

## HOME MISSIONS SERVICE SUNDAY 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020

Welcome & Announcements

Home Mission Video 'Unforced'

Call to Worship Psalm 107: 1-2a, 8-9

Praise '*Come people of the risen king*'

Prayer

Scripture Reading Romans 7:20-25 (The Message)

Video 'Element'

Offering & Reminder about Home Mission

Scripture Reading Matthew 11:28-30 ( Video )

Address (Video)

Prayers

Hymn HP 770 Go forth & Tell

Benediction

Call to worship Psalm 107:1-2a, 8-9 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Praise COME PEOPLE OF THE RISEN KING,

Who delight to bring Him praise;

Come all and tune your hearts to sing

To the Morning Star of grace.

From the shifting shadows of the earth

We will lift our eyes to Him,

Where steady arms of mercy reach To gather children in.

Chorus- Rejoice, rejoice, Let every tongue rejoice

One heart one voice, Oh, church of Christ rejoice

Come those whose joy is morning sun

And those weeping through the night

Come those who tell of battles won

And those struggling in the fight

For His perfect love will never change

And His mercies never cease

But follow us through all our days

With the certain hope of peace

CHORUS

Come, young and old from every land

Men and women of the faith

Come those with full or empty hands

Find the riches of His grace

Over all the world His people sing

Shore to shore we hear them call

The truth that cries through every age

Our God is all in all

CHORUS

**Opening Prayer** Loving Lord Jesus, we join with the choirs of heaven in worshipping you as King of Kings & Lord of Lords. Be glorified & honoured through our praise and through our lives, as we lay them down in worship & service to You. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit, that we might know Your loving presence that brings us Your peace & comfort, together with Your gentle but persistent call to use our gifts to bless those around us. And help as we know your presence & hear your voice we ask that You would continue to lead us in worship & in witness this day.... Amen

### **Scripture Reading Romans 7:20-25**

Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different

### **Video- Element**

### **Offering Prayer**

### **Scripture Reading Matthew 11:28-30 (Video)**

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

**Address (Video) Rev Mark Forsyth** I wonder what comes to your mind when you hear the word 'Mission'? Perhaps it's an image of a big tent with people flocking to hear an Evangelist. Maybe it's someone on a street corner with an open Bible, exhorting passers-by to give their lives to Christ. Or it could be a group on a busy pier on a Sunday afternoon, handing out gospel tracts. The church has always engaged in mission since the day of Pentecost, in various ways and with varying degrees of fruitfulness. While the message remains the same, the methods employed adapt and evolve depending on the context. For many of us, our ideas about mission come from the 20th century. We remember a time when it was normal to go to church three times on a Sunday. But society has changed and now, the 'Sabbath' looks more like a Saturday with most of the shops open and Sunday service times competing with sporting activities for our young people. The concept of 'Christendom' is well and truly over as the church is losing not only its influence in society, but for many, its relevance too. Mission in the 21st century is going to look very different than in previous centuries. Rather than being seen as a niche

endeavour for certain people with a particular gift of evangelism, there's a growing sense that God's mission needs to be embraced by all God's people as a fundamental part of living out the Christian faith. Indeed, as the writer Matthew Bracey notes, this may look more like the mission of the early church: 'Other than God Himself, the most important voice in God's mission work is the voice of lay believers—then and now. This is where a significant part of mission work occurs. We see this in the early church. As Christians, when businessmen and common travellers used the Roman roads to travel and migrate, they took Christianity with them. While many of these weren't vocational missionaries (as conceived today), they were nevertheless Christians who viewed their faith through the lens of mission.' For many of us, the thought of being a 'missionary' is quite daunting. We feel inadequate, untrained and unprepared. Echoing Paul's "struggle to do good" in Romans 7, we know we probably should tell our friends about Jesus, but we very often can't bring ourselves to do it—it feels a bit awkward...a bit 'forced'. The good news is that Jesus addresses our anxieties and invites us to "learn the unforced rhythms of grace" as we join Him on mission in our context. Jesus says to us: "Walk with me & work with me", promising not to overburden us with unrealistic expectations. As we do this, we will find opportunities to share our faith in natural, unforced ways. The big question for us today, is what does unforced mission look like in the middle of a global pandemic? Is it even possible? In preparing for Home Mission Sunday, we've gathered a few stories from ordinary people

around the Connexion to share with you. Let's listen to 2 of them now as they talk about how they try to 'live on mission with Jesus in the reality of their everyday', in the context of COVID. We're going to hear from Fadzi in Dublin & David in Belfast.

**Fadzi** My story about my faith during the pandemic is as a nurse in a semi-acute nursing home. The clergy & priests are not coming into the nursing home so that gap had to be filled by someone. I found myself filling that gap, ministering & being a priest to patients at the end of their life. I can recall a time when 1 of the patients was dying & her sister phoned in, wanting to pray with her. I had to think of a way to do this. God just gave me this idea to use an iPad (provided by the company for giving medication) to set up a Facetime call between the 2 sisters. I can say that in all this, my faith is going on a mission, because this is a mission that I never thought I would do—to pray for patients at work is usually left to the chaplains. Because of the pandemic, I have been challenged to live & practice my faith with vulnerable people who are at the end of their life. God is in some way teaching me & appointing me to do that & to point people to Jesus Christ.

**David** Rhythm Helps Your Two Hips Move, that's how you remember how to spell it. Rhythm. The most exciting thing we've done during this lockdown period is start a rhythm of prayer. Every day at 5.30pm, my wife Jill & I would close the working day with a short time of liturgy, praise, reflection & spontaneous prayer. As Pioneer Mission leaders in South Belfast, we wanted

to make sure that whatever we do is rooted & grounded in prayer, first & foremost. Prayer isn't always a convenient thing & we're not naturally good at routine, so we've enjoyed this 'rhythm' because it's helping our 2 hips move! Then as Lockdown came, we moved onto Zoom & it became even more convenient for others to join in. Then we added a morning slot at 7am. Now there are around 10 of us, more or less, who meet in this way throughout the working week. We pray for the sick, we pray for the grieving, for the bullied & depressed, we pray for our friends (some of whom had COVID), our families, for strangers, politicians & global leaders, for firefighters & pharmacologists, for doctors & ministers & one another. We pray for the lost & the found, big things & small things, long prayers & short prayers, in Irish, English & Filipino. And we slowly see them answered. One by one. And we taste the joy and the urge to move, to reach out, in faith, to share and care and speak & listen, with increased confidence that the Lord is able to do more than we can ask or imagine, that the Holy Spirit is with us, guiding our days, our interactions, the movement of our hips & our feet & our hands, like a dancing partner in a holy Tango. I highly recommend that you discover your own rhythm of prayer & that you find some dancing partners! Remember...Rhythm Helps Your Two Hips Move!

**Mark-** I love hearing these stories, because they are so are so inspiring. We heard Fadzi share how COVID opened up a new ministry for her in the Care Home, praying for vulnerable patients. When the professional chaplains weren't allowed in, God

had someone "on the inside" ready to step into that role. David told us about the benefits of Rhythm & how he & his wife developed a rhythm of prayer that started small & expanded during COVID through the use of Zoom. And, of course, prayer is something that we can all do. The good news is that many are finding that their faith has actually grown deeper & more meaningful in these challenging times. And what's also really exciting is that ordinary Methodists across the island are finding unique opportunities to engage in mission because of COVID, rather than despite it! We're going to see more of this as we listen to Gavin in Dublin & Beth in Lurgan.

**Gavin** - (engineering student in Trinity College, Dublin)

Since starting in college, I have realised that to walk with Jesus in college actually means going against the grain. But that's probably what makes walking for Jesus in college all the more important. Jesus got alongside people, he got to know them, he asked them questions, he ate with them he showed them love. So surely if I'm trying to live for him on campus I should try to do the same! I should be real with the friends that I make, getting alongside them, showing them that I genuinely care about who they are. Especially in this time of Covid-19, when I'm actually here on campus so rarely, I realised that I have had to be so intentional about reaching out to friends. I want so much for them to be okay during this time. Jesus has been a rock & hope for me during this time & I just hope that he can be that for other people as well. My prayer is that I can be a witness to

others, showing them that Jesus' love calms & sustains us through the most difficult times.

**Beth** - (Lurgan) In the midst of the turbulence of this world at the moment, looking to Jesus has given me steadiness, hope & vision for our community. We live in a small rural community & over the last while I have felt God stirring love within our family for our neighbours. In all honesty Jesus placed a love in me for this area & the people here for a long time, but Covid forced me to pray about how I could really serve my neighbours well & develop deeper relationships. Emily & I set out one night to deliver little notes through all the post boxes, we chatted to people about setting up a WhatsApp group to support one-another through lockdown. Within 24 hours we had 44 households signed up. A week later & a chef neighbour had made dinner for everyone, delivered to their door, another neighbour had placed baked goods on every doorstep & messages of support & kindness were connecting each household. We have developed more friendships over the last 7 months since we started the group than we had in the previous 5 years. Kindness & hope are pervading our community. For years I had thought God's mission needed huge strategy, & training in evangelism (which are excellent but not always necessary), we have given Him what we have, our lives & our home. It's simple but it's everything we have & He in return has blessed us with more of His Spirit as we seek to pray for our neighbours, listen to them & love them. These times may bring turbulence, but we have hope in Jesus, & an

assurance that He loves our community & each person that we get the privilege to meet. Life here is natural & unforced. In the sunny days we all sat on doorsteps & watched our children play having cups of tea whilst chatting with others sitting on their own front steps: Neighbour to neighbour. When we go for walks with our girls we pray for each home. Emily made a particular house from play dough this week & we prayed for the occupants & the business they are running throughout COVID. Going forward we are praying for greater depth & opportunities as a family, that others may come to know the hope that we have In Christ.

**Mark-** It's been a real blessing to hear the honesty & heart behind all these stories. Gavin, being intentional about getting alongside his friends. Beth, taking the initiative to reach out to her community & bring so many people together. Let's just remind ourselves of what we've learned from all those who have shared with us about their recent experiences on mission. Firstly, mission is for all of us - ordained & lay, male & female, young & old. Secondly, mission doesn't have to be awkward, it can & should happen in natural, unforced ways. And thirdly, mission is not on hold during COVID, in fact it can thrive as God reveals to us unique, once in a generation opportunities to get alongside people & share our faith in word & deed. Life had been very difficult during COVID for people in many walks of life, & that's why it's so heartening to see that God is clearly at work through His church in these days. These stories are just a snapshot of the

many people within our congregations who are stepping out with Jesus, living on mission with Him in the reality of their everyday! At the start of this talk, I asked what comes to your mind when you hear the word 'Mission'? Maybe you had an image of an overseas missionary? Yes, they still exist & do good work, but they need to go through a lot of preparation. Before they arrive on the mission field, they usually need to go through language & cultural training. On arrival, they often have to build up a network of relationships from scratch. It's a significant investment of time & energy & it's not for everyone. But the beauty & simplicity of living 'on mission' with Jesus in our local context is that we already know the language & the culture, & we already have a network of relationships, so we can get started right away, wherever we are!

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we find ourselves living in an extraordinary time of change & challenge. We pray for all those in your church throughout this island, that we will not grow weary & despondent, but will instead respond to Jesus' call to walk with Him, to work with Him, to keep company with Him as we learn to live freely & lightly in this season of uncertainty & opportunity.

Colin- And we continue in prayer now as we pray for others...

**Prayers of Intercession and Petition** Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of prayer, and we pray now for others, especially those who have been affected by COVID.

- For the bereaved, asking you to hold them in your arms and give them your peace and comfort.
- For the isolated, asking you to provide emotional, spiritual and practical support.
- For those in medical settings who are not allowed visitors, asking you to provide ways for them to keep in contact with loved ones.
- For those who have lost their jobs, asking you to provide new employment and training opportunities.
- For those suffering with mental health, asking you to provide healing and support.
- For those awaiting medical treatment and screening, asking you to provide access to essential services...

And we name before God those who have sought our prayers today... **Leo... Daniel Timothy & Adam...** Lord God we thank you for the positive steps in the lives of these boys & we pray that You would continue to do wonderful works of healing..

We pray for **Paul, Jean, Gerry & Jean, Bernie, Ronnie & Maggie, Sarah Lucy, Mark, Trevor, George, Susanne, Liz, Arianna, Raymond & Connie, Patti, Nicky, Valerie, Yvonne & Christine, Gary, Carol, Margaret & Phylis.** For Rachel & her baby..... Father of all, we lift these people up to you and trust them to you. Give us the grace to accept your answers to our prayers and your timing for those answers.

And we pray for ourselves, as we consider what it means to live on mission with Jesus in the reality of our everyday. · For honesty, as we address our fears and reluctance to engage in mission. · For openness, as God calls us to himself, first and

foremost. · For assurance, that God loves us regardless of our performance. · For solitude, as we create space to be with God and listen to his voice. · For God's compassion, for our family, neighbours and friends. · For confidence, as we prepare to do God's work, leaving the results to him. · For a sense of companionship, knowing that Jesus walks with us on mission. · For opportunities, to share our faith in natural, unforced ways. · For trusted friends, that we might encourage one another along the way · For joy, as we see God accomplish his work through us.

Father, we place ourselves into your hands. Take all that we offer and use it for your glory, for we ask it in Jesus' name.  
Amen.

### **Hymn Go Forth & Tell**

Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!  
God's saving news to all the nations take;  
Proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord, and King,  
That all the world his worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;  
He will in grace respond to all who call:  
How shall they call if they have never heard  
The gracious invitation of his word?

Go forth and tell! Some still in darkness lie;  
In wealth or want, in sin they live or die.  
Give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,  
A love like yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:  
Share God's good gifts with people long denied.  
Live out your life as Christ, your Lord, shall choose,  
Your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

The Grace- May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

