



# THE METHODIST CIRCUIT OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Insert date here.

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building.

## Opening Prayer

Lord and Father of all  
Jesus taught us that greatness  
is not as the world sees it,  
but comes when we humble  
ourselves in service to others.  
Help our minds and hearts be open to  
your teachings today. **Amen**

**Hymn 362 StF**     [Meekness and  
Majesty - Graham Kendrick \[with lyrics  
for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Meekness and majesty,  
Manhood and Deity,  
In perfect harmony,  
The Man who is God.  
Lord of eternity  
Dwells in humanity,  
Kneels in humility  
And washes our feet.

*O what a mystery,  
Meekness and majesty.  
Bow down and worship  
For this is your God,  
This is your God.*

Father's pure radiance,  
Perfect in innocence,  
Yet learns obedience  
To death on a cross.  
Suffering to give us life,  
Conquering through sacrifice,  
And as they crucify  
Prays: 'Father forgive.'

Wisdom unsearchable,  
God the invisible,  
Love indestructible  
In frailty appears.  
Lord of infinity,  
Stooping so tenderly,  
Lifts our humanity  
To the heights of His throne.

*Graham Kendrick*

## Let us pray together

Lord God, we give you thanks and  
praise for your Son Jesus who showed  
us, that true greatness is known in  
serving others.

The way of wisdom is found in childlike  
humility, with hearts lifted high, we  
offer you our thanks and praise for  
loving us and showing us the way to be  
your disciples. **Amen.**

## Confession

Loving Lord,

We know that in your eyes, it is not  
social status, or wealth or reputation  
that count.

Forgive us we pray when our lives are  
taken over by these worldly values.

**Amen**

Here is the good news for all who put  
their trust in Christ. Jesus says your  
sins are forgiven. **Amen.**

### **Old Testament: 1 Sam 3: 1-9**

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

### **Gospel reading: Mark 9: 30-37**

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching

his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

### **Time to Reflect**

"Floats like a butterfly – stings like a bee." The words of Mohammad Ali, probably the greatest heavy weight boxer of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In the final years of his life, it was sad to see his ability to speak and move limited by Parkinson's disease. He was also well known for saying, "I am the greatest."

Which takes us to the argument between the disciples that Jesus overheard about who was the greatest. Maybe it was because they

were ashamed that they did not want to tell him about it.

Jesus simply says, "Whoever want to be first must be last of all." And he took a child by the hand and put the child at the centre of their circle. There seem to be two strands to Jesus thinking as he explains what he has done: you must be like this child at the centre and you have to welcome this child at the centre.

From the story of Samuel we heard that it was a child who was able to discern what God was saying. His elders with all their sophistication and learning were only able to offer advice - he alone was able to hear the call of God.

It is interesting that Jesus moves from talking about a servant to making a little child an example. A servant was someone who waited and tables and got to eat after everyone else was finished. Judged by the values of the kingdom servants and children tell what true greatness is about. It's not about status or power or authority. It's about taking on all the characteristics of one who is open to listen and to learn.

These days we hear a lot about lifelong learning. It's certainly true that children do an incredible amount of learning in the first months and years of life. In the first couple of years, they pick up the intricacies of language, they learn about relating to other

people, then an incredible amount of stuff is put into formal education.

Life-long learning is also kingdom concept. If you were asked to talk about what God was doing in your life would you tell a story of something that happened a many years ago or would it be an experience or fresh insight that came to you recently?

In the kingdom of God, you have to be open to new ideas and possibilities, to the new thing that God is saying. You have to be willing to learn, like the child at the centre.

If you were asked to name someone who was a great example of the Christian faith who would you say? It may well be someone who has influenced you personally who is unknown to many people. It might be someone well known who makes you think "I could never be like that."

We don't know if the disciples were arguing about which of them should be given the title of "The Greatest" or whether they were wanting to give the award to someone else.

What they did not expect was that Jesus would put a child at the centre. One of the other characteristics of children is that they need so much. Yes, of course it's true that children can give a great deal - they bring joy and vitality and freshness in our lives and our communities. But they cannot bring any of those things unless their

needs for love, food, clothing and shelter and so much else are met.

The child is a symbol of all who need care attention and protection, all who are vulnerable and defenseless. Jesus says that it is in people like them that we will meet him and meet God, the one who sent him.

In a child we have a window into the heart of the one who willingly made himself helpless at the hands of others and gave himself over to be crucified.

This really turns our thinking upside down. So often we offer our service and help to others from a position of power because we are the people with resources that others need. We can choose whether to share or withhold those resources. When we recognise that the vulnerable have so much to offer us, the relationship is transformed because we stand side by side. Mission is no longer something we do for people, but alongside people in a relationship of mutual giving and receiving.

So, who is the greatest in the Kingdom? Generations of retelling the story of Jesus putting a child in the mist have dulled the impact of his actions on our minds. We don't realise just how shocking it must have been. For an example of true greatness Jesus went to the people who are at the bottom of the pile.

If we discover what it means to be open to God every day and what it

means to need to depend on others, then we might begin to discover what greatness is in God's kingdom and what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus.

**Hymn 611 StF**     [Brother, sister, let me serve you | Lyrics - YouTube](#)

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christlight for you  
in the night time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow,  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too

*Richard Gillard*

**Prayers**

Let us offer our prayer with all God's people through Jesus Christ our Lord who ever lives to pray for us.

We pray for the needs of the world...

We pray for the Church...

We pray for all in trouble or distress...

We pray for all who make a new beginning today...

God of compassion and mercy

Listen to our prayer

May what we ask in Jesus' name be done according to his word. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn 615 StF**     [Let love be real.](#)  
[Lyric video \(StF 615\) - YouTube](#)

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,  
Without the need to manage and to own;  
A haven free from posing and pretending,  
Where every weakness may be safely known.  
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,  
Give me your love wherever we may go.  
As God loves us, so let us love each other;  
With no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,

That strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;

That helps us face the risk of truly living,

And makes us brave to be what we might be.

Give me your strength when all my words are weakness; Give me your love in spite of all you know.

As God loves us, so let us love each other;

With no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

Let love be real, with no manipulation, No secret wish to harness or control;

Let us accept each other's incompleteness,

And share the joy of learning to be whole.

Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments

Give me your trust when all my failings show.

As God loves us, so let us love each other;

With no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

*Michael Forster*

### **A prayer of blessing**

May God our Father, strengthen us,

May Christ Jesus show us the way to serve,

May the Holy Spirit make us fruitful in all we do. And May the peace and love of our God

be always with us. **Amen.**

Original Materials by Linda Ashworth and John Hellyer