

Sunday 30th January 2022

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us,
we worship together in God.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Contemporary English Version)

What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels?

If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

What if I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge?

And what if I had faith that moved mountains?

I would be nothing, unless I loved others.

What if I gave away all that I owned and let myself be burned alive?

I would gain nothing, unless I loved others.

Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude.

Love isn't selfish or quick tempered.

It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do.

Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil.

Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting.

Love never fails!

Everyone who prophesies will stop, and unknown languages will no longer be spoken.

All that we know will be forgotten.

We don't know everything, and our prophecies are not complete.

But what is perfect will someday appear, and what isn't perfect will then disappear.

When we were children, we thought and reasoned as children do.

But when we grew up, we quit our childish ways.

Now all we can see of God is like a cloudy picture in a mirror.

Later we will see him face to face.

We don't know everything, but then we will, just as God completely understands us.

For now there are faith, hope, and love.

But of these three, the greatest is love.

Suggested hymn **God is love, his the care**

Listen [here](#)

Prayer

Loving God, in you we have our being and in you we find the truth of love. Your love is surrounds us and your grace forgives us and when we search for you our hearts are changed and we find a new way of loving that is open and kind, patient and forgiving and embracing of all people.

We are still learning of this love, and when we falter and forget your forgiveness encourages us to remember and opens our eyes to the truth of love.

Every day we experience your love in the kindness of strangers, in the patience of friends, and in the humility and encouragement of others we see your love. We pray that we may be expressions of your love for others, showing loyalty and trust, and offering support which does not judge but accepts and shares.

As your children we offer our thanks for creation and the ways in which creation supports and nurtures our lives. We thank you for the beauty of the world in which we live, and the creatures with which we share the world. May our love for you and each other embrace the natural world and may our actions be loving of creation and seek to do no harm.

We offer this prayer because of Jesus whose example opened eyes and hearts and whose story continues to touch the world in new ways. As followers we pray the words Jesus taught the disciples saying, Our Father....

Readings Jeremiah 1:4-10
 Luke 4: 21-30

Suggested hymn Loving Spirit, Loving Spirit
Listen [here](#)

Reflection

Jeremiah doubted his abilities. How often have you doubted your abilities? How often have you been encouraged to do something, take on a responsibility, or lead something and found yourself making excuses? Jeremiah had been called by God, yet he felt inadequate, but in his heart he knew he was being less than truthful with himself. He was making excuses and he could hear God's response- do not be afraid, I am with you. In that moment he felt God's presence as touch on his lips and he knew. He could do this.

God put the words into Jeremiah's mouth. Sometimes we use excuses to avoid doing things and yet we know that God is with us. how we can experience God's words in our mouths and fulfil our call to messengers of the good news of God's love.

It is, I believe, about speaking from the heart rather than the mind, speaking from some inner place of which we are only aware when we allow ourselves to connect with what some call Spirit, and some call collective consciousness or cosmic consciousness. I have experienced this in a number of ways. I can remember the first time I was aware of it was when writing a poem about peace for a worship group service. I picked up my pencil and began writing and I did not stop until I reached the end, I did not pause to think or formulate, I simply wrote and was amazed when I read it back. When I accepted the call to train for ministry, I found myself less dependent on writing prayers and more often used extemporary prayer, unwritten prayer, in worship, responding to the whole worship experience through prayer. I have had people come up to me after a service and ask for a copy of the prayer and had to explain that I do not have them written down, but also that usually I have little recollection of what I have said. One of the biggest challenges during Lockdown was having to write prayers for the website and to use on zoom, it is a very different experience, and also time consuming but I know it has been important to do in these changed circumstances and I have tried to hold fast to the principles of extemporary prayer in the process.

I have also experienced this connection it another way, again a form of prayer but quite different from our usual prayer. I have taken the time to think with God, to discuss things that puzzle me out loud, rehearsing a conversation or an explanation of something, and then found myself making connections between very diverse thoughts, or discovering I was talking about something I had not realised I knew. Twice when preparing a presentation for an interview, Yarley Hastings and then the South Western Synod role, I have discovered what I knew I should do through talking out loud. These were ideas completely out of the blue and I don't believe I would have come across in any other way. I remember feeling really excited about preparing the presentation, and I had a real belief in the message of the presentation. In both situations I was offered the job.

Perhaps you have experienced something similar but been afraid to mention it, perhaps you have been involved in a conversation with someone and found yourself saying something you did not expect to say. We might call it inspiration but surely that is simply God's words in our mouth.

Jesus was in the temple. He had just finished reading from the scriptures, not a single quotation as it appeared but a merging of two passages. Maybe, he found himself inspired to add another verse to the passage before him. He then spoke with such confidence that those who heard were amazed and had to remind themselves that this was Joseph's son, from their town. As we listen to this reading from Luke questions arise, was Jesus rash to antagonise the temple officials the way he did,

and what was Jesus really saying? Those listening were waiting for the Messiah, waiting for God to liberate Israel from their pagan enemies, from the oppression of civil authorities. How often did they, like their ancestors, pray for God's wrath to pour down on their enemies and destroy them? Suddenly, they were hearing something very different, Jesus spoke of God's grace for everyone, even their enemies, they did not want to hear this message and they expressed their displeasure, or their fear, by aggression towards Jesus. But that is the Good News, love for everyone, God's grace forgiving everyone. Maybe there are times we don't want to hear that message either.

In 1 Corinthians 13 we probably have Paul's most poetic piece of writing in which he explores the nature of love and reminds his readers that we are called to reach for the perfect love but recognise we are on a journey and have not yet reached the perfection that is God's love. However, Jesus urges us to explore the fullness of our humanity, to let go and trust in the inner connection we have with God, the source of all being, and allow ourselves to live fully. Paul was at the beginning of understanding the true nature of Jesus' connection with God, he knew that there was more but that much of the reality was still hidden. Nearly two thousand years later, we are beginning to realise just how much more there is to the connection than we thought, and that God's presence with us can be experienced in sometimes startling ways, but if we trust in God then what we experience can and will change the world.

Jesus trusted, even when faced with earthly death he trusted, because he knew that this life is but a passing phase, he had seen God face to face and his message tells us we can also see God face to face, or least experience the presence of God with us in a very tangible way. We can feel daunted, inadequate but in the power of a connection with God we will discover the way forward, the way we, you and I, can change the world for the better, and it will probably startle us. Paul was right, the key is love, a love which is kind, patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude; isn't selfish or quick tempered, doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do; rejoices in the truth, rather than evil; is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. It is in this love that we will discover a new way of being, it is through this love that others will experience a different way of seeing, and together in this love we can fulfil the prophecy to of a world at peace. Without such love our actions however well intentioned will ring empty. It is in the connection with God, that striving for the fullness of our humanity, that we will discover the most powerful force in creation, pure love.

As I prepared this worship, I was reminded of a song based on the words of Jaques Brel – If we only have love. I invite to listen to this song and let it connect you with God.

Listen [here](#)

Suggested hymn Love is the touch of intangible joy

Watch [here](#)

Prayers

Eternal God, creator of all time and space, creator of all life, as we worship together, we offer you our prayers of concern and commitment and pray for your inspiration as we seek to follow Jesus in sharing the message of your universal love. May we recognise when our decisions are less than loving, when we put our needs before the needs of others, and when we use excuses to avoid the challenge of your call to love one another. Accepting the gracious forgiveness of your love may we offer that same gracious forgiveness to others.

Loving God may we feel your presence and know your words in our mouth.

Loving God may we trust in your presence and learn to consciously seek to connect with you, allowing ourselves to be guided by the Spirit as we walk the way of Jesus. May we be courageous in our exploration of our humanity and open to discovering new ways and new ideas of being one with you and each other as we journey through this life.

Loving God may we feel your presence and know your words in our mouth.

As we reflect on the world, and on the stories in the news may we see opportunities for sharing the message of your love through our words and actions.

We think of the headlines this past week –

Poor decisions in government - may we be a voice of challenge when decisions by governments lead to discrimination and divide communities, and a voice of challenge when leaders fail to recognise their role in encouraging others to love one another.

The accumulation of Russian weapons on the Ukraine border – may we guard the freedoms of all people's and be a voice against oppression in whatever form it happens.

Afghanistan – may we remember those who live amidst the turmoil and deprivation of unrest and find themselves deprived of the basic necessities of live. May we reach out in the generosity of love.

Covid – we continue to give thanks for NHS workers as they face the frontline in the battle against covid, may we support them by taking responsibility for the part our actions play in spreading the virus. We think of the education sector where so many children and teachers are off sick or self-isolating and we pray that everyone will play their part in reducing transmission amongst children and their teachers.

Bullying and prejudice in organisations - in love we pray for all who find themselves victims of prejudice and bullying. May we speak out against intolerance and discrimination against people on the grounds of race, culture or faith.

Energy poverty - as we all worry about the future of the planet, we recognise that the ongoing use of traditional fuels is unsustainable, but we pray for inspired leadership to help all those for whom the rise in the cost of fuel will place them in poverty. May we speak out to support those struggling with the changes and all who find themselves with difficult choices. May we be a voice of love as we encourage a fairer sharing of the harvest of the world.

We pray for the inspiration to challenge and change the ways of the world and grow the kingdom.

Loving God may we feel your presence and know your words in our mouth. Amen

We pause to reflect on our family and friends and the challenges they face in their lives.

Silence for personal prayer.

May our love support them and bring your light into their lives.

Loving God may we feel your presence and know your words in our mouth.

Our offering to God.

As we worship together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously and sharing the message of hope that is God's love. Amen

Suggested hymn We sing a love that sets all people free

Listen [here](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.