



Sunday 26th September 2021
How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!

If you have the Internet, you will find a video to accompany this sheet on YouTube from Sunday morning – search for Isle of Man Methodist Church and you will find it on our YouTube channel.

Call to Worship (Psalm 84:1-2)

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

Be still – and become aware of the presence of God – nearer than breathing – Emmanuel – God with us.

Hymn (StF 20) Read, sing or pray

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One, is here;
Come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found
we stand on holy ground.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire,
With splendour he is crowned:
How awesome is the sight
Our radiant King of Light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.

Be still for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place;
He comes to cleanse and heal,
To minister his grace:
No work too hard for him
In faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place.

Let us pray:

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Let us praise God this morning – because we are a dwelling place for God. Yes! The living God, Emmanuel, has chosen to be with us. Wherever we are right now, as we turn our hearts to worship, God is with us.

We stop and listen for a moment in silence for the still, small voice.

We say 'thank you God' again and again as we remember God's patience and mercy. However far we walk away from God, however many times we turn away from God, God never gives

up on us and never stops longing for us to return home and learn how to live the full life of the Kingdom – on earth as it is lived in heaven.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, You are faithful and just – and forgive us our sins and heal us from all unrighteousness.

Amen – Thanks be to God!

Hymn (StF 565) – Only by grace

Only by grace can we enter,
Only by grace can we stand;
Not by our human endeavour,
But by the blood of the Lamb.
Into your presence you call us,
You call us to come.
Into your presence you draw us,
And now by your grace we come.

Lord if you mark our transgressions,
Who would stand?

Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
By the blood of the lamb.

Readings: Psalm 84 & John 4: 19-24

Thoughts about 'church' & God's dwelling place

Let's look at some of the ways the people of God, the church, have been described by Jesus and in the New Testament more generally:

Jesus says we are like a field, or an olive tree, or a grape vine, or a flock of sheep. Jesus calls us friends and trains us as disciples or learners. After the resurrection – the gathering of those following 'The Way' became known as: The Body of Christ: in diversity, all needed and honoured. The Communion of Saints. Runners in

a race with a great cloud of witnesses. The family or household of God; brothers and sisters together. The Bride of Christ, passionately in love and growing in intimate relationship to Christ. God's living stones built on Christ into a living temple.

We may understand these Biblical pictures of 'the church' as people – not buildings – and yet still live our lives as if church is a place you go to get something you want. Some people treat 'church' as monument or museum. Others as a theatre of light entertainment. For some it seems to be like a fast food restaurant – choose what you want and get out quick! For others it seems to be like a football match – lots of spectators watching a few do the hard work.

So what new metaphors can we find that are more helpful for 2021?

- 1) Citizenship classes for heaven – learning the culture and language of the Kingdom?
- 2) Choir practice for trainee angels - learning harmonies of heaven – resonating with spirit ?

Here are four of my favourites:

1) The Repair Shop

Have you watched it on the BBC? Why is it so addictive – so satisfying – consoling to watch? It is a simple idea – to take items that have got broken/spoiled and get experts to restore them. Things that are too precious to throw away require team work to restore their beauty. There are Teddies with all the stuffing gone, mirrors broken, clocks that don't tick... It is an antidote to our throw-away culture.

Like the Repair Shop - church is a community where people can know they are valued – worth saving. It's where we can meet the one expert, Jesus Christ, who can repair us, restore us...

2) The hospital

There is a quote that says: 'Church should be a hospital for sinners not a hotel for the saints' Pope Francis goes further and says church should be like a field hospital after battle (remember MASH). We need an emergency room not a court room!

3) The gym

'The gym or the yoga studio is the modern-day church'. I like this metaphor – because it's about growth of healthy Christians – not just about running to church when something goes wrong. Footballers, pole-vaulters, cricketers – all prepare themselves in the gym, training off the field so they can perform well on the field. It's hard to be Christ-like in the heat of the moment, if you haven't done the spiritual conditioning.

4) My home - God's home

This is my favourite – Biblical and modern – always relevant. Church as God's home, God's dwelling place. We are God's dwelling place – when we are at home with God. How lovely is your dwelling place – O Lord of hosts.

Intercessions and Lord's Prayer:

We spend some time with God, remembering the needs of the world – and turning our worries and anxieties into prayers. We name before God those people who long for healing – and we voice to God our own needs. We bring our

prayers together in the words of the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Hymn (StF 676)

Christ from whom all blessings flow

Perfecting the saints below,
Hear us, who thy nature share,
Who thy mystic body are.

Join us in one spirit join,
Let us still receive of thine;
Still for more on thee we call,
Thou who fillest all in all.

Closer knit to thee, our Head,
Nourished, Lord, by thee, and fed,
Let us daily growth receive,
More in Jesus Christ believe.

Never from thy service move,
Needful to each other prove,
Use the grace on each bestowed,
Tempered by the art of God.

Love, like death, has all destroyed,
Rendered all distinctions void;
Names and sects and parties fall:
Thou, O Christ, art all in all.

**And now may the blessing of God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Rest and abide with us all,
now and for ever. Amen.**



Hymns Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition. Prayer and thoughts from Rev Dr Janet Corlett.