



Online Worship for St Paul's URC
and South Croydon United Church
Lent 1

Welcome

Welcome Friends, to our online worship for St Paul's URC and South Croydon United Church. Today, with churches up and down the country, we are marking 'Church Action on Poverty' Sunday, which coincides with the first Sunday of Lent.

Some of you shared some great pancake pictures on Shrove Tuesday and then a few of us gathered for a service on Ash Wednesday, when we marked our hands with the cross.

Let us pause with some music, to be aware of God's presence with us as we prepare to worship:

Opening Music –

'If ye love me' by Thomas Tallis
sung by The King's Singers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1WwNSfCom8>

*If ye love me
keep my commandments
and I will pray the father
and he shall give you another comforter
That he may 'bide with you forever
E'en the spirit of truth*

Call to Worship

We come to worship God

IN OUR NEED,

AND BRINGING WITH US THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD.

We come to God, who comes to us in Jesus

AND WHO KNOWS BY EXPERIENCE WHAT HUMAN LIFE IS LIKE.

We come with our faith and with our doubts

WE COME WITH OUR HOPES AND WITH OUR FEARS

We come as we are, because it is God who invites us to come

AND GOD HAS PROMISED NEVER TO TURN US AWAY.

'Sing for God's glory'

Tune: 'Lobe den herren', played by Rod Charles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QBG04er6uQ>

Sing for God's glory
that colours the dawn of creation,
racing across the sky,
trailing bright clouds of elation;
sun of delight
succeeds the velvet of night,
warming the earth's exultation.

Sing for God's power
that shatters the chains that would bind us,
searing the darkness of fear and despair
that could blind us,
touching our shame
with love that will not lay blame,
reaching out gently to find us.

Sing for God's justice
disturbing each easy illusion,
tearing down tyrants
and putting our pride to confusion;
lifeblood of right,
resisting evil and slight,
offering freedom's transfusion.

Words © Kathy Galloway

Church Action on Poverty is a Christian ecumenical social justice charity, committed to tackling poverty in the UK. They work in partnership with churches, and with people in poverty themselves, to tackle the root causes of poverty. Through our worship today, we will be using some excellent resources shared by Church Action and learn more about the charity, listen to voices who experience poverty and recommit to the Christian imperative to speak, act and pray for change.

Introduction to Church Action on Poverty

given by its director, Niall Cooper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b95l6LXjbCw>

The way Jesus interacts with Bartimaeus in our gospel reading, teaches us about how we, as Christians, can better engage with and love those on the edge of our society, so, we will be using a reflection by Jan Pickard, which uses the voice of Bartimaeus and the voices of the world around him – and around us.

Bartimaeus

Scripture reading and reflection by Jan Sutch Pickard

*This is what hurts: not seeing, but hearing
the hum of the crowd, bustling a few feet away –
business as usual –*

But what's it got to do with you?

*Then sensing the change in tempo and tone:
something new, to be welcomed or contained,
challenging the status quo, a threat, a promise –*
But what's it got to do with you?

Accept the way things are, Bartimaeus,
the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate
and the blind man – in the dark.

We can see what's best. We can see.

This is the way things are: stop shouting!

Don't rock the boat or try to break the mould
or ask awkward questions.

Just shut up and stay in your place at the side of the road.

Don't get in the way of progress and policy-making.

It's for your own good. Take our word for it.

We have the whole picture
and structures to keep things under control,
to keep safe the ferment of new ideas.

Don't imagine that what you have to say
will make a difference.

We can see what's best.

Desist, beggar-man. Don't protest.

*This is what hurts: being seen but not heard,
like a troublesome child, being taken for granted,
without agency, not allowed a voice.*

Mark 10: 46-52 – read by Sue Eardley

⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' ⁴⁸Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' ⁴⁹Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' ⁵⁰So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' ⁵²Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

'Heaven shall not wait

sung by Ruth and Joy Everingham

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHMt3YJHbZE>

Heaven shall not wait
for the poor to lose their patience,
the scorned to smile, the despised to find a friend:
Jesus is Lord:
He has championed the unwanted;
In him injustice confronts its timely end.

Heaven shall not wait
for the rich to share their fortunes,
the proud to fall, the elite to tend the least:
Jesus is Lord;
he has shown the master's privilege –
to kneel and wash servants' feet before they feast.

Heaven shall not wait
for the dawn of great ideas,
thoughts of compassion divorced from cries of pain:
Jesus is Lord;
he has married word and action;
his cross and company make his purpose plain.

Heaven shall not wait
for triumphant Hallelujahs,
when earth has passed and we reach another shore:
Jesus is Lord
in our present imperfection;
his power and love are now, and then for evermore.

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I'm not sure that this is something that I have spoken about widely at St Paul's and SCUC, but I have first-hand experience of living in poverty.

Before returning to ministry in 2016 I was reliant on benefits for just over 10 years, whilst I underwent various spinal surgeries. I know the shame that that can bring, I have lived the endless changes to the benefit system; from Housing and Council Tax Benefit, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance – all of which have now become PIP (Personal Independence Payments).

I was privately renting, paid for by my benefits. Finding landlords willing to have a tenant using benefits was a huge challenge in itself. The only way they would accept me, was if I signed a letter that said they could evict me with no notice. Getting repair work done, was always a joke and made me feel like a beggar asking for something extravagant, when all I needed was a shower that worked.

There is shame and indignity in this experience – a form of humiliation built into the system.

Even as a relatively articulate, educated man, I felt that I had no voice.

When I tell something of this story, (which is not often, as shame lingers), I can still feel like I'm shouting on the side-lines, with the crowd, the majority, telling me to 'shut up' and not rock-the-boat.

What I have found and trust in scripture, is a man who listens – a man who sees those on the edge – a man who treats everyone with the God-given dignity they deserve.

God with us, Jesus Christ, shouts with and for those on the edge, so that we might hear and respond and enact change. The Holy Spirit works through charities like 'Church Action on Poverty', reminding churches of their calling and opening ears and eyes to see what some folk suffer.

Stef Benstead, a Poverty Truth Commissioner, shares the importance of Dignity, Agency and Power:

The Importance of Dignity, Agency and Power

Stef Benstead, Poverty Truth Commissioner

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFKKxf8x_0s

Prayers of Intercession

God-with-us, present though unseen, we give thanks that you hear us when we cry out for change.

You hear us even when others don't want to listen, or doubt the authority of our lived experience; you go on listening, even when we struggle to put our beliefs into words.

And, when people in power reject our protests, you affirm our right to speak: you call us to come forward and state our case.

For you, our Maker, who breathed life into us, understand our heart's desires.

In Jesus, you came to share our human lives,

and know the down-to-earth needs
of our neighbours and ourselves.
Your transforming Spirit can empower us
to help make the world a better place.

Give us the humility to call for your help;
give us the ability to speak the truth out loud,
in words all can understand;
give us the grace to see clearly
where you are, who we are and what needs to be done.
Help us to stand up for what we believe, to speak out,
and to follow you.

Amen

'Inspired by love and anger'

sung by Derrick Paul Miller

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zijXlqMEq7c>

Inspired by love and anger,
disturbed by need and pain,
Informed of God's own bias,
we ask him once again:
"How long must some folk suffer?
How long can few folk mind?
How long dare vain self-interest
turn prayer and pity blind?"

From those forever victims
of heartless human greed,
Their cruel plight composes
a litany of need:
"Where are the fruits of justice?
Where are the signs of peace?
When is the day when prisoners
and dreams find their release?"

"When will the wronged be righted?
When will the kingdom come?
When will the world be generous
to all instead of some?"

God asks, "Who will go for me?
Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will listen,
will prophesy and preach?
And who, when few bid welcome,
will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow,
will walk the road I show?"

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The Lords' Prayer

We bring our prayers together, as we pray as Jesus taught us...

*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 this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
Forever and ever. Amen*

Notices

Our United Lent Study, 'Woven', begins this coming Tuesday 23rd at 10am on zoom. It last for 1hr each session, over six weeks – a great chance to journey though Lent together with fellowship, worship and exploration.

On Saturday 27th Feb at 7:30pm, both churches are welcome to 'Awesome Planet: The Southern Polar Region', shared by Helen Dean – bring your own wine and nibbles!

Next Sunday, our service is led by Revd Alex Mabbs from the Brighthelm Centre in Brighton, who will be helping us to explore 'Eco-church'.

'Show me how to stand for justice'

Tune: 'Ode to joy', played by Kaleb Brasee

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msysc6xr_CaE

Show me how to stand for justice
How to work for what is right,
How to challenge false assumptions,
How to walk within the light.
May I learn to share more freely
In a world so full of greed,
Showing your immense compassion
By the life I choose to lead.

Teach my heart to treasure mercy,
Whether given or received
For my need has not diminished
Since the day I first believed.
Let me seek no satisfaction
Boasting of what I have done.
But rejoice that I am pardoned
And accepted in your Son.

Gladly I embrace a lifestyle
Modelled on your living word,
In humility submitting
To the truth that I have heard;
Make me conscious of your presence
Every day in all I do:
By your Spirit's gracious prompting
May I learn to walk with you.

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Sending forth & Blessing

*May the blessing of God be with us,
in recognising Christ in each other,
in hearing and seeing those on the edge
in doing justice, loving kindness,
and walking humbly with our God.*

Amen

Closing Music – ‘Exultemus’ (from Seven Sketches)

by Percy Whitlock

(Daniel Cook, organist)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNLxIObVIm8>



You can donate to 'Church Action on Poverty, here:

www.church-poverty.org.uk/give/

or by calling: 0161 872 9294

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