

## CIRCUIT SERVICE FOR 28 AUGUST 2022

### Rev. David Jenkins

Call to Worship-Today we reach a unique point on our journey.

As we gather together we pause to listen, to receive, to discern the direction our journey is to take from this point onwards. So we come with eager anticipation.

Hymn 465 Singing the Faith (437 Hymns and Psalms) "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wT4n1hGjDDg>

Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah  
Pilgrim through this barren land  
I am weak but Thou art mighty  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me now and evermore;  
Feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain  
Whence the healing stream shall flow;  
Let the fiery cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer

be Thou still my strength and shield;  
be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side:  
Songs of praises, songs of praises  
I will ever give to Thee;  
I will ever give to Thee.

(William Williams 1717-1791)

### Prayer

Living God, moving among us and within us, calling us forward, driving and impelling us, we greet your ever dynamic presence, never static, never stagnant, always flowing and moving on, leading us constantly into new and larger life.

Forgive our unreadiness to travel with you, our desire to stay put in our thinking and our ways, our reluctance to keep up with what you are seeking to do among us.

As we travel into the future where we are apprehensive reassure us, where we are over-confident humble us; where we need direction guide us.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has travelled this way before as the trailblazing pioneer of the Spirit, Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

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.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### All-Age Talk- "On a Journey"

Bank Holiday Weekend!

We're towards the end of the School holidays.

When those holidays began, travelling was a real problem -queues of traffic towards Dover with waits of up to 6 hours in the car; or trains not running; or great hold ups at airports.

Journeys can be full of difficulties, frustrations and hold-ups.

"Are we nearly there?" comes a voice at the back of the car and the answer may be, "Not for a very long time yet".

Journeys can be really boring, things to be survived, not enjoyed.

Boring, frustrating, difficult-yes, sometimes- but journeys can also be incredibly exciting! Your first time on an aeroplane, in a helicopter, on board a ship, your first time in a different country or in a place you've never been to before.

Some of the most exciting books and films are ones where the main characters are on a journey somewhere, -Indiana Jones searching for hidden treasure, Star Trek exploring the unknown; or real-life adventures - people who have explored new continents, the team that first climbed Everest.

Everyone who follows Jesus is on a journey.

Sometimes it can be hard going and you may feel you want to turn back and give up.

It can be a journey in which we may face dangers, difficulties and challenges.

Sometimes it may lead you into great discoveries and real excitement.

It can be a journey with many surprises in which we will be learning new life skills; a journey through which we grow and mature.

When Jesus calls people, "Follow me", it is to a journey for life-it is about searching, exploring, discovering. It's a journey which is not about standing still but moving on.

And it's not one we need make alone.

There are lots of other people on that journey too.

We can help, encourage, feed, watch over each other as we move forward on the journey guided by Jesus who leads us towards our ultimate destination of life with God here and now and forever.

Hymn 476 Singing the Faith (746 Hymns and Psalms) "One more step"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w2WhUJHaIo>

One more step along the world I go,  
One more step along the world I go;  
From the old things to the new,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,  
More and more about the world I learn;  
All the new things that I see  
You'll be looking at along with me.  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

As I travel through the bad and good,  
Keep me travelling the way I should.  
Where I see no way to go,  
You'll be telling me the way, I know.

And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

Give me courage when the world is rough,  
Keep me loving though the world is tough;  
Leap and sing in all I do,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.

You are older than the world can be,  
You are younger than the life in me;  
Ever old and ever new,  
Keep me travelling along with you:  
And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
Keep me travelling along with you.  
(Sydney Carter 1915-2004)

Readers -

There are many, many Biblical journeys - Here are some -You may think of many more -

Abraham sets out in faith-

Genesis 12:1-5a

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."<sup>[a]</sup><sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup> Abram took his wife

Sarai and his brother's son Lot and all the possessions that they had gathered and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran, and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

The Israelites escape from Egypt-  
Exodus 14:15b-22

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to move on. <sup>16</sup> Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup> I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. <sup>18</sup> The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."

<sup>19</sup> Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, <sup>20</sup> coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long. <sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, <sup>22</sup> and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

The Israelites return from exile-  
Isaiah 48:20

Go out from Babylon; flee from Chaldea;  
declare this with a shout of joy; proclaim it;  
send it forth to the end of the earth;  
say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!"

Journeys around the birth of Jesus-  
Matthew 2:1-2

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi<sup>[a]</sup> from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east<sup>[b]</sup> and have come to pay him homage."

Jesus in the wilderness-  
Mark 1:12-13

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup> He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Jesus sets out for Jerusalem-  
Luke 9:51

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Jesus enters Jerusalem-  
Luke 19:35-38

They brought the donkey to Jesus, and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> Now as he was approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

Many journeys of the early Christians-

Acts 8: 1b, 4

That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. <sup>24</sup> Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word.

Hymn 473 Singing the Faith (450 Hymns and Psalms) "Moses, I know you're the man"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr7YZ203UVI>

"Moses, I know you're the man,"  
the Lord said.  
"You're going to work out my plan,"  
the Lord said.  
"Lead all the Israelites out of slavery,  
and I shall make them a wandering race  
called the People of God."  
*So every day,  
we're on our way,  
for we're a travelling, wandering race,  
we're the People of God.*

"Don't get too set in your ways,"  
the Lord said.  
"Each step is only a phase,"  
the Lord said.  
"I'll go before you and I shall be a sign  
to guide my travelling, wandering race;  
you're the People of God."

"No matter what you may do,"  
the Lord said,  
"I shall be faithful and true,"

the Lord said.  
"My love will strengthen you as you go along,  
for you're my travelling, wandering race,  
you're the People of God."

"Look at the birds of the air,"  
the Lord said,  
"They fly unhampered by care,"  
the Lord said.  
"You will move easier if you're travelling light,  
for you're a wandering, vagabond race,  
you're the People of God."

"Foxes have places to go,"  
the Lord said.  
"But I've no home here below,"  
the Lord said.  
"so if you want to be with me all your days,  
keep up the moving and travelling on,  
you're the People of God."

(Estelle White born 1925)

### Sermon "Journey of Faith"

Many journeys are about searching for something, discovering something, exploring somewhere-and so are faith journeys-seeking for truth, discovering strength, exploring love.  
And the more we discover the more we keep on searching.  
One of my favourite prayers is by Catherine of Siena-"Eternal Trinity, you are a deep sea, in which the more we seek the more we find, and the more we find the more we seek".  
One journey of discovery continually leads to another.

The journey of faith takes us in at least 3 different directions-the journey inwards, the journey upwards and the journey outwards.

The journey inwards helps us to discover our identity, our purpose in life at the stage we have now reached. Jesus at his baptism became aware of how immensely he was valued and affirmed. In his wilderness journey straight afterwards he was conscious of being tempted and tested as he tried to work out the repercussions of what he had received at his baptism.  
The wilderness was a suitable place for him to explore his inner journey. Solitude and even emptiness can help us in that same exploration.  
Solitude and emptiness can lead us into wonderful times of peace and spaciousness.  
They can also lead us into searching and challenging times which can be so uncomfortable that we may try to avoid such moments through constant activity, noise and distraction.  
The journey inwards may demand of us the brutal honesty of confronting truth about ourselves.

It is a place of losing and finding-losing compulsion, anger and greed and other undesirable traits of character and finding in their place the gentle, healing power that helps to transform our lives and to give us fresh direction.

If the journey inwards is inevitably centred upon ourselves in self discovery so the journey upwards is centred upon God and the discovery of God's being.

The journey upwards was of great importance to Jesus throughout his life.

There were many times when he would spend time in prayer.

His companionship beside us helps us to make the journey upwards.

Like climbers attached to each other by ropes we can choose to let ourselves be attached to Jesus and him to guide and lead us into the higher reaches of the spirit and towards staggering new views of life.

Developing our prayer life and participating in worship can help us move along the journey upwards.

The journey inwards concentrates on us; the journey upwards concentrates on God; and the journey outwards brings us in contact with other people.

It may specially draw us towards the people who are on the same journey.

The companions on our road may well be people from our own Church or from neighbouring churches.

They may be people who belong to our own family or close circle of friends.

They may even be people we have not known before, possibly people of another faith or people of no faith.

They may be colleagues at work, our near neighbours, people we come across in our local community.

They may be people we only meet once in our lives or those we encounter with frequency.

In meeting them, through respectful listening, there may be a great deal for us to learn,

And who knows what we may be able to give ourselves?

Who knows what a positive contribution we may be able to make?

Who knows where the journey outwards may take us in an ever-extending commitment to social justice?

The journey outwards encourages us to share insights, to bear the burdens of others and to let them bear ours.

Through the companionship of others we may receive the precious gift of friendship and learn more of what it means to love and to be loved.

So where are you on these various journeys?

On your inward journey are you making space for yourself?

On your upward journey are you making space for God?

And on your outward journey are you making space for others?

Make space to reflect; recognise God's presence with you; share with your fellow travellers.

And may God bless us and bless others through us on all our journeys.

Prayers-In the silence let us make our own response to what we have heard.....

We pray for all who set out on hazardous journeys, including people fleeing for safety from wars and poverty and oppression.

We think of people on journeys they have not chosen for themselves, including those who are trafficked in present day slavery.

We think of those taking long and monotonous journeys each day to forage for food or fetch clean water for their families who are threatened by malnutrition.

We think of those whose work is in transport, and for those exploring safety on the roads and seas and in the air.

In silence we remember people for whom we are especially concerned, who are facing challenges of illness, bereavement or other difficulties.....

Help us as we travel inwards to work with you towards our transformation into the people you would have us be.

Help us as we travel upwards to discover more of the glory of God at the heart of life.  
Help us in travelling outwards to establish and maintain good relationships within our families, friends, colleagues and neighbourhoods, and with those who are strangers; and help us to make our own contribution towards our prayers for others, through Jesus our loving Lord, Amen.

This hymn is traditionally sung at the end of each Methodist Conference when the delegates go to different parts of the United Kingdom and recall the journey of God's people in the desert-

Hymn 459 Singing the Faith (62 Hymns and Psalms) " Captain of Israel's host"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt4CpbkXMg>

Captain of Israel's host and guide  
Of all who seek the land above  
Beneath thy shadow we abide  
The clouds of thy protecting love.  
Our strength, thy grace; Our rule, thy word:  
Our end, the glory of the Lord.

By thy unerring Spirit led  
We shall not in the desert stray  
We shall not full direction need  
Nor miss our providential way.  
As far from danger as fear  
While love, almighty love is near.

(Charles Wesley 1707-1788)

Benediction - On the on-going journey of life, as we travel inwards into self discovery, shape us more fully into your likeness;

as we travel upwards fill us with the joy of encountering you;

as we travel outwards, enable us to bring the fruits of kindness into all our relationships.

The blessing of the Father, the Spirit, the Son be upon us to transform us, Amen.