, the time of darkness less. We acknowledge your power and might in setting the lengths of our days and nights. You have created order out of chaos, so we can have ordered lives. You have created all things and given us yourself in your son, Christ Jesus. You are truly amazing God.

You have not only accomplished all this, but you have given us all you created so we could be stewards of your creation, the world in which we live and those with whom we live.

In spite of all you have done and accomplished, we have failed to be the people you created us to be. We come offering our confession and seeking your forgiveness.

When we have forgotten whose world we live in, forgive us. When we have failed to treat our neighbour as we would be treated ourselves, forgive us. When we have insisted on doing things our own way, without consideration of what you would have us do, or the harm we might bring to others, forgive us. We reflect on the ways we have failed you that only you know - and we ask your forgiveness.

Gracious God, you have forgiven us. For in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ your son, our Lord, our sins have been forgiven.

Thanks be to you O God. **Amen.**

Readings:

[Genesis 1:1-5](#)

[John 1:1-5](#)

[Mark 1:9-11](#)

Use your own bible or click on the links above to read from the New International Version (UK edition) on the Bible Gateway website.

Hymn: [Longing for light, we wait in darkness](#) (STF 706)

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see. **Chorus**

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice. **Chorus**

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed. **Chorus**

Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone. **Chorus**

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come. **Chorus**

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

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Reflection

It's a time of year when we naturally think about beginnings. It's a New Year, we (might) make resolutions to break old habits. We might recommit ourselves and our lives to God as in the Covenant Service. We might even find God has a new purpose for us. Our Scripture readings place us at the beginning of all things. "In the beginning. . ."

In Genesis we find ourselves spectators as the world begins being created by God. In John we see that Christ – THE WORD – was present in the beginning and an active part of God's creation. And Mark shows us how together, God and Jesus, Father and Son, begin Jesus' earthly ministry.

In each passage chaos is overcome. In Genesis God calls forth the light and calls it good. This goodness isn't a matter of judgment between shades or colours – light and dark. Light is a blend of all colours, darkness is an absence of them. The light God creates controls the chaos of a dark void in which we stumble and lose our way. In John's Gospel THE WORD (with God) overcomes the darkness and the chaos that it causes. And in spite of every attempt since, that light has never been overcome. Mark begins the story of Jesus' ministry with His baptism. As Jesus sees 'heaven being torn open' He knows it's time to begin to take God's presence into the chaos of the world.

It is the voice, the breath, the Spirit of God, becoming active in the midst of the turmoil that tames the chaos. God's Spirit hovers over the waters in the darkness and speaks. Instantly there was light, a source of both light and life for the world. THE WORD, as John tells us, is part of God at the beginning. THE WORD spoke with God bringing light into the world and continues to speak with the voice of God, keeping the darkness at bay. And as Mark shares the beginning of Jesus' mission with us, we get to 'hear' the voice of God. The voice of God speaks only to Jesus. 'You' says the voice of God, 'You are my Son'. Jesus is the one set aside to hear God's voice, He is the one strengthened by God's Spirit as His ministry begins and continues on earth.

Beginnings are great. But finishing is important too. The embroidery group I belong to sets aside regular events as UFO days. They devote the time for working on Un-Finished Objects. Those projects begun with great enthusiasm, that never seem to be finished. For some 2020 might seem like a UFO – a year that began with enthusiasm, hopes and plans that too often could not be finished. It might also seem as if 2021 hasn't really begun, as normal

celebrations and traditional gatherings were cancelled. Chaos and uncertainty seem to fill the news and affect our daily lives.

This is the time we need to remember all that God accomplished 'in the beginning' in overcoming the chaos, sending His light into the world, and giving us His own Son as His redeeming presence. God still has the power to overcome the chaos in our lives, to shine His light into the dark places in the world and in our hearts. May you know His Spirit calming any chaos you experience and may you follow His light leading to His peace. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, we pray for ourselves, for those we love, for those we may never know and for all the needs of the world you created and gave to us.

Our prayers go out for all those affected by the current pandemic. 'Affected' seems such a clinical word, but you, Lord, know what it means to each and every individual and family and community.

May those who mourn be comforted; may those who are sick and isolated from all they know and love find a friendly voice by their side; may those who feel lost and don't know who to believe or trust know that you are beside them, that all you do and say is truth and love and hope.

We pray for those whose livelihoods have been damaged or eliminated through no fault of their own; for those whose workplaces have closed; for those whose jobs are considered surplus to requirements; for those who have been forced to end the employment of workers they can no longer afford to pay.

May those who have be motivated by your love to share with those who have not; may employers find ways to share out the work they have with as many as they are able; may those without work find employment or retraining that enables them to live with dignity.

We pray for the leaders of the nations of the world. Many are facing impossible tasks as they try to protect the health and economy of the nation they lead. Many are struggling to make decisions with very little information, or information that seems to change day by day. Many have to make choices they know will assist some and wound others.

May they lead with mercy and justice; may they feel your strength enabling them to make careful and considered decisions; may they know your forgiveness and presence when they fail, and grant them the ability to keep on for the sake of the people they serve

We pray for ourselves Lord, you know our needs even better than we do. Illuminate our hearts and minds so we can see what it is you need for us – to be; to have; and to do.

As Jesus asked us to do, we offer these and all our prayers in His name using the words He taught us to say:

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name.
your Kingdom come.
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever, **Amen.**

Hymn: [In Christ Alone](#) (STF 351)

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!

This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

*Keith Getty (b.1974) and Stuart Townend (b.1963)
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Blessing:

May this time of worship stay with us as a light in a storm, always and ever
keeping us close to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit **Amen.**

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With thanks to Rev Linda McMurray for preparing this week's order of service.