

*Dear Heaton Moor United Church,*

*Trinity Sunday greetings to you all. Trust you are all doing well.*

*It was good to see many of our members at our Church on Sunday at the Holy Communion service. This week, Linda and me visited few of our friends at their houses, listening to them, praying with them and having Holy communion at their homes. It was quite a moving experience, listening to people's faith stories and specially how prayer, faith and friendships have sustained them during lockdown. It was also good to have walked with couple from our church this week.*

*Thanks to Jonnie who will leading the service this Sunday at our church and also on our YouTube channel. We are grateful to Jonnie for being with us during this student placement year, and this Sunday will be his last service as a student ordinand. We wish Jonnie all God's blessings in all his future ministerial engagements. We have had many positive feedbacks for his ministerial contributions, and we want to place on record our appreciations to Jonnie. Our prayers go with Jonnie as he will be ordained in July this year and he takes on his Pastoral appointment in the Missional Partnership of the Manchester area of the North west Synod, URC.*

*It was an inspiring experience to visit Highfield school at Brinnington in Stockport this week. This is a Stockport MBC pupils referral unit. The Headteacher of the school explained passionately the work that they have been doing for the children at school, and all the four-member team from the circuit who visited the school, came back inspired recognising the commitment, efforts and dedication of the school towards the betterment of the children. We are exploring to find some common avenues and possibilities in working with the school in the near future.*

*We were at the Mersey Vale Primary school on Thursday this week doing school pantry, in our effort to address holiday hunger for children and their families during the half-term. Many thanks to all those who have supported and donated food towards this endeavour. Thanks to JoAnne, Linda, Hannah and Helen for loading the food in their cars and for volunteering in the distribution of the food to the families.*

*This week, I was also at the Church Action and Poverty's theology collective discussing about "Dignity, Agency and Power," which was*

very encouraging. One of the learning from these conversations was, “if you cut the texts of poverty from Bible, it falls apart.” How true it is that our Bible calls us to address issues of poverty, contesting greed, wealth and riches. This week, I was also part of a team that brought out a video on Dalit theological offering commemorating the first anniversary of George Floyd’s murder, and if you are interested you can watch this video on this link: <https://youtu.be/GIocxiaFafU>

This weekend, Cliff college Festival 2021 is taking place online called ‘Festival at Home’ during 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 with a theme, “Around the Campfire,” and you find the details of the programme on this link: <https://cliffcollege.ac.uk/cliff-festival/cliff-festival-2021-around-the-campfire>. You might recognise the speaker on Saturday, the 29<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm, and also the church where this recording took place.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection for this Sunday and also the worship resource for your kind perusal.

May the peace and love of our Tribune God be with you all.

Thanking you,

With warm regards,

Raj

27<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

It has been a pretty quiet week all round which is reflected in a much shorter notice sheet this week. Not that I'm complaining!

On Wednesday Raj I visited Highfield School in Brinnington along with 3 members of the Circuit Team. The teaching team at Highfield works with students from across the borough who have been excluded from mainstream school due to social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. I was moved by the passion that the headteacher showed when he explained the work at the school and the approach they take to develop a personalised package of studies to each student. This was an initial conversation, and I am excited to see how the conversation develops and how we can work in partnership with the school.



I was at another school on Thursday, Mersey Vale. This time with our termly school pantry. We provided food to 5 families and have been asked to provide a couple more food parcels to help over the school holidays.

It would be easy to question how successful this project is if you look at numbers alone, however the team all agree that if we help one family it is successful. Additionally, building our presence back at the school and developing relationships with both staff and families can only ever be a good thing. This project also brings together Heaton Moor United Church, Heaton Mersey Church and Christians in Schools. It is comprised of both volunteers and paid workers and being together on Thursday in the sunshine we shared ideas and experiences and offered help and support for future projects.

The June booking form has been sent by email. If you have not received it please check your Spam folder before contacting the office.

As always if I can be of any help please do not hesitate to contact me.

*JoAnne*

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Heaton Moor United Church



heaton Moor United Church



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**Office Opening** The office opening times for next week will be:

**Monday 10 - 2**

**Tuesday 10 - 2**

**Wednesday 10 - 2**

**Thursday Closed**

**Friday 9-1**



## Thursday Prayer

### A Reflection for Earth Day



God,  
Creator of All,

We offer our prayer in gratitude and humility that we might heed your call to care for one another through our care of the least, the lowest and the most vulnerable of all your blessed creation.

Grant, we pray, the courage to speak on behalf of the soft soil under our feet, the running and still waters, the warmth of the sun on our face, and all the crawling, flying and swimming creatures you love. May our courage to speak translate into actions that protect our planet – so that our children and their children might enjoy the fruits of what we sow.

In your name, we pray.  
**AMEN.**

*Prayer: Card from chausa.org Earth Day Resources 2021*

## FUNDRAISING UPDATES

United Stockport Circuit has set up a JustGiving page to support the work of The Christian Service Agency in India.

The Christian Service Agency is the Service Arm of the National Council of Churches in India. More information about the work they did during the first wave of the pandemic and what they are aiming to do during this second wave can be found on the JustGiving page.

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/stockportcircuit>

Thank you to all who have donated, to date £630 has been raised.



Over 30 miles  
walked

90 cream teas  
given out

10 + volunteers

Donations from  
Rodda's Clotted Cream  
& Tiptree Jam

4 street collections  
raising £648.21

£922.50 donated  
online

**TOTAL received** with Gift Aid  
**£3186.26**



## *Prayers from Linda*

### **Prayer for Church Family**

Father, we praise and bless you for every member of Your Church family here and throughout the world, and for the diverse ways that you graciously use each one to fulfil the particular role that you have purposed for us, in your wider plans and purposes. Thank you, that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Thank You, that we are stones being built up into a glorious dwelling-place, a Temple fit for our God, so that we may proclaim your praises with our lips and in our lives. You have brought us out of darkness into your wonderful light and we praise and bless you for your grace and mercy towards us and all people. What a privileged people we are and how we bless and thank You for making us one with each other, and in union with Christ Jesus our Lord. Stir up in our hearts a desire to be in unity one with the other, under the banner of Christ our Head. Your truth and keep us ever looking to Jesus, Who alone is the Way to God, Amen.



### **Prayer for our earth**

All powerful God, you are present in the universe and in the smallest of your Creatures you embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with your peace, So that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle, for justice, love and peace. Amen

If anyone would like to share a Prayer  
with the church family, please call Linda  
on 07564839380 or  
E-mail [lindawfleming625@gmail.com](mailto:lindawfleming625@gmail.com).



No names required because  
God Knows.



## **To Disciple Christ is to be 'Born Again': A Re-reading from 'Below'**

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### **John 3:1-17**

The gospel lesson for this Trinity Sunday from John 3:1-17 is a call towards a new birth in faith and to become a new creation in Christ and for Christ, for Christ plays a midwifery role in trying to give a new birth experience in faith to Nicodemus. Jesus tried hard and insisted Nicodemus to push hard to come out as a 'born again' or 'born from above' person, and also helping all of us as listeners of this word today to push hard to come as 'new born people in faith.' Nicodemus was struck in between in that labour for new life, for he neither could come out nor go in that day.

The conversation between leader Nicodemus and Jesus comes straight after the wedding at Cana and the cleansing of Temple by Jesus in the previous chapter. For Nicodemus on knowing these acts done by Jesus, came to Jesus by night, for in John 3:2 he says, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Nicodemus was a powerful person in that context, for he is a religious teacher by calling who has well read all the religious scriptures, a Pharisee by birth, a leader and a ruler in the government of his day, and commanded authority on all fronts of his life. Jesus encounters this powerful man with the gospel of 'born again' theology, a theology which is invitational into a journey towards a new birth experience, giving up all the old forms and practices. This periscope did not mention, how Nicodemus responded or acted to Jesus' invitation, probably he went unconvinced and confused about this new birth experience, for we see him to be mentioned at two other instances in John's gospel, once in 7<sup>th</sup> chapter asking his co-governmental authorities to investigate properly on the accusations made against Jesus, and for the last time in 19<sup>th</sup> chapter where he comes with expensive spices to embalm the body of Jesus Christ at his burial. I think those appearances are too late for Nicodemus to emphasise that he had this 'born again' experience. To understand further, I want to share two things from this text,

#### **1. The Activities of the Presence of God:**

Nicodemus in verse 2 recognises that Jesus has come from God, and he says no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God. What were those signs and activities that Nicodemus knew which he says are the activities of the presence of God? In chapter two we have the first miracle at Cana, where Jesus turns water into wine, and then the cleansing of the Temple, for he contested that 'the house of God is a place for prayer for all nations' driving away all activities of commercialisation that is taking place there. The activities of the presence of God are those that challenges the normalisation of status of quo, in other words it was the activity of the presence of God, that sees to it that the least and the last who came for the wedding were given fresh and new wine, for Jesus tries to locate his mission of God among and with the margins. The activity of the presence of God is to ensure that the least gets the best, the least are the privileged friends of Jesus, and best wine is served to those at the last who are willing to stay with perseverance with the last.

In the second account, Nicodemus as the leader of the government and of the temples, saw that no one can overthrow the tables of money lenders, for those moneylenders had the patronization of the powerful religious authorities and the empire, except from the activity of the presence of God. Perhaps this is a wakeup call for us to feel that it is the activity of

God's presence to speak truth to the powers, cleanse our churches and worships and to see to it that 'these are the houses for prayer for all nations.' The presence of God is in the cleansing of the corrupt systems and unjust structures. The church today needs to see its mission as cleansing our own systems and ensure that our worship places become a place of prayer for all people of all nations, encouraging diversity and affirming in pluralities.

In short, for Jesus' ministry and from Nicodemus's acknowledgement we recognise that, the activity of the presence of God is to quench the thirst of the people, to ensure that the least gets the best, to cleanse the corrupt structures, to make our churches a place of prayer in action for all people of God from all nations. This text is a call to audit our own Churches and mission engagements, for are we able to partake in the activities of the presence of God, and how actively are we engaging in the activities of the presence of God? The Church as a body of Christ cannot be inward looking based on its own whims and fancies, but has to engage creatively and enthusiastically in the activities of the presence of God, relevant and needed for our times in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **2. The Applications of Being Born Again:**

In my youth group, one of the questions that I was often asked by some of the peers at church is, "are you born again?" or "when was I born again?" What does it mean to be born again? In this age of modernity, the language has come to suggest some sort of conversion experience, a shift that promises eternal reward. 'Born again' Christians have become a new class today who takes privilege in their self-righteous attitude of being 'more' Christian than others.

But in the context of the Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus says in verse 3, "very truly I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above," by which Jesus was inviting Nicodemus to a journey of Christian discipleship which includes denying oneself, taking up one's Cross and follow Jesus Christ, which was a call towards subversive discipleship of leaving the old self, and renewing to be a member of a new community in communion with Christ.

Allow me to say that being 'born again' is not to take a birth afresh after death, but a second birth which calls us to be born anew, into a renewed community, which is a marker of the Kingdom of God. We need to understand that 'born again' is better translated as 'born from above', which is to say 'born of Spirit.' This then calls us how should we understand 'born from above' from the perspectives of the margins, or in other words "what does it mean to read 'born from above' from below?" In the context of the caste system, 'birth' becomes a norm to define one's status of caste, for those born outside of the body of caste system are considered to be polluted and out-casted. 'Twice born' takes the privilege of the dominant Brahmin caste, for they consider themselves superior to the rest of the people, in a way ascertaining that they are 'born from above' from the head of the body of God. In such a context, margins contests these notions of 'twice born' and affirms that 'born from above' is to be 'born again', which is an invitation of erasing the norms of status quo which classifies people into different castes, by virtue of their birth and descent.

The second birth of water recalls Jesus' own emergence from the waters of the Jordan, for such a baptismal experience according to Sathianathan Clarke is to 'give up the privileges ethnicity in Jewishness, giving up the domination of male-ness and also giving up his 'whiteness,' for Jesus by giving up such privileges was forging a new identity for the Kingdom of God, which does not privilege any one by their birth or piety but which will be governed by inclusivity, justice, equality and liberation. Therefore, 'born again' experience is an invitational call to give up all privileges of power and domination, and foraging for a renewed community in Christ.

'Born again' is to start living subversively different from the logic of empire, for it expects people to shift their gears and journey with a drive from the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is to locate and explore the activities of God among the margins. This was an invitation to Nicodemus from Jesus to give up his power and prestige, and join the '*oklos*' (*common people*), the people on the margins in their movements for justice and peace. It was a call to turn away from colonial basis of knowledge, which calls on rationality as a norm, for Nicodemus replies Jesus with such a logic, where he asks, 'how is it possible for him to get into his mother's womb second time?'

'Born again' therefore is an invitation to acknowledge the counter oppositional collective knowledge that comes from below, which seeks re-ordering of the public sphere and even to reclaim it by those on the margins. It was a tough call for Nicodemus to catch up with Jesus' invitation of 'born again', for he was left confused and unconvinced. Have he been convinced of what Jesus meant, he could have come open to join in Jesus' movement for justice, giving up his privilege and power. The theology of 'born again' did not match with his ideologies, for he left more puzzled from Jesus.

Towards the end, Jesus says, 'for God so loved the world that he sent God's only Son, and who ever believes in him will have eternal life,' by which he explains that the gift of salvation that Jesus brings to this world is a salvation that seeks people to be 'born again' and 'born anew' in Christ, which is to give up the old self and become 'new creation' in Christ. To disciple Christ one must be 'born again' which is to engage in the activities of the presence of God as reflected and demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

Raj Bharat Patta  
27<sup>th</sup> May 2021



**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Call to Worship**

Be still, and know that God is with you.

The God who caused creation to burst into being in all its complexity and simplicity.

The Christ who entered life, and embraced its boundaries, finding a straight path through.

The Holy Spirit whose activity enlivened and equipped, and opened possibilities.

God who is three in one and one in three is with you, and all who join with you in worship right now without you knowing who they are.

Be at peace, for as you welcome God's presence, all of you is cherished.

**Hymn StF 11: Holy, Holy, Holy**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/JwuDSw-9cUQ>

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:

holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,  
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,  
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,  
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,

perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth  
and sky and sea;  
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

*Reginald Heber (1783-1826) (alt.)  
Based on Revelation 4:8-11*

Let us pray together

Loving Creator, the source of life and love, we  
praise you for the beauty of this day, and  
thank you for the good things we enjoy.

Jesus, Messiah, we praise you for your  
courage and kindness in living your life and  
dying your death for all humankind. We are  
blessed by your rising from death to life,  
opening the way for us to follow you.

Holy Spirit of God, you reveal to us the things  
of God, open our hearts to Love, and shower  
upon us gifts which build up our brothers and  
sisters in Christ in peace and joy.

Holy God, amazing Trinity, as you gave  
yourself to heal us, help us to offer ourselves  
to you anew today, for you welcome and  
embrace all who respond in love to you.  
Amen.

**Today's Reading from the Old Testament**  
Isaiah 6: 1-9

**Today's Gospel Reading:** John 3: 1-17

**Time to Reflect**

There are times when we enjoy a mystery –  
it's fun to work out the answer and we feel  
good if we can get there by our own effort.

But for the same reason, we find the mysteries we face in life more difficult; because our efforts to understand them can be frustrated.

Why is it that we have the health we have, and not that of others?

Why is it that we have the wealth we have and not that of others?

Why do some people suffer, and not others?

Why do some go hungry? Why must some travel far from home to find almost-safety?

What is the purpose of my life at this point in time? And why do I find this difficult if it's meant to be?

Why do so many people of the same faith disagree? Why do some people of faith try to force it on others?

Why is love so difficult to discern sometimes?

Your own mysteries may be very different to these. We listen for God, but do not hear. We look, but do not see. Like the people of Isaiah's generation, we get things wrong.

"The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes."

Jesus explains that no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. We cannot perceive them as God does in this life; we have to be ready to receive fresh perceptions from the light of a love which came, not to condemn, but to save the world:

Including you: Including your mysteries.

Take a time to sit quietly

### **A time of prayer**

Holy God,

We listen for your voice, but we don't always understand. Help us to find the humility to accept that mystery, and to let you reveal your purposes in your own time; to trust you through every moment of each day, and leave our questions with you.

We wonder about our world, thanking you for the vaccines and medical help received by so many, and praying for any who are still frightened or disadvantaged.

We wonder about those who lead us, and ask you to speak into hearts and minds, to guide them in your ways of mercy and justice.

We wonder about those who are hurting, and ask you to be close to them on our behalf; to enfold them in love, to comfort them with your peace, and to offer to them moments of joy and happiness even as they travel through their valleys of shadow.

We hold before you the thoughts which come into our minds as we wait on you; as we listen, trying to hear, and look, trying to see.

"Lord, grant the courage to change the things which can be changed; the serenity to accept the things which can't, but simply are; and the wisdom to know the difference." Amen.

*Based on a prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)*

### **The Lord's Prayer Our Father .....**

Hymn: Listen to: StF 451 Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

[Youtube.com/watch/watch?v=idQ1n3cdgfo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idQ1n3cdgfo)

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,  
open the eyes of my heart;  
I want to see you, I want to see you.  
Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,  
open the eyes of my heart;  
I want to see you, I want to see you.

To see you high and lifted up,  
shining in the light of your glory.  
Pour out your power and love;  
as we sing holy, holy, holy.

Refrain

To see you high ...

Holy, holy, holy,  
holy, holy, holy,

holy, holy, holy,  
I want to see you.

*Paul Baloche*

### A prayer of blessing

May God the Faith, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit remain with you always, in all the glory of mystery, until we see him face to face. Amen.

Original Materials by V. Phillips

All Hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to provide these resources until the end of August 2021.

### Isaiah 6: 1-9

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
The whole earth is full of his glory.”

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said, “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin has been blotted out.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!” And he said, “Go and say to this people:

“Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand...”

### John 3: 1-17

Now there was a Pharisee names Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can anyone enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above. The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.