

## W@H 25<sup>th</sup> January 2026

### Introduction

Hello, my name is Helen Watson and I'm a Methodist Local Preacher in the Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit. Welcome to worship today.

### Call to Worship

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom should I be afraid?

Psalm 27:1

### Hymn            **STF84 Praise the Lord his glories show. Alleluia!**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 Praise the Lord, his glories show,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>saints within his courts below,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>angels round his throne above,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>all that see and share his love.<br><i>Alleluia !</i>       | 3 Praise the Lord, his mercies trace ;<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>praise his providence and grace,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>all that he for us has done,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>all he sends us through his Son.<br><i>Alleluia !</i>         |
| 2 Earth to heaven, and heaven to earth<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>tell his wonders, sing his worth ;<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>age to age and shore to shore,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>praise him, praise him evermore !<br><i>Alleluia !</i> | 4 Strings and voices, hands and hearts,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>in the concert play your parts ;<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>all that breathe, your Lord adore,<br><i>Alleluia !</i><br>praise him, praise him evermore !<br><i>Alleluia !</i> |

Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847)

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### Prayer<sup>2</sup> and Lords Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

You bring us together in all our diversity, as family and church.

In the face of so many situations on earth,

where hope has given way to despair

and hearts are wounded and emptied by disappointment,

renew our strength and unify us.

Help us to share Your hope wherever we find ourselves.

You are the true Light, who casts out the darkness of sin, despair and brokenness,

who shines into our hearts, releasing the joy and the true hope of Your eternal love for all.

You have bestowed wonderful graces and multiple gifts upon us

for the sake of building up Your Body, the Church.

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Help us to embrace and recognise our individuality, so that we may be caught up in the childlike wonder of Your diverse making and creating.

Breathe in us with Your creative Spirit, that we may respond and spread Your word, Your dream, Your grace and Your beauty, to every place that we can reach.

Lord Jesus Christ, We come as we are. You give us so much, but we don't always give back to you as we would like.

Forgive us when we fall short and strengthen us so that we can change our ways and respond with joy as we play and pray in your name.

Now listen to God's word: your sins are forgiven. Go in peace. Thanks be to God.

**Amen**

We say together the Lord's prayer.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

Thy Kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

For ever and ever.

**Amen.**

**Reading      Matthew 4:18 – 23<sup>1</sup>**

**Jesus Chooses the First Disciples**

One day Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee. There he saw two brothers. They were Simon Peter and his brother Andrew.

They were throwing a net into the lake. They were fishermen.

"Come. Follow me," Jesus said. "I will make you fishers of people."

At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers. They were James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee. As they were preparing their nets, Jesus called out to them.

Right away they left the boat and their father and followed Jesus.

Jesus went all over Galilee. There he taught in the synagogues. He preached the good news of God's kingdom. He healed every illness and sickness the people had.

**Reflection**

Now we're hearing about Jesus at the start of his public ministry.

He has just come from his baptism by John and his time in the desert, and now he is calling his disciples. His call is urgent, as it often is, and it is noteworthy that Andrew, Peter, James and John respond immediately. They leave their families and their work and followed Jesus at once. If that was not somewhat amazing, we might also remark that the people he called to be his disciples were ordinary men. They were not religious leaders or people of note in the community. They were not particularly scholarly, not particularly charismatic. They were just ordinary people.

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We might think that he was taking a bit of a risk. Should he not have chosen people with experience of dealing with others, or with some in-depth knowledge of the scriptures and the rules the Israelites followed?

But Jesus didn't do that. He called ordinary people. They did not always get things right – indeed he was often exasperated with them when they misunderstood him or did the wrong thing. For example, Peter was apt to open his mouth and put his foot in it! But in the end, Jesus had chosen the right ones. In their diversity, they all played their parts in proclaiming God's Kingdom and in the healing and teaching which Jesus was now embarking on in Galilee/

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January marks the end of the week of prayer for Christian unity. This is a time when we can reflect on Jesus's call on our lives. He calls us to follow him and to follow him in unity, rejoicing and celebrating our differences.

At this time too, we might consider the deep truths that we hold in common, and perhaps, how our differences speak of the wideness of God's love and Christ's call rather than division.

We can look at those fishermen and the disciples who came after and see that they are very different people – as we are. But we are called by Christ into the light. So let's follow him into the Kingdom of God.

Amen

### Hymn                      STF673                      Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1 Will you come and follow me<br>if I but call your name ?<br>Will you go where you don't know<br>and never be the same ?<br>Will you let my love be shown,<br>will you let my name be known,<br>will you let my life be grown<br>in you and you in me ? | 2 Will you leave yourself behind<br>if I but call your name ?<br>Will you care for cruel and kind<br>and never be the same ?<br>Will you risk the hostile stare<br>should your life attract or scare ?<br>Will you let me answer prayer<br>in you and you in me ? | 3 Will you let the blinded see<br>if I but call your name ?<br>Will you set the prisoners free<br>and never be the same ?<br>Will you kiss the leper clean, | and do such as this unseen,<br>and admit to what I mean<br>in you and you in me ?  |
|  |   |   | 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide<br>if I but call your name ?<br>Will you quell the fear inside<br>and never be the same ?<br>Will you use the faith you've found<br>to reshape the world around,<br>through my sight and touch and<br>sound<br>in you and you in me ? |
|  |   |   | 5 Lord, your summons echoes true<br>when you but call my name.<br>Let me turn and follow you<br>and never be the same.<br>In your company I'll go<br>where your love and footsteps show.<br>Thus I'll move and live and grow<br>in you and you in me.                    |

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)

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### **Prayers of Intercession<sup>2</sup>**

We come now to offer our prayers for our world.

Loving Lord, accept the prayers of all Your faithful people throughout the world, who call out to You with one mind, one voice and one heart. Through Your beloved disciple John, You promised that if we walk in Your light, then we will have communion with one another, and Your precious blood will cleanse us of all sin. Bring us that blessed communion, O Saviour!

Grant us peace, O Loving Lord, and remove the scourge of violence from the face of the earth. Change the hearts of all who make war. Touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by conflict. Comfort all prisoners of war and speedily bring them home. Let the light of Your love shine in all the dark places of our world and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice.

O Lord Jesus Christ, look with compassion on refugees throughout the world, who suffer the agony of displacement and the loss of their homes. Move us to manifest our communion with You, with them and with each other through gestures of hospitality and loving help.

O Christ, our Saviour, we pray for those people who are injured or sick just now. You healed the sick and ill whenever and wherever they asked you, so we beseech you now to bring your healing love and compassion on all who need it, whether they are at home, in hospital or looked after in other ways. Be with them in their need.

Shine the light of Your righteousness and wisdom on all Your creatures, O Lord. Make us children of light and children of the day, so that we may always live our lives reverently, and become for all the world worthy lampstands for Your life-giving light.

For You are our Saviour, and to You be glory, dominion and honour, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

**Amen**

**Hymn                    STF405                    Great is the darkness that covers the earth**

1 Great is the darkness that covers the earth,  
    oppression, injustice and pain.  
    Nations are slipping in hopeless despair,  
    though many have come in your name.  
    Watching while sanity dies,  
    touched by the madness and lies.  
    *Come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,  
    pour out your Spirit we pray,  
    come, Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus,  
    pour out your Spirit on us today.*

2 May now your Church rise with power and love,  
    this glorious gospel proclaim.  
    In every nation salvation will come to those who believe in your name.  
    Help us bring light to this world that we might speed your return.

3 Great celebrations on that final day when out of the heavens you come.  
    Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end,  
    and rulers will bow at your throne.  
    Our great commission complete,  
    then face to face we shall meet.

Gerald Coates (b. 1944) and Noël Richards (b. 1955)

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**Blessing**

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among us and those we love and remain with us forever.

**Amen**

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