

Sunday 14th January 2024: Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or other suitable time. This is our 200th Worship at Home Sheet – continuously produced by our Circuit since 22nd March 2020. We begin with 'To God be the glory' to mark this new milestone. As we continue, this extended Worship Sheet incorporates prayers of the Covenant Service.



StF 94 H&P 463 'To God be the glory' by Frances Jane von Alstyne (1820 – 1915)

Opening Prayer

Think of the past week and say both 'thank you' and 'sorry' to our loving God.

Old Testament reading set for today: 1 Samuel 3 v 1 – 10

Message from a Circuit Friend

I have found myself wondering about several people in the Bible recently, one being Samuel. I find that reading his early story, it is one of being highly thought of by his family, but at a very early age being handed over to someone else, in a situation that would have been totally foreign to him. His mother had made a promise to God that if he granted her desire of having a son she would dedicate him to God. Therefore, his future was already determined before he was even born! That sounds very familiar. He is presented to Eli, an older man, to be brought up to serve God both in the Temple and, at a later date, as a prophet taking God's message out to the people (who didn't really want to know thank you!) In our reading from the first book of Samuel we see that he is sleeping near Eli and thinks that every time he hears a voice calling him, that it must be Eli. Even Eli takes a while to realise what is happening, that God is calling Samuel. Eli then tells the boy to answer the voice by saying "Speak Lord, for your servant hears". I should imagine that Samuel is still very confused, not aware of who the Lord is or how he is calling when there seems to be only Eli and himself about. He then shows great faith in obeying what Eli tells him to do and goes on to receive a message from God, a message which was not exactly a pleasant one (read on and you will see what I mean). Even at this very early age Samuel is showing that he is aware of being important, having a special commission, to work for God here on earth. He was, to my way of thinking, a forerunner to Jesus. Born for a special purpose, to do God's will. Can we see anything in the story of Samuel that we can relate to? Only you can answer that question, for me it is that it doesn't matter what age you are, if there is a special purpose God wants you to carry out, he will continue to call until you answer in the affirmative.

Jacky Woor (Local Preacher and member of Trinity Methodist Church)

StF 546 H&P 788 'Behold the servant of the Lord!' by Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

Gospel reading set for today: John 1 v 43 – 51

Introduction to the concept of Covenant

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law.

The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience. In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God. We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God.

Take a moment to make a prayer of Confession. Say sorry to God for your failure to live for God rather than yourself. Then take a moment to know God's love for you and his assurance of forgiveness: 'Your sins are forgiven.' Give God thanks and praise.

StF 549 H&P 649 'Come, let us use the grace divine' by Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)
If you don't know the tune to this 'Covenant Hymn', read the words as a poem/prayer.

Preamble to Covenant Prayer (*usually said by the Presiding Minister*)

Let us again claim for ourselves this covenant which God has made with his people,
And take upon us the yoke of Christ.

This means that we are content that he appoint us our place and work,
and that he himself be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done: some are easy, others are difficult;
Some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and
material interests, others are contrary to both;

In some we may please Christ and please ourselves;
in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.
Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own.

Let us give ourselves to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

Covenant Prayer (*for those that feel able to make this annual commitment*)

I am no longer my own but yours,

put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;

Put me to doing, put me to suffering (OR 'may your will be done in all that I endure');

Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,

exalted for you or brought low for you;

Let me be full, let me be empty,

let me have all things, let me have nothing;

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours.

So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

As the covenant is entered into as God's servants and witnesses,
pray for the church and for the world:

We pray for our world, our country, the Methodist Church, our Circuit, our local church and
fellowship, our community, our family and friends, ourselves.

We pray for needs of which we are aware, and for our own needs as another year begins.

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

Hymn StF 563 H&P 704 'O Jesus, I have promised' by John Ernest Bode (1816 – 1874)

May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.

Circuit News: Next week includes prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18th – 25th).

We have received a special message from Rev Julian Pursehouse, Chair of District, on the occasion of the 200th
edition of this Worship at Home sheet:

"I am delighted that the Central Norfolk Circuit responded so positively to the challenges that we
all faced when the country was plunged into lockdown in 2020. The Circuit ensured that the
people called Methodists were still enabled to worship through the provision of a weekly worship
sheet. I understand from the Superintendent that this edition will mark the 200th edition of the
weekly worship sheet, so I want to offer you my congratulations for being so faithful in this
endeavour. Particular thanks must go to the Circuit Staff Team who have contributed so diligently
to this task. May God bless you all." **Rev. Julian M. Pursehouse - Chair of East Anglia District.**