



Circuit Contact - Issue 40

Welcome to this week's Issue of the Circuit Bulletin.
Worship this week has been prepared by the Rev Richard.

CIRCUIT WORSHIP – 31 January 2021

From north and south, east and west, all are invited to come into the presence of the Lord:
whatever you have done, wherever you have been, you are welcomed by God:

CHANT: Come All You Peoples STF 22 [Come All You People - YouTube](#)

Whatever your gender, whatever your orientation, whatever your gifts, whatever your personality,
you are welcomed by God:



CHANT: Come All You Peoples STF 22 [Come All You People - YouTube](#)

Whatever your perceived faults or failings, whatever mistakes you may have made, whatever regrets you live with,
you are welcomed by God:

CHANT: Come All You Peoples STF 22 [Come All You People - YouTube](#)

Whatever your strengths, whatever your commitment, whether you identify with a faith or with no faith,
you are welcomed by God.

CHANT: Come All You Peoples STF 22 [Come All You People - YouTube](#)

Prayers...

Creator God,
you spoke to set in motion a world
filled with potential and possibility -
so that your kingdom may come
 in diversity,
 in care,
 in praise.



We worship you.

Lord Jesus,
you proclaimed a kingdom come,
where all are welcomed –
and barriers are broken down,
 enabling love,
 offering wholeness,
 uniting in praise.

We worship you.

Holy Spirit,
you bless us with your presence,
affirming our questioning and guiding us in truth -
so that we may seek God's kingdom
 with wonder,
 with intrigue,
 with praise.

We worship you.

We often pay lip service to your kingdom's values as we fear failure – our loving is weak, our openness is half-hearted, our own questions disturb us, and your ways are too challenging. When we seek a definite answer, you lead us with more questions; when we seek acceptance, you show us the ones we reject; when we think your ways are too hard, or you are asking too much of us, you show us the cross.

Forgive us when we trivialise your grace and exclude ourselves from your purpose;
forgive us when we ignore your guidance but want to feel loved;
forgive us when we dismiss the neighbours you give us;
forgive us when we turn our backs on the opportunities you offer to us to reveal your kingdom in the things we do or say.

Silence is kept.

In Christ all is made new.

We begin again as God's people.

Thanks be to God whose all-encompassing love has room even for us. Amen.



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

PSALM 111

Alleluia. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the faithful and in the congregation.

The works of the Lord are great,
sought out by all who delight in them.

**His work is full of majesty and honour
and his righteousness endures for ever.**

He appointed a memorial for his marvellous deeds ;
the Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

**He gave food to those who feared him ;
he is ever mindful of his covenant.**

He showed his people the power of his works
in giving them the heritage of the nations.

**The works of his hands are truth and justice ;
all his commandments are sure.**

They stand fast for ever and ever ;
they are done in truth and equity.

**He sent redemption to his people ; he commanded his covenant for ever ;
holy and awesome is his name.**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;
a good understanding have those who live by it ;

his praise endures for ever. From *Common Worship* Words: © The Archbishops Council 2000, 2005.



READING: Mark 1: 21 - 28 [Mark 1: 21 - 28 NRSV - The Man with an Unclean Spirit - They - Bible Gateway](#)



Reflection

Have you ever felt like you are in the wrong place? Or a place that causes you to be confused? Or felt that you don't belong? I remember when I first landed on the island of Iona on a cold, dark March evening – I couldn't really see anything (it was pitch black) and I wondered what on earth I had come to – by the time we were taken to the MacLeod Centre for a meal, the cook came out and said, "Do you have a brother Robert?" – she had studied with my brother at Bangor University.

We live in a world where many people are physically displaced and where some are emotionally or mentally displaced – and sometimes the communities to which we belong can be unforgiving places that in their busy-ness do not have time to be with others, to affirm them, to understand them, to help them belong. We are much more aware of the problems some people live with and how inadequate we feel at coping with those issues. Some people are so damaged by their life's journey that all they can do is lash out at those around them.

It strikes me that even within our church life, we do not always achieve the celebration of the God-given diversity of this world – we expect people to fit in, to do what we do, to be like us. John Harvey writes a story in the book "Fire And Bread" (compilation © 2006 Ruth Burgess) about a couple of weeks when young men from borstal, teenagers under social work supervision and folk from a hospital for people with disabilities (in this case adults with cerebral palsy) came together for a camp. After sharing together in the Communion service in the Abbey on the last evening, they all shook hands and offered peace to each other. John Harvey was the last person to leave and he heard sobbing coming from a corner of the cloisters – one of the borstal boys was clearly upset, so he went to comfort him, assuming it was because this lad was returning to borstal in the morning. "It's not that," he said, when he got hold of himself. "It's just that I never thought anyone in church would ever want to shake hands with someone like me'.



Some of the work that used to be done by Synapse in schools in Leek centred around wellbeing and self-worth with some of the young people nominated by the schools; and all these issues, we keep being told, are exacerbated by the experience of such an extended, yet necessary, lockdown. And these issues can be as prevalent in adults as well as younger people. We are aware of the damaging effect of parents on children when parents' behaviour seems to withdraw love and the parents who have an inherent inability to care for their children; some psychologists suggest that if we have not been adequately cared for and loved, the cycle continues from one generation to another.

This story of Jesus is not an easy story. Such exorcisms have captured the imagination of film-makers and those who like the horror genre – but at its very worst, it has led to the murder of at least two children and a young pregnant woman, all in this century and all in the UK. Kristy Bamu and Ayesha Ali both died after being accused of being possessed of evil spirits by their families – as did Naila Mumtaz who was six months pregnant at the time of her death. There was also an article in a national newspaper where a priest, who exorcised a home, was described as failing to detect the person who lived in the house's psychological problems. At the very least it may suggest that none of us should try and play Jesus.

In our context therefore, we have this story of Jesus. It is a controversial story – some people will take it quite literally, while others will see it as a primitive misunderstanding of mental health issues. In its context, the author very early on is capturing the attention of the readers/hearers, that at the very start of Jesus' work, after preaching that 'the time has come, the kingdom of God is near' Jesus is recognised not just by those who will follow him (Jesus has called four fishermen in v 16 – 20) but by the supernatural, "the man with an evil spirit".

This story is not really about advocating exorcisms – in the story exorcism is Jesus' work; the role of the crowd, the observers, those who represent us, was to tell others what Jesus had done. This story reminds us that good conquers evil; that even the most "evil" of situations can be redeemed; that those we are fearful of, who are different, who don't fit in *can* find their place, that there is hope and healing – but it may also suggest we need to choose it. It is easy to be dismissive of people and situations, to write someone off, but in this story, Jesus gave time to the man, and address the problems and issues and leave the man in a better place than when he first met Jesus. The "evil spirit" dehumanises the man to the extent he was most likely ostracised by his peers. This story suggests that all those things which may dehumanise us are the things that need to be exorcised – so when we fail to see those latest refugees as human beings, we are not acting in the ways of Jesus, but like the man with the evil spirit; we have been reminded this week on Holocaust Memorial Day how so many have lived with the horror of being treated as less

then human, less than equal and the devastating consequences of that. That is not the way of Jesus – who gives back to this man his humanity, and calls us to do the same to those who are so broken by life.

There is an allegorical representation of the story: Jesus represents the freedom found in the love of God, which is for all humankind, whereas the man represents all those people bound up by all those different things which prevent people from living a full and rich life, and often destroys themselves and those around them.

So, this is Jesus living the good news that he proclaims at the start of his ministry – and setting the context for what *his* story is about. Following this Jesus will liberate, re-humanise, bring love to the most love-less of situations, and in all that the fullness of life will be experienced. Instead of hurting and breaking those around us, we will build up and restore; instead of being driven by hatred of self and others, we will bring healing and hope; instead of creating borders and separation, we will create community and belonging; instead of making judgements we will show acceptance.

The story still asks us to make a choice – do we follow the life-giver, or do we continue bound by the things which ultimately destroy us. Amen



HYMN: Let Us Build A House STF 409 [Let Us Build A House - YouTube](#)

We pray that God's kingdom of love, joy, peace and hope may come into our world:

We remember...

the rich and powerful who seek God's justice...

may they see your kingdom come;

the outsiders who long for acceptance...

may they see your kingdom come;

the poor who are trapped in a cycle of poverty...

may they see your kingdom come;

the voiceless who have had their rights and freedoms removed...

may they see your kingdom come;

those weakened by the struggle for justice...

may they see your kingdom come;

those wrecked by experience, and lash out, damaging others,

may they see your kingdom come;

those dis-eased in body, mind and spirit...

may they see your kingdom come;

those who are nearing the end of this life...

may they see your kingdom come;

the ones who struggle with themselves...

may they see your kingdom come;

the unemployed who long to work...

may they see your kingdom come;

the employed who are frustrated and stressed by their employers demands,

may they see your kingdom come;

the marginalised and ignored who have done no wrong...

may they see your kingdom come;

those who live with daily discrimination and prejudice...

may they see your kingdom come;

the ordinary who go about their daily lives unnoticed...

may they see your kingdom come;

until that time, may we who see ourselves as your people, live in love and grace, and use our gifts, our time, our energy for the sake of your kingdom. **Amen**



HYMN: Jesus Christ Is Waiting STF 251 [Jesus Christ is Waiting \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)



Be blessed by God's presence;
show Good News in the way you live,
reach out in grace and love,
joy and acceptance until the kingdom comes **Amen.**

