

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.

HOLY COMMUNION

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

HYMN StF 92 Think of a world vv 1,4,5,7,8

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeTdh-oHJak>

Let us pray

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden;
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may truly love you
and worthily praise your holy name;
through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

Let us confess our sins to God

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

Silence

In your mercy

**forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw *us* to himself,
and cleanse *us* from all *our* sins
that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

NEW TESTAMENT READING

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark 10: 13 - 16

Jesus Blesses Little Children

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

HYMN StF 443 Come let us sing of a wonderful love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCSx7ZZ3-2I>

Sermon

There's something magical and irresistible about little children. A baby melts the hardest hearts, brings a smile to the sad, gives hope to the hopeless, and turns otherwise ordinary people into obnoxious grandparents! Children seem so nice until you have them 24/7! Jesus couldn't have meant that we are to be like children in every way. After all they can be little devils! So, in what sense did Jesus mean that we should be like little children? What qualities of children do we need to receive the kingdom of God? What qualities of a child does God want us to imitate?

A childlike faith

God is real to children. They don't doubt his existence. They find it easy to trust him and believe. But as we grow older, reason and experience take over. We become sceptical of anything beyond our experience. We reason and debate God out of being sometimes. We find it hard to trust anyone else let alone God.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Heb 11:1. God has given us ample evidence to believe - the beauty of creation, the person of Jesus, answered prayer, transformed lives, and the Bible. But that's evidence, not proof. To please God we have to examine the evidence and then take a step of faith. This requires childlike humility and trust.

In *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, Willy Wonka hides five gold tickets in his Wonka Bars. Each ticket wins a tour of his chocolate factory and win a lifetime's supply of chocolate. Five children find the tickets and come to the factory for the tour. Through the day, each of the children falls victim to greed, except for Charlie Bucket.

Near the end of the story, Wonka reveals his plan: he's looking for someone to take over the factory and Charlie is the one chosen. The conversation goes like this:

Willy: How did you like the chocolate factory, Charlie? Charlie: I think it's the most wonderful place in the whole world. Willy: I'm very pleased to hear you say that, because I'm giving it to you. I can't go on forever, and I don't really want to try. So who can I trust to run the factory for me when I leave to take care of the Oomph Loompas? Not a grownup. A grownup would want to do everything his own way, not mine. That's why I decided

a long time ago I had to find a child—a very honest, loving child whom I could tell all my most precious candy-making secrets. Charlie: And that's why you sent out the golden tickets? Willy: That's right. So the factory's yours, Charlie. You can move in immediately. Our golden ticket is paid for by Christ! We receive it as a gift not by merit.

A childlike wonder

Children squeal with delight at songs, sounds, toys. Watch the face of a child picking a flower, stroking a pet, or singing a song for the first time. We can quickly lose sight of the beauty around us so that we don't see anything special at all. The harsh reality of pain and conflict can make us cynical and blind. Remember what Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Mk 10:15. Wonder is to life what romance is to marriage. There has to be more than romance, or the marriage won't last. But if there is never any romance, the marriage becomes dull and stale.

Now we can't go around on a high all the time. However, if we never get goose bumps, or tears in our eyes, if we never admire the wonder of all that God has created for us to enjoy, the Christian life is tedious and boring.

Think again about what Jesus did for us on the cross and be filled with a childlike wonder and enthusiasm. Has communion become commonplace for us? Do we need to be reminded of the blessings that we all have but so many times we take so much for granted? Do we need a new sense of wonder and awe? Open your eyes and look around you. Open your eyes and look at your Bible, open your eyes and look at someone who has encouraged you or inspired you. Pause, stop and give thanks to God.

A child knows that they are dependent—upon others. As Christians we must remember that we are dependent upon Christ. We cannot enter the Kingdom of God without being helplessly dependent on Christ!

Acceptance of the simple things

Do you remember the story of Elisha and Naaman? Naaman was angry because the prophet told him to do something simple that his leprosy might be cured – to wash in the tiny, muddy puddle of the Jordan! Surely he'd be better washing in the great rivers of his homeland? He'd expected to have to perform some difficult task. But he took Elisha at his word and was healed.

That story reminds me of how some people react to the plan of salvation. To some it sounds too easy, too simple to be true. They feel that there is something they must add to God's plan for salvation. But the Bible is clear, "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy (Titus 3:5). The gospel we proclaim must be free of good works and human efforts, even though it may sound too easy and full of trust and wonder.

It is to be received as a free gift, a gift that is overwhelming. We cannot earn it. Salvation comes from trusting in God's mercy and grace, through Christ who gave up everything for us that we might have abundant life in Him. He's done the work and we bring faith and trust that Christ is sufficient.

Prayers of Intercession

Within our darkest night,
Response: **Let your light shine.**

God of all creation, you hold the depths of the earth in your hands.
You are closer to us than the air we breathe.
Fill our souls with your wonderful love and light.

Give us strength and courage to reflect that love and light in the world.
Let us never shrink back from who we are in you or hide our light inside ourselves. Renew in us a sense of joy, painting the dark shadows around us with your light, your love and your salvation.

Hear us today as we pray for a world too often darkened by hatred, evil, power and greed.

Within our darkest night,
Let your light shine.

God of power and might, your broken world cries out from the depths, a world dominated by the darkness of war, terror, pain and suffering. We think of the on-going and deepening conflict in Syria and the Middle East. We share the pain and anguish of those who have had to flee from

their homes, countries and livelihoods, who risk their lives, desperate for a new start free from fear and war.

May they see your light, feel your strength and power
and know the truth of your promise
that we shall not be overcome by the dark shadows of life
or the darkness of human nature.

Within our darkest night,
Let your light shine.

God of compassion and grace, we share with you our love and concern
for people in a dark place today.

We have on our hearts the friends and loved ones of the victims of
violence and hatred.

We pray that they will find your strength
in the compassion and love of those around them.

We pray for tolerance in our society.

We pray for all Muslims suffering from Anti-Islamic hate crimes.

Let your light shine through the darkness of all their pain and their
suffering.

Within our darkest night,
Let your light shine.

God of life, we ask for your healing power
on those who are enduring pain and illness.

We especially think of ...

and all those we name quietly in our hearts...

We share the grief of people close to us, who've recently lost loved ones.

We especially think of ...

We remember that as we weep with the grieving,
we embrace the joy of ...

We know your everlasting light shines with us,
in moments of great sadness and great joy.

Within our darkest night,
Let your light shine.

God of love and hope,
Renew in us a deeper sense of who we are in you.
Help us to be aware of your presence each and every day.
Make us instruments of love and praise.
May our words, actions and lives be living examples
of your forgiving, healing, life-giving love.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

HYMN StF 585 – God whose love is all around us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhKsmIH10Oo>

THE THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you

and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

We praise you, gracious Father,
our Maker and Sustainer.
You have created the heavens and the earth
and formed us in your own image.
Though we sinned against you,
your love for us was constant,
and you sent your Son Jesus Christ
to be the Saviour of the world.
He proclaimed your kingdom, by word and deed,
And was put to death on the cross.
You raised him from the dead;
you exalted him in glory;
and through him you have sent your Holy Spirit,
calling us to be your people,
a community of faith.

**And so with angels and archangels
And all the choirs of heaven,
We join in the triumphant hymn:**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy God, we praise you
That on the night in which he was betrayed
Our Saviour Christ took bread
and gave you thanks;

he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
'Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper
he took the cup of wine, gave thanks;
and gave it to them, saying:
'Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant,
Poured out for all people
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection,
And proclaiming his eternal sacrifice,
We offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving,
As we declare the mystery of faith:

Christ has died:

Christ is risen:

Christ will come again.

**Send down your Holy Spirit
that these gifts of bread and wine
may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Unite us with him for ever
and bring us with the whole creation
to your eternal kingdom.**

**Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,
In the power of the Holy Spirit,
We worship you in songs of everlasting praise.
Blessing and honour, and glory and power**

Be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The gifts of God for the people of God
May Jesus Christ be praised

Let us pray:

**We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.**

THE SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life.
Those who come to me shall not hunger
/And those who believe in me shall never thirst.'

The body and blood of Christ keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

PRAYERS AND DISMISSAL

Silence

Let us pray.

**We thank you, Lord,
That you have fed us in this sacrament,
United us with Christ,
And given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
Prepared for all people. Amen.**

HYMN StF 457 Author of faith eternal Word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KywV6mCIGaA>

The blessing of God,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Remain with you always. Amen.

Go in peace in the power of the Spirit
To live and work to God's praise and glory.
Thanks be to God. Amen.