

worship notes



from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 10th
March 2024
The Fourth
Sunday of Lent
The Revd
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Call to Worship

We are on a Lenten journey;

**From a wilderness, to a garden, from longing, to discovering,
from waiting, to birthing.**

God of transformation and new life,
we offer you our worship & praise.

Opening Prayer (with movement)

Holy One, in times of wilderness and uncertainty

Love and hope surround us.

*(action: *arms circle round, cross in front of body and lower)*

In times of abundance and clarity

Love and hope surround us. (action*)

In times of growth and change

Love and hope surround us. (action*)

One: God of Love and Hope,

in this season of Lent we are travelling with Jesus
from the Wilderness to the Garden.

We remember the wilderness where the seeds of his calling took root;
where he planted wholeness rather than egotism;
watered with integrity rather than achievement;
nourished with love rather than fear.

We give thanks for Jesus' wise choices,

We praise the Spirit's abundant growth

We worship you, Holy Source of all Life.

As we travel through Lent, may we too be transformed:

May we plant seeds of wholeness and turn away from egotism;
May we water with integrity and turn away from earthly success;
May we nourish with love and turn away from fear.
That we may grow as we follow your wisdom;
Bloom, as we trust your abundance;
and be transformed by your loving companionship.

We unite our prayers together in the Lord's Prayer...

All Age Activity Introducing the Theme: Mothering Sunday

Mothering Sunday in the UK originates as a day when people were released from their work to return home to their Mother church. Mothering Sunday in Lent, offers us the opportunity to think about where we have come from and to think about ways in which that has shaped us as Christians today. Can we think of all of the churches we have belonged to throughout our lives? No church is perfect, but think of what are some of the good things about those churches, which we are thankful for? How have these shaped our faith today?

Take a 20 cm strip of narrow ribbon for each of the churches you have belonged to.
Take a 20cm strip for each decade you have belonged to a church.
(Ensure you have at least 3 strips of narrow ribbon.)
Stack the strips on top of each other.
Tie a knot of all the strips at one end.
Divide the strips into 3 strands and pleat them together.

Meditation

Hold the pleated strip in your hands.
Think on the many places and people who have been part of your faith journey throughout your life.
Offer to God things which have been hard
Give thanks to God for the goodness
Hold the pleated strip clenched in your hand and know God hold you close, loves you and has dreams for you.

Readings

Numbers 21:4-9 | St John 3:14-21

Sermon Notes

Numbers

It is important to understand and reflect on where this episode sits within the wider epic story of the children of Abraham & Sarah and this wilderness series within that. In the series, the people and Moses will go through various episodes of the people struggling with their context and gradually being forged into the people God calls them to be. This is not the first or only time they will complain! What insight could this story offer us into the wilderness series in our individual and collective experience? Thinking of Lent as a time for stripping back, how did the wilderness experience strip back the people and how did they grow from it? What wisdom might this passage offer to enable us to grow and allow God's Spirit to further forge us this Lent?

John

This passage has many layers to offer for preaching. Working with such a well-known passage bring the challenge that people may only focus on particularly familiar parts of the passage which perhaps have a legacy of connection and meaning for them.

As I reflect on the passage to preach on, I can see one useful possibility could be to open questions about the theology of substitutionary atonement which is sometime connected with this passage. However, in this Sunday in Lent, I am drawn to explore what light the less well-known story of Moses serpent stick could cast and offer on the John text.

I have found the commentary offered by Dr Wm Loader thought provoking and insightful. (<https://billloader.com/MkLent4.html>)

Prayers of the People

God of Healing,
in Jesus' Cross you have shown us your desire of wholeness for all.
We thank you for your loving heart and bring before you,
brokenness in our lives and world.
We pray for illness experienced in body and mind
and for all who offer care.
We pray for systems and processes,
from national laws to local decision making, which deny justice or equity.
We pray for relationship which are fractured and distorted,
preventing love and joy.
We pray for the brokenness in the health of Earth.
In a moment of silence, we offer together to God what is broken,
seeking the healing work of God's Spirit.

Holy One in Jesus' Cross you have shown us not only your desire for healing, but your Way of healing.

Grant us the courage to follow your Way and work with your Spirit, to bring healing for all.

God of Justice, in Jesus' Cross you have shown us the power of human destructiveness.

This Lent, as individual disciples and together as faith community, enable us to...

turn away from fear and follow your ways of love;
turn away from the ways of Empire and live by the ways of your Kingdom;
turn away from the drives of our egos or hubris,
and be fuelled by your desire and seeking to glorify you.

God of Hope, in Jesus' Cross you have shown us the indestructible power of your creativity, hope and love.

We seek to trust you and to follow your Way.

May the Way of your Cross shape our daily lives, the lives of Your Church and all faith communities.

May the Way of your Cross

shape the minds and actions of our politicians and the leaders of industry.

May the Way of your Cross

shape the minds and actions of educators, medics and care givers.

God of Healing

God of Justice

God of Hope

To you we bring ourselves and our prayers.

God of the Cross

In you we trust.

Amen.

Offering & Dedication

Giving is part of our lives as Christians – we give because it is needed, because it's good for us, because it deals with the poison of consumerism in our souls. We give to charities at home and abroad, we give to the homeless, we give to the Church. In all the ways we give we seek to make a difference and now we give thanks for all of our giving.

Praise God from whom all blessing flow

Praise God all creature here below

Praise God above, You heavenly host
Praise Maker Christ and Holy Ghost

Blessing

May the blessing of God Almighty
Creator, Christ and Comforter
be with us all, now and always. Amen.

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Womb of Life		118		
Be still and know	347	755	18	48
Tree of life and awesome mystery		401		
O breath of life	302	595	391	488
God of freedom, God of justice	625	263		
Lord for the years	603	159	470	428
Forth in the peace of Christ We go	602	646		
Christ is the World's Light	600		346	

RS – Rejoice & Sing | CH4 – Church Hymnary 4 | StF – Singing the Faith | MP – Mission Praise