

# Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2021

*Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.*

## **Opening prayer**

Gracious God, Lord of all,  
we thank you that we can come to you in prayer.  
that for all your greatness, and wonder, and holiness.  
we can speak with you as to a friend.  
Hear now our prayer.

We thank you that we can open our hearts to you,  
that we can pour out our innermost souls  
and share our deepest thoughts  
in the knowledge that you are there,  
always ready to listen and understand  
Hear now our prayer.

So now once more we lay our lives before you,  
open to your gaze  
the bad as well as the good.  
the doubt as well as the faith  
the sorrow as well as the joy  
the despair as well as the hope.  
Hear now our prayer.

We bring the anger as well as the peace,  
the hatred as well as the love  
the confusion as well as the certainty  
the fear as well as the trust.  
Hear now our prayer.

Gracious God,  
we bring these  
not with pride or any sense of arrogance.  
but honestly  
recognising that you know us through and through

.Hear now our prayer.

Help us to be truthful to ourselves and truthful to you,  
and so may we discover the renewing love  
which only you can offer  
a love that frees us to live as you would have us live.  
and allows us to be the people you would have us be  
Hear now our prayer in the name of Christ  
Amen.

StF 276: Lift high the cross <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgcaigsoNug>

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

### **Prayer of praise and confession**

Loving God  
this is the day you have made  
and we thank you for it.  
thank you for all the good things which surround us  
our homes  
our families  
our friends  
our church  
the vastness of the universe,  
the beauty of the natural world,  
the sights and sounds of daily life  
For all you have given.  
We praise and worship you

We thank you for all the interest  
and opportunities  
and pleasures this day will bring  
For all you have given,  
we praise and worship you

We thank you for the love of Christ encircling us,  
his Spirit guiding us  
your eternal purpose constantly inspiring us  
for all you have given  
we praise and worship you.

We thank you for this day set aside  
so that we might praise you,  
so that we might bring our lives before you,

and consecrate every day to your service  
For all you have given,  
we praise and worship you

.Loving God  
we bring you our praise  
and reverently we offer our worship  
we declare your greatness,  
we acknowledge your faithfulness  
we rejoice in your goodness,  
marvel at your holiness  
All we have and all that is we owe to you.  
For all you have given  
we praise and worship you

You are ever at work in our lives and our world  
striving to help and strengthen,  
heal and comfort  
forgive and restore  
undo wrongs and establish right.  
For all you have given,  
we praise and worship you

Loving God  
forgive us that we have sometimes lost sight  
of your great love,  
that we have been forgetful of you  
greeting some days with indifference,  
even reluctance,  
instead of welcoming them as your gift.  
We have failed to count our blessings  
or appreciate how fortunate we really are.  
We have even made this time of worship  
a duty or tradition, rather than a privilege.  
For all our faults  
forgive us, O Lord,

Loving God  
we know we know we have failed you in much  
have not given you due recognition,  
have not shown thanksgiving in our hearts,  
we have not lived as your people.  
For all our faults,  
forgive us, O Lord

Have mercy on us,  
cleansing us from all our weaknesses  
pardon our sins  
renew our faith and restore us to your side  
For all our faults,  
forgive us, O Lord

And so with your help,  
through the grace of Christ,  
and in the power of the Holy Spirit,  
may we be enabled to live more faithfully  
as your servants,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen

Lords Prayer.

1 John 3:11-20  
Luke 6: 27-36

STF 615: Let love be real <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZUo4gG>

### **Address**

What is love? How can we define it? Do you and I understand the same concept when we hear that word 'love'? Some years ago I was flabbergasted to hear that the Inuit people (Eskimos to most folk) have numerous words to describe snow. There is one word to describe the light, small flakes of snow that immediately melt, another word for those very large flakes that float so regally down like swan feathers. Another word that points to the sort of snow that appears to fly at you horizontally, directly into your face and stings. It's the sort that makes you look like your car is travelling at light speed as it gets caught in the headlight beam when travelling late at night down a country road. I certainly remember cross country runs in Senior school days when returning to school, my front totally covered from head to toe in solid snow and my back completely dry! When snow comes in so many ways wouldn't it be so much more helpful if by one word we knew how it had fallen?

Love too is defined by the relationship it comes in, whatever relationship it falls into. New Testament Greek (like the Inuit people and snow) relied on different words to describe that word we think of as 'love'. For example 'patros' (from which we have the word patriotic) means love of country, 'philos' means brotherly love (hence Philadelphia 'city of brotherly love'). 'Eros' (not just a statue in Piccadilly Circus in London) means/implies sexual love however the most important usage is 'agape' which is the word used especially by Paul for the love of God, particularly from God to us. God's love is all-encompassing, it is for everyone regardless of sexual

orientation, age, social standing – as an old shepherd was once heard saying “God loves us all the same”.

All us seek to be loved, from birth we appreciate the loving arms of caring adults, for many of us that would probably be our mothers (even the hymn writers acknowledge that cp STF 81 second half of verse 1). Later we look forward to the wider love of family – brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Then as we get a little older we look to being loved by girl/boyfriend some of whom go onto becoming lifetime partners and then in turn may look forward to the love of children and possibly grandchildren. I realise that this is not always within everyone's experience and there are those who experience and value love from pets particularly cats and dogs. Doctors have pointed out the calming effect of petting animals, often pointing out how Blood Pressure is often reduced and anxiety levels are lowered just by listening to a cat purring. It is something to do with the releasing of Endorphins (a natural hormone secreted in our own bodies) which helps us feel good.

Why is it that too many people find it difficult to not only speak of the love of God but basically fail to acknowledge let alone feel it. For a number of people God is a non-entity, something at best “out there” which they indicate with a vague hand gesture pointing out into the wide blue yonder. They find it difficult to accept God can be small enough to be 'within' us and we can be totally filled with his love. One little girl was asking sometime ago about God, how big was he and how could he care for everyone in the world and especially her because she was so small. Her mother said God was so big his heart is big enough to hold everyone and as Christians we should invite him into our hearts because there was room for him there. The logic completely flummoxed the youngster, God is so big everyone could fit in him, yet he could come into her heart, Surely she argued that if God came into her heart then he would fill it and bits of him would stick out all over? “Yes”, said her mother, “They're the bits you can pass onto others because they'll be his love and he keeps giving you that so you can keep giving it to others”..The little girl said she liked that idea.

How often do we speak of the love of God to others? Are we a little afraid about speaking of it because we do not want to sound a bit weird? Yet how will others know about God's love if each of us doesn't tell others? We expect people just to come to come to Church because after all isn't that where people come to discover God? Just think of it this way – when you discover somewhere that sells beautiful items at a fair price do you keep that knowledge to yourself or do you tell others so that they can appreciate what you now have? Isn't it selfish to keep that knowledge all to yourself? If you know God's love in your heart don't you owe it to your neighbours to tell them about it? Or are you hesitant because you don't know quite how to do it? How to speak of something others may feel as nebulous?

I think we find it difficult to speak about God because it is something we are not used to. Talking about the weather is easy because it is something we all experience and know about, it is typically the British topic of conversation isn't it? Yet the more we

do it the easier it gets, so start by talking to other Christians about His love. There are courses available online if that is what you prefer, when we can get back to meeting in church again there will be opportunities to speak together face-to-face. Then, as you feel more confident, you may feel here is the opportune moment to speak to others. In the meantime don't hesitate to speak to God in your quiet time together, ask Him to inspire you through the gift of the Holy Spirit – after all you can read how He inspired the disciples at Pentecost in Acts.

### **Prayer of intercession**

Living God  
we pray for those who face the future  
with uncertainty or anxiety  
those who fear it,  
who despair of it  
or who feel they have no future

We pray for those in the troubled places of the world  
those who long for peace  
an end to conflict and a time of harmony  
but who in their hearts have given up hoping

We pray for those who face trauma  
and upheaval in their lives  
what seemed secure swept from under them  
what they had hoped for denied them  
what they had trusted in proven false

We pray for those who doubt their ability  
to cope with what life may bring  
those overwhelmed by pressures  
paralysed by fears  
crushed by sorrows

We pray for those faced with difficult decisions  
circumstances beyond their control  
unexpected dangers  
awkward choices

Living God  
reach out to all for whom the future  
seems uncertain or unwelcome  
and bring the assurance that even in the darkest moments  
the greatest challenges

the most worrying times  
you are there working out your purpose:  
able to bring light out of darkness,  
hope out of despair,  
joy out of sorrow  
and good out of evil.

Grant the confidence that there is nothing in heaven or earth  
in life or death  
in the present or the future  
that is finally able to separate us from your love.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord  
Amen

STF 620: Thou God of truth and love  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJyF696PFKk>

Benediction  
Let us now continue on in our life  
with laughter in our eyes  
a smile on our lips  
a song in our heart  
merriment in our soul  
sharing the joy that Jesus has given to all