

Preparation:

The readings set this Sunday include:

- **Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67**
- **Psalms 45:10-17**
- **Romans 7:15-25a**
- **Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

1. You may want to read some or all of these readings before starting your worship – or include them after the first prayer. There's a YouTube introduction (5 mins) at https://youtu.be/aCPg_GqvXrE To go into more depth you may want to look at the Bible study material provided at <http://centralhall.info/resources/>
2. When preparing for this worship, find a place and time where you can be quiet and comfortable for half an hour.
3. Put something that speaks to you of God's faithful love in a place where you can focus on it.
4. For the hymns, you can sing them if you are able, or you can read the words out loud – or silently if that seems better – or you may wish to click on the links and join in on the internet (if you are using a computer).
5. When you are ready, light a candle/tea light if it helps you to focus. This can mean many things to you. Perhaps you could use the words of Romans 7:25 – Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
6. Now, sit down and relax...
7. Welcome to worship!

Order for worship on Sunday 5th July 2020



Monet, Claude, 1840-1926. Waterlilies, from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=46715> [retrieved July 3, 2020]. Original source: <http://www.yorckproject.de>.

Worship for Sunday 5th July – at Central Hall

Notes for worship preparation are on the other side of this sheet.

Call to worship: Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! *Rom 7:25*

Hymn 136: [Morning has broken](#)

Prayer: Christ Jesus, you walked amongst us in Galilee and laughed and cried with your friends. Your ministry challenged people to connect with God and neighbour through love and compassion. Forgive us when we have disconnected from you and from others, in our playing or our working, forgive us when we have isolated ourselves through our laughter or our tears. Forgive us and restore us.

Christ, you re-connect us with the source of laughter and tears, the source of loving and hoping. By your grace we are healed. We thank you. **Amen.**

Gospel reading from Matthew (11:16-17)

To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

Reflection

When I was young I remember two types of play. There were games I played with friends where the rules were sometimes quite strict and if you didn't do what others asked you to do (or you weren't popular) you were left out. Then, there were other games played alone or often with a friend or two – games which were in many ways private and imaginative. I remember some of those games as my happiest times. There we are, climbing the tree and looking at the blue sky through the yellow laburnum blossoms, hanging on as long as we can, singing a song, living the precious moment together in our shared world. That sort of play was a delight and a connection with the earth and my friends.

I wonder when did Jesus learn about playing weddings and funerals in the marketplace? Did he learn about the rules when he was a child? Maybe, like most children, he was sometimes left out by the other children because he was different. What happened when they wanted to play

weddings and cry or to dance to the pipes and he wanted to do something else? What happened when he wasn't persuaded about their games? Did they tell him to go away?

Once when Jesus was in a tight spot being asked about the rules, he drew with his finger in the sand (John 8:1-11). Time to think, time to focus on what matters. He traced in the sand, whilst the others tried to make him 'play' their cruel game. Here in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is pointing out that the best way to live life is to connect with what really matters. We are not on earth to satisfy others' demands to cry and dance on tap, we are here to truly connect, with one another, and with God.

John the Baptist and Jesus in very different ways wanted people to connect with God in their lives. That's not a marketplace game, it is real.

There's a risk that we get caught up in knots about our faith and the 'rules of the game' a bit like Paul in the passage in Romans 7. Religion (not faith) becomes the be-all and end-all, and the way things are done is seen as the only way to do things. This can make us like children in the marketplace, trying to keep to the rules and not allowing people to be different.

Whether we are fasting or feasting, laughing or weeping, God wants to connect with us. Jesus invites us to make that connection, to let go of the rules that limit us, and follow him, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28.

Hymn 248: [I heard the voice of Jesus](#)

Prayers for the world

Please pray for people places and situations which you know about where there is isolation or brokenness. End your prayers with the **Lord's Prayer**

Hymn 51: [Great is thy faithfulness](#)

Blessing: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. **Amen**