

Get Up And Go



Middlebie 21st January 2024

Order of Service

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Call to Worship All We can be

Come let us gather before the Lord
The Lord who calls us to be all we can be
Who calls us his children
Come let us call him Father
And praise him in song and word
Let us bring our hearts in prayer
Let us listen for his voice
Let us worship the Lord

Hymn

CH4 204 I Am The Church

*I am the church! You are the church!
We are the church together!*

The church is not a building;
the church is not a steeple;
the church is not a resting place;
the church is a people.

We're many kinds of people,
with many kinds of faces,
all colours and all ages, too
from all times and places.

And when the people gather,
there's singing and there's praying;
there's laughing and there's crying sometimes,
all of it saying:

At Pentecost some people
received the Holy Spirit
and told the Good News through the world
to all who would hear it.

I count if I am ninety
Or nine or just a baby
There is one thing I'm sure about
And I don't mean maybe

Approach

House Of Comfort

Lord, Father, our God

Your psalmist wrote “I rejoiced when they said to me

Let us go to the house of the Lord”

And we rejoice that you have called us here

To your house

For here we find comfort

The comfort of knowing we are your children

The comfort of promised forgiveness

The comfort of familiar ways

We rejoice in your love for us, so constant and true

And gather with songs of praise

We gather in prayers of praise

We gather and listen for your comforting voice

But not, sometimes, your word of challenge

We are sometimes too ready to stay in our comfort zones

We see the poverty and hunger of the world

But we are comfortably off

And sometimes prefer to shrug our shoulders

And say it’s the way things are

We see the injustices that flourish in the world

But as long as they do not touch us or ours

We sometimes blame the victims for their weakness

We hear the calls to war and military intercession

But as long as they are just fireballs on our televisions

We choose not to imagine the anguish they imply

Your son’s talk of taking up our cross troubles us

And we stay in our comfort zones

Father, forgive us

Lord your son’s cross

And the promise of forgiveness it brings

Brings us comfort but also challenge

To go from this, your house

Comforted and strengthened
To be your voice of compassion in the world
To be your voice of justice in the world
To be your voice of peace in the world
And to proclaim the gospel of your son

Address

Troubling Service

Hi Honey! I'm home. Are you feeling better? The service. Yeah, it was OK. But we had this stand-in pastor. he made us sing some new hymns - I mean not those old great Sankey songs, right? Some of the words made me feel uncomfortable. And he had response lines in his prayers. We don't do that in our church. It was like he was trying to make us listen. And his sermon! Talking about feeding the poor and housing the homeless; about welcoming refugees and doing something with with guys in prison other than frying them I don't know - something from Matthew. I don't go to church to hear commie talk like that

Hymn

CH4 608 Spirit Of truth And Grace

Spirit of truth and grace,
come to us in this place
as now in Jesus' name God's people gather. Open our eyes to see
truths that will ever be,
and in communion draw us close together.

Spirit of joy and peace,
make all anxieties cease
with knowledge of the Father's perfect caring.
Then may God's children know
love that won't let us go
and joy that fills each day, beyond comparing.

Spirit of life and power,
revive us in this hour
and stir our hearts to praise with true devotion.
Fill us with heavenly fire,
and every heart inspire,
that we may serve the world with your compassion.

Readings

Jonah 3:1-5,10

The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

Mark 1:14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

Hymn

CH4 659 Put Peace Into each Other's Hands

Put peace into each other's hands
And like a treasure hold it
Protect it like a candle flame
With tenderness enfold it

Put peace into each other's hands
With loving expectation
Be gentle in your words and ways
In touch with God's creation

Put peace into each other's hands
Like bread we break for sharing
Look people warmly in the eye
Our life is meant for caring

And at Communion, shape your hands
Into a waiting cradle
The gift of Christ, receive, revere
United round the table

Put Christ into each other's hands
He is love's deepest measure
In love make peace, give peace a chance
And share it like a treasure

Intercession

Heralds

Lord send us as heralds

To carry your word

Lord as we gather in this sanctuary
In this comfortable safe place
Beyond these walls folk are going through hard times
Because we live in a world that knows sorrow and violence
Because we live in a world that can be unjust and untruthful
We bring this broken world before you Lord
And offer ourselves in your service

Lord send us as heralds

To carry your word of love to those who are hurting
To those who are sick or broken
To those who are lonely or frightened
To those whose lives have been turned upside down
To those we bring to you in silence

We ask you to bring healing to fractured lives
And to make us part of your healing touch

Lord send us as heralds

To carry your word of peace to a troubled world
To those who cower in burned out buildings
To those who fear the violence of the streets at night
Or which goes on within their homes
We bring the victims of sectarianism and racism
And all the divisive forces of the world
We ask you to bring peace to the Earth
And to give us voices to speak of love

Lord send us as heralds

To carry your word of justice to the world

To those who sleep on the streets in the cold
To those who can't afford to eat
To those who are exploited for their bodies or labour
By those who have power over those who are weak
We ask you to make this a more just world
And to steel us to strive for justice

Lord send us as heralds

To carry your word of truth to the world
A world that clings to easy lies
That it's a dog-eats-dog world
That charity ends at home
That it's us or them
We are the Church: the body of your son on Earth
May we bring your word of truth and love and peace
To a world that needs it

Lord send us as heralds

Hymn

CH4 681 Send Out The Gospel

Send out the gospel! Let it sound
northward and southward, east and west;
tell all the world Christ died and lives
he gives us pardon, life and rest.

Send out the gospel, mighty Lord!
Out of this chaos bring to birth
your own creation's promised hope:
the coming days of heaven on earth.

Send out your gospel, gracious Lord!
Yours was the blood for sinners shed;
your voice still pleads in human hearts
let all the world to you be led.

Send out your gospel, holy Lord!
Kindle in us love's sacred flame;
love giving all with heart and mind,
for Jesus' sake, in Jesus' name.

Send out the gospel! Make it known!
Christians, obey your master's call;
sing out his praise! he comes to reign,
the King of Kings and Lord of all.

Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him. (Mark 1:20)

I've never been one for beach holidays. I'm really not one for sitting on a sun lounger beside a pool. I get restive very easily. If I'm holiday I like to get up and go and explore. It's odd. I'm not like that at home. Left to myself I'll sit in my armchair and read for as long as you like, but when there's something to distract me; a new place to visit, whatever, I have this overwhelming urge to get up and go. I'm never sure whether this amuses my wife or irritates her. Probably both in about equal measure.

So I have some sympathy with James and John. There they are sitting mending their nets beside the Sea of Galilee - OK not a sun lounger by the pool, but not particularly stimulating or exciting either - and along comes Jesus. He calls them to follow him and immediately they get up and go. We have to be careful with that word, "immediately" here. This is one of Mark's words. Last week we had a reading from John and in John's gospel there is a placid serenity about Christ and he engages in long sermons that explain who he is and what God's purpose is in coming into the world in him. Mark's Christ is much more dynamic and so are the events that surround him. Mark's gospel is peppered with words like 'immediately', 'straight away' and 'at once'.

So we can make to much of that. The situation of James and John isn't like that of Jonah who immediately got up and went, at God's call, to Nineveh. They hadn't spent three days in the belly of a fish to teach them to respond to God's call. Maybe they talked for a few minutes. Maybe they wondered whether their Dad would be OK without them. Probably - he could afford to hire other workers. It doesn't really matter. The important thing is that they encountered Christ and they got up and they went. They followed him.

An encounter with God can do that. That's what this event was. It was an encounter with God in Christ. Because Mark's gospel is so terse, so dynamic, we can't say what it was about this encounter that made them get up and go. We can't tell what it is about what he said to them or how he said it or what it was about him that galvanise them. Nor does that matter. Whatever it was, it did the job.

It's worth noting that, unlike Nathanael in last week's reading they don't go to find Jesus. Jesus goes to find them. I wonder sometimes if the Church has forgotten that. I wonder if we have spent an awful lot of time worrying about how to get people to come to church; that we've looked at ways of getting people to come to church; that we find ourselves in a position where so many churches are closing and bemoan the fact that people haven't come to church.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not dissing coming to church. I think coming to church is great. I love doing it whether it's as a member of the congregation or what I'm doing now. I wouldn't do this if I didn't think that coming to church is a vital part of being a Christian and something that is meant to strengthen us in our faith. It's just it's easy to forget what this time together with each other represents.

We are here, together, in the house of God. Here we don't just gather together; we gather in the presence of God. We gather here to encounter God just as James and John did, in Christ, on the shores of the Galilee. We gather here to meet with the eternal, incomprehensible God, who came into the world at a particular time in the life of a human being so that we could at least try to comprehend him. We gather to listen for, to look for, to reach for the God who, in Christ, called James and John; called Peter and Andrew; called Philip and Nathanael to get up and go and follow him.

In our prayers we speak to him, but do we listen for him? In our praise we sing to him, but do we listen for him singing back to us? We read the words of scripture but do we hear him speaking through them. As a preacher I try to say what they say to me and tell you why they make me get up and go and do this on a Sunday morning.

It's an answer. An answer to a call: come follow me. I wonder sometimes, if the church hasn't been fixated on buildings like this as places to come to. Yes they are but perhaps more importantly they are places to go from. They are places to which we are called to encounter Christ, as James and John did, but then to get up and go. Go out into a world that needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ: that there is a God and that he loves us - all of us - so much that he came into this world in the life of his son. That he gave his son for us that we might have hope for eternal life.

Here in this place and in places like it all over the planet people gather to encounter God in Christ. Here in this place and in places like it all over the planet people come to meet the risen Christ in word and song and prayer. But from this place we are meant to get up and go. To go and be God's word of love to the world. To visit the lonely, to speak for the forgotten, to forgive as we are forgiven, to carry the Gospel where it needs to be heard. In short, to get up and go and follow Christ

Father, may we be like James and John and, yes, because we sometimes need a push, to be like Jonah. May we get up and do your will in the world and let folk know that you love them.

Offering

Six Days

Lord we thank you for this time today
On this sabbath day to gather here
We thank you for the love you shower on us
And for the fellowship we find here
We thank you too for the other six days
For the chances we have
For the challenges you offer
To be your word of love to the world
We thank you for the coming of your son
The embodiment of your word
To show us what it truly means
To be your children
We thank you for all your blessings
On this day and the other six
For food and friendship, love and laughter
For the difference we make in each others' lives
We bring these offerings in thanksgiving
And bring our whole selves too
We ask you to bless them and to bless us
To rededicate them and to rededicate us
This day and every day
This place and every place
To the bringing in of your kingdom

Hymn

CH4 248 For My Sake And The Gospel's Go

For My sake, and the Gospel's, go
And tell redemption's story";
His heralds answer, "Be it so,
And Thine, Lord, all the glory!"
They preach His birth, His life, His cross,
The love of His atonement,
For Whom they count the world but loss,
His Easter, His enthronement.

Hark, hark, the trump of jubilee
Proclaims to every nation,
From pole to pole, by land and sea,
Glad tidings of salvation;
Still on and on the anthems spread
Of alleluia voices,
In concert with the holy dead
The warrior church rejoices;

He comes, Whose advent trumpet drowns
The last of time's evangels,
Emmanuel crowned with many crowns,
The Lord of saints and angels;
O Life, Light, Love, the great I AM,
Triune, Who changest never,
The throne of God and of the Lamb
Is Thine, and Thine forever.

Benediction All You Can Do

Go now and do all you can do
To speak the word of God to the world
Through acts of kindness
Through words of justice
Through touches of love and grace
Go now to be God's word to the world
As children of God
Beloved of God
Now and always

