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ORDINARY 17A

30th July 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

As you sit here in this space you call your own ready to meet the living God, you might like to remember:

You are connected to people of faith worshipping in different ways and places.

You are part of a community of saints that have worshipped for generations.

You are joined with others across the world choosing to do the same.

Here in this special space where God has been for all time you are free to worship.

So take a moment and give thanks in the quiet places of your heart.

For all you have,
All you are
And all you might be.

Pause

If you feel able speak the following

All I have, all I am and all I might be I offer to you as I worship – today and always

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are most familiar

Reading: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding in music:

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy - [YouTube](#)

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart - [YouTube](#)

713 STF – Show me how to stand for justice - [YouTube](#)

699 STF – God of justice - [YouTube](#)

[Please note, this video is not owned by Twelvebaskets so check with the rights holders before using in public worship or online].

Responding to the reading

All We Can is the international development charity of the Methodist Church, and a partner organisation with Twelvebaskets. All We Can works around the world, helping people to tackle the poverty they face and with the vision statement of ‘every person’s potential fulfilled.’

This year, All We Can is running a campaign called ‘Communities in the Driving Seat’, which is an invitation to think about how we can shift the power when it comes to how we think about poverty (especially in relation to the communities in Africa where much of All We Can’s work happens), but also a challenge to us to think again about how we operate as churches in the communities where we live and have our presence. Do we try to take control, or are we able to wait, to listen, to accept that movement may be slower but more transformative.

I invite you to think about a tandem bike for a moment. Have you ever ridden one?

This is an analogy that All We Can have been using at events and services up and down the country this year, inviting people to think about whether they would like to get on the back seat, or the front seat of the tandem. On the back, you can lend a bit of extra power, and if you don’t move in sync with the other rider you can destabilise the whole thing – but you have to let go of control. On the front, you are able to steer and to take control, as long as the other rider is being helpful! This is like the work All We Can is doing around the world where they are resisting the temptation to jump on the front seat of the tandem in the communities in Malawi, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and other countries where they are working. They are trying to let go the control, so the local community can be in the driving seat, and help to create space for change.

You might like to watch this video, to help explain how this works in Malawi: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fncGaj_rhA

In today’s gospel readings, we hear some of the parables Jesus uses to explain the nature of the kingdom of God. And these parables help us recognise a gospel message that runs counter to the power-games and control-narratives of this world. This is a story that is about mustard seeds and yeast: tiny things that have a huge impact, with time and effort. Victor, the head of All We Can’s partner from Eagles, talks about the potential he sees in the communities in Malawi where he serves, but he recognizes they ‘need a push from the outside – it’s partnership’. This is the gospel message: not a grand-scale takeover, but a gentle nudge. Not a forest, but a seed. Not a banquet, but a few grains of yeast.

Let us hold a moment of stillness and, in the quiet, I invite you to picture the few roads around where you are now: the houses, the shops, the people who live and work and travel there. In the stillness, just hold those places and people in prayer.

[Hold for quiet for 3 or 4 minutes].

1. What is happening in your community that the church or church people are already involved in / supporting?
2. What is happening in your community that we could be more involved in?
3. What would praying intentionally for this community look like?

You can find out more about All We Can's work, and get involved in the conversation to change the way we think about poverty at allwecan.org.uk/drivingseat – or by finding All We Can on social media. If you feel able to support their work with a regular donation, take a look at the website or get in touch with the team to sign up and help rethink poverty.

Let us pray.

Loving God,

There is so much that is not right with your world,

And yet we know that the best solution isn't always for us to jump in and try to fix it.

Help us to listen, help us to learn, help us to discern the work you have called us to do, and the things you are challenging us to let go of.

Help us to do all that we can, all that is ours to do, and to let you – and the people in the communities we serve – be in the driving seat.

Inspire us, by the gentle nudge of your Spirit we pray,

Amen.¹

Blessing

May God help us to turn our lives towards the divine,
May God use me to transform the lives of those around me
And join in with what the Spirit of God is doing already.
May Almighty God bless me and guide me on my way,

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 31st July

- Pour a glass of water. Think about the things you do that get in the way of your relationship with God. You might think it muddies the water of your life, but God forgives us for all these things, and offers us living water. Drink some of the water and give thanks for the way God reaches out to you with love and forgiveness.

Tuesday 1st August

- Get a piece of string and tie a knot as you think of someone you would like to pray for. Tie two more knots praying for two more people. Put the string somewhere you'll notice it throughout the day where it'll remind you to pray for the three people.

¹ Reflection written by All We Can

Wednesday 2nd August

- Read this poem "Blessing and Rest" by Malcolm Guite. Consider the blessings you have received today. Give thanks for them. <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/tag/sabbath>

Thursday 3rd August

- Consider how God is love, and where there is love, there is God. Leave a note, or send a text message, to tell somebody you love them or you're grateful for them.
Pray for them as you write.

Friday 4th August

- Do you have a favourite poem or song? It doesn't have to be explicitly Christian. Consider the ways the good news of God is communicated through the words.

Saturday 5th August

- Light a candle. Jesus is the light of the world. Pray about the places you experience darkness in your life, that Jesus light might shine there.