

Devotions at home

Methodist Way of Life – Challenging Injustice

Introductions and explanations

These notes are offered for you to use as you wish; please adapt them to suit – alone, or with family, or gathered virtually.

There are parts where you are invited to choose for yourself, so I suggest that you look in advance at the options.

The structure of the devotions has three sections: Opening, God’s word, and Response. I have offered several ways of approaching the readings so you could revisit this material through the week using different options. It differs slightly from my usual content to suit a preaching appointment at East Leake, thus saving preparation time. Apologies for any inconvenience.

You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Although I have “designed” this assuming that those using it have access to a bible and a hymn book (StF = Singing the Faith, SoF=Songs of Fellowship). I have included links so a computer with internet is a good alternative. I have tried to find links to songs with words displayed but without ads; this has not always been possible.

There are alternatives for each hymn as I know not everyone knows the same songs; you can use these how you wish - read or say them if you don’t know the tune; sing unaccompanied or with the internet links provided.

One option is called “Lectio divina”, which is a Latin phrase meaning Divine Reading. It is a way of reading scripture which gives an opportunity to think deeply about it and respond thoughtfully.

Notes:

- Words in *purple italics* are instructions.
- In some places there are wording options presented as [me/us].

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Opening

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God.

Opening Words: Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Pause in silence, or you may wish to use one of the following:

or [StF001 All people that on earth do dwell](#)
or [StF048 From the Highest of Heights](#)

Prayer: Lord, you are steadfast in your love, and infinite in your mercy;
you welcome sinners and invite them to be your guests.
[I/we] confess [my/our] sins, trusting in you to forgive us.
Pause in silence
[I/we] have yielded to temptation and sinned:
Lord, have mercy.
[I/we] have turned from our neighbours in their need:
Christ, have mercy.
[I/we] have resisted your word in our hearts:
Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins, and keep us in life eternal. Amen

Lord's Prayer [God our Father \(sung\)](#)
or [See the back of Singing the Faith](#)

Prayer:

Either A

Lord, [I/we] give [myself/ourselves] to you,
Help [me/us] know your promises and rely on your grace.

Name the people and situations you want to pray for.

Close your prayers of intercession by repeating:

Lord, [I/we] give these people and situations to you,
Help [me/us] know your promises and rely on your grace. Amen

Or B:

Almighty God,

We come to worship you, and though we desire to focus on you, we come with worries and burdens which distract us.

Like a compassionate Father, you invite us to bring our concerns to you and so we pray:

We bring to God in prayer the things which concern us, our health, financial worries and difficult relationships. <silence>

We pray for family and friends whom we know to be in need of support and comfort at this time. <silence>

We also bring to God our wider concerns – situations in the news, those fearing redundancy and seeking work. <silence>

We pray for those in positions of leadership and responsibility; those seeking to bring peace, avert harm and give assistance. <silence>

We pray for God's guidance, through the Holy Spirit, in every situation; that we and all people would hear and act to build the Kingdom of God. <silence>

These and all our prayers we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, in whom we trust to answer our prayers according to the Father's will. **Amen**

God's Word

Hymn StF164 Your words to me are life and health
or [StF156 From the breaking of the dawn](#)

Reading: [Habakkuk 1:1-4](#) *Read the passages aloud if possible*
[Matthew 23:23](#)
[Luke 10:27](#)

Consider: Is there anything in the passages that stands out, or you've heard from a new perspective?

Option 1 - Sermon

As you may be aware, my daughter Ellen was sent home from school to isolation twice this half term, while tens of thousands of sports fans were gathering at Wembley, at Wimbledon and many other places. It felt so unfair.

Of course, life is unfair, and isolation guidelines are necessary for our health. Sometimes life is more than unfair, it's unjust. There are examples in our news:

- The employees who are subject to fire-rehire tactics (Brush, British Gas, Clarkes and others);
- Workers who are forced to work when sick owing to no sick pay or job security;
- People who participated in Vaccine trials whose jobs are not accepted by other countries to enable them to travel.

I'm sure you can think of more.

We are all alert to personal unfairness (although some assume they're entitled to more than is the case). The Christian and Jewish religions have always known Yahweh as a God who is on the side of the poor, dispossessed and voiceless. Our Old Testament reading reflects this - God's people cry out confidently to Him, knowing that he is a God who cares.

Jesus himself rates justice, highly, together with mercy and faith, as he tells the Pharisees that following the law in infinite detail is not enough, nor the higher priority.

At the heart of the Christian Faith is a massive injustice. An innocent man executed for no crime, and people in power quite deliberately perpetrated the injustice for their own ends. Yet that man, Jesus, chose to take the punishment, and not defend himself because of love. It wasn't like those who are powerless and voiceless. Jesus chose, in love and obedience, to accept this injustice.

Jesus died in our place, taking upon himself the consequences of our sins. In so doing he won for us forgiveness, freedom from our sins. He rose to life and ascended to heaven which brings us eternal life with the God who loves us.

When we come to believe and understand the cost of that love, it is our calling to love Christ our Lord, and to obediently follow his commands. The love of God and of neighbour is practically worked out in many ways, but one of them is to be alert to and concerned about issues of injustice. It stems from our God who is on the side of the poor, dispossessed and voiceless. And throughout the bible tells us to call out injustice and care for those who have nothing. It is in the

Methodist Church tradition too, for example, Wesley Opposed slavery, and many Methodists respond to campaigns on Social Justice.

I believe we are to follow the example of Jesus who made no complaint against how he was treated, but showed mercy to others. This mercy is more than justice, it's compassionate leniency; it's generosity. So in our world today, where and how can we challenge injustice, model generosity and reveal God's Kingdom?

Right at the moment Coronavirus is making life worse for the poor and vulnerable.

- Individuals have been forced into unsustainable debt.
- Poor countries cannot afford to vaccinate as we have in the UK, but are mainly given the leftovers from richer countries, perhaps with short expiry dates or needing cold storage they can't provide.
- Climate change's worst affects are suffered by those least able to cope.

Again I'm sure you can think of many more.

There are just as many ways we can help, starting with prayer, but not ending there. What are we doing, as individuals and as a church community to respond to injustice, in mercy and faith?

Option 2 - Bible study

Read the passages again;

Some background: Habakkuk is among the minor prophets, a contemporary of Nahum, Zephaniah and Jeremiah. The book is structured as a dialogue between God and Habakkuk where the prophet confronts God with what he sees as inconsistencies in his actions towards his people. Our reading is a lament or complaint reminiscent of Psalms. Do you identify with the anguished questions that Habakkuk asks?

Habakkuk can only ask these questions because he understands God as just and righteous, and expects God to have the ability and desire to intervene. How is this same understanding reflected in the life of Jesus? And of the Church today?

Have you ever cried out to God as Habakkuk did, or would you feel able to challenge God. What was/might be His response?

Reflect on what unjust or oppressive situations are going on in our world today, perhaps you'd like to make, draw or write something in response.

Option 3 - Lectio divina

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what this passage might be saying to you today.

Read the passage a second time, lingering over the bits that capture your attention. Reflect on what the passage brings to mind and how it touches your life today. Note what feelings the passage invokes in you.

Read the passage a third time:

Use this reading to respond to God, praying about what has come to mind, take time to pray silently, listening for God's words to you.

You might like to record what you discovered and your response in a journal.

Option 4 - Messy church activity

Weighing scales have been a symbol of justice for centuries.

Gather a stick or (dowelling) rod, string, two yoghurt pots or eggbox segments, weights from kitchen scales, or lumps of modelling dough measured to weigh different amounts, small items to weigh.

Make a pair of scales by tying string around the centre of the stick/ rod as a handle. Make a 'pan' for each end by tying a yoghurt pot or eggbox segment to it. Use the weights to weigh different items.

Make it 'unfair' by moving one of the pans nearer the centre on one side.

Talk about how hard it is to stay fair. Consider: where do you see unfair situations happening in the world today and what might make them fairer?

Response

Hymn [StF696 For the Healing of the nations](#)

or [StF702 I Will Speak out](#)

Prayer: Loving God,
As I come before you in prayer,
help me to focus my thoughts on you,
letting distractions fall away.

Silence

I offer you my words,
those of kindness and support,
those which have wounded,
those offered with care,
and those carelessly spoken.

Silence

I offer you my actions,
those of generosity and care,
those of selfishness,
those done from love
and those neglected and undone.

Silence

I offer you my thoughts,
those of an open mind and heart,
those closed by prejudice,
those of love
and those of fear.

Silence

I offer you myself,
you know me
and love me.
Help me to love others
as you have loved me.
Amen

Almighty God,
In the power of your Spirit
we offer you whole selves as a living sacrifice.
Strengthen us to serve you,
and gather us and all people into your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN.