



# The Sunday Supplement

Issue 17: 11th July 2020

## Call to Worship

Come and worship,  
everyone on earth,  
everywhere the sun shines,  
**let's praise God together!**

For listening when we call,  
answering our prayers,  
forgiving our mistakes,  
and providing what we need:  
**let's praise God together!**

Come and worship,  
everyone on earth,  
everywhere the sun shines,  
**let's praise God together!**

## Prayer

O God,  
We gather together in Your presence with  
expectation,  
hungry for an encounter with You,  
eager to hear Your Word.

Open our eyes and ears to the presence of  
Your Holy Spirit.

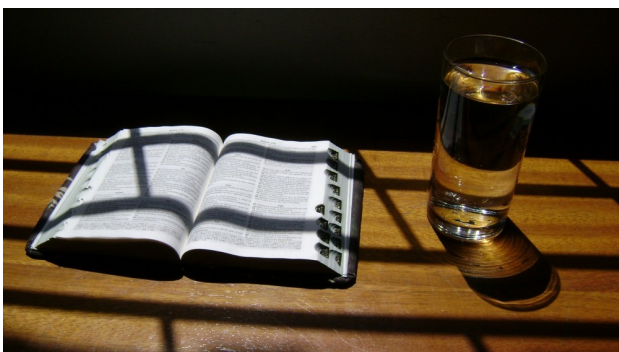
May the seeds of Your Word scattered  
among us this morning  
fall on fertile soil.

May they take root in our hearts and lives,  
and produce an abundant harvest  
of good words and deeds.

We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ,  
our teacher and our Lord.

Amen.

*Christine Longhurst <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/>*



## Reading

Matthew 13:1-9 & 18-23



## Prayer: The Divine Gardener

The Divine Gardener cannot sow seeds  
of justice and peace  
where there is nothing but hearts of  
dry, hard rocks.

We confess that our hearts may need  
tilling  
and the digging out of the deeply  
rooted sins  
that crowd out seedlings planted with  
divine compassion.

God of steadfast love,  
you change bitter tears of remorseful  
hearts  
with raindrops of mercy,  
**Now let us germinate a new life,  
growing with integrity!**

God of steadfast love,  
you change the cold shame of contrite  
hearts  
with sunrays of mercy  
**Now let us sprout a new life, growing  
with honesty!**

God of steadfast love,  
you change the stony edges of  
repentant hearts  
into landscapes of mercy,  
**Now let us branch out into new life,  
growing with generosity!**

Divine Gardener,  
You tend us in steadfast love,  
Unending mercies, and eternal  
faithfulness;  
you cultivate true friendship with you  
through boundless forgiveness.  
In Christ, this faithful love is planted in  
our hearts.  
Gathered as your community of  
believers, our family of faith,  
with the help of the Holy Spirit living in  
us,  
we can now produce forgiveness for each  
other as we are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God!**

*James E. Janeczek*  
<http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/year-c/p/pentecost-ordinary-time-21.html>

## Thought for the week



Gardens across the UK are blooming this year. Good weather in the Spring coincided with the introduction of the 'stay at home' instruction imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those fortunate enough to have gardens of their own rediscovered the beauty of the natural world on their back doorstep. Many took up tools, bought seeds and began nurturing plants. As a result, in many places, Britain really is in bloom this summer.

The garden at Highams Park Baptist Church has also needed some attention this year. Drainage work had disturbed large areas of the lawn. When the holes were filled in the drainage company sowed seed that failed to take due to lack of water and poor preparation of the ground. Two months later the picture is much brighter thanks to the work of our church gardener. Careful preparation of the soil to remove stones before reseeding and regular watering during the sunniest month on record were needed. The area is now restored and the grass growing well.

In the coming weeks churches in Britain will begin to reopen. New guidance has been issued to ensure this is done safely in these early post-pandemic times. The restrictions in place will shape collective worship and prayer for some time in ways that many feel will be uncomfortable. Rather like the rocky ground Jesus describes in the parable of the sower this new territory seems unpromising. The challenge to Christians in this new situation will be to find ways of nurturing new life in these difficult conditions.

Changing the old familiar ways is never easy. Norman the missionary knew that a new strain of rice could help his community in Guinea Bissau. It took some time for the villagers to trust him enough to begin planting the new seed. They were suspicious of the unfamiliar and afraid of the consequences of change. In the end the results were transformative. In the same way, Christians in Britain today face a choice. Church services will look and feel different for the foreseeable future. Learning to worship in this new situation may be difficult but there is the possibility that the results could be transformative. Together we must find the strength to overcome our suspicion of the unfamiliar and trust God to help us embrace change.

Careful preparations are underway to give the seeds that will be planted the best chance of growth. Although success depends upon the action of the Divine Gardener, the decision to plant is ours to take. We move forward in faith, trusting the God we worship to water the seeds that are planted and to bring them to growth when the time is right.

# It is well with my soul

When peace like a river, attendeth my way  
When sorrows like sea billows roll  
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say  
It is well, it is well, with my soul

It is well  
With my soul  
It is well, it is well with my soul

Though Satan should buffet, though trials  
should come  
Let this blest assurance control  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul

It is well (it is well)  
With my soul (with my soul)  
It is well, it is well with my soul

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul!

It is well (it is well)  
With my soul (with my soul)  
It is well, it is well with my soul

It is well (it is well)  
With my soul (with my soul)  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

*Songwriters: Horatio G. Spafford / Phillip P. Bliss*

Sheila Humphrey chose "It is well with my soul" for this week's Sunday Supplement. Throughout early lockdown two Very Old hymns came to my mind.... "Nearer my God to Thee" and "It is well". Both seemed appropriate on many levels! I would like to reacquaint you, or introduce you to, "It is well with my soul". It has been a comfort and affirmation for me and I hope you find it valuable. Do sing along and make the words your own.

## Blessing

As you go from here, remember this:  
the same Spirit of God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead,  
also lives in you,  
breathing new life and freedom into your hearts and minds.  
So go from here with joy and confidence,  
knowing that God Is at work within you.

