

## Coming Together & Moving On Prayer Morning at Newbiggin-on-Lune on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2022

### Session One(Hannah Fox – Winton)

Activity - pick an object from the table. Don't overthink it, just pick something that your eye is drawn to.

Now I'd like you to spend a few minutes considering that object, noticing it's features, its function. What is interesting about it? What is unique about it? What is it that drew you to that object? Write down your thoughts on paper.

Now ask God what he wants to say to you through your object. Maybe read through what you have written down and ask God if he is saying any of these things about you.

It's very easy to unwittingly close ourselves off from some of the ways God can speak to us. Even picking up a random object from a table for no other reason than our eye was drawn to it, I believe God can speak to us. If you didn't sense God was saying anything particular to you today, can I urge you to take your piece of paper home, pop it somewhere safe but where's you'll see it from time to time, and trust that God will reveal what he wants to say to you when the time is right.

The reason I wanted to do this activity is to take a moment to consider whether whose voice we spend more time listening to - ours, other people's or God's?

When it comes to knowing who we are, whose voice do we listen to? Is our identity achieved or received?

When we're born, only the people who gave us life - our parents - have the authority to name us....to give us our identity. So, in the context of God giving us new life, then surely only he has authority to name us, to give us our identity.

And when it comes to the identities we gave ourselves - the achieved identity - If you were a sculpture in progress—a block of marble—you might be worried about all the pieces you are losing as the sculptor chips away at various pieces of you. However, all the while, the sculptor is delighting in each chip that is removed because each piece that is pulled away from you reveals a little bit more of your true form to the world.

I'd invite you to spend the remainder of our time reflecting on this verse:

*1 Peter 2:9-10* "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

*1 John 3:1-2*

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."

## Session Two (Sue Thackray – Newbiggin-on-Lune)

The reflection was based on what does it mean to move forward with God?

Life can be so full of changes from moving house, starting a new job or day to day changes we all encounter. Embracing change is not always easy. How do we let go of the past and move forward with God successfully? We will experience change as we learn to trust God properly. As we become closer to God, we begin to live closer to the example that Jesus showed us.

Moving forward can be challenging and we will have to be courageous and not fearful. Holding on to the past can sabotage the future that God has for us. When we begin to trust God and try to live obediently, He will be there holding our hand. No matter what life brings our way, God wants to help us move forward. He will help us live for Him. He will be with us when it feels like we are starting over, moving on, or making necessary changes. Prayers are an important part of this. We prayed the prayer “To help us move forward with God” then we had a time of silence to just be with Him communicating with Him and listening to Him. We finished with another prayer and His promise Matthew 28v20 “I am with you always to the end of the age.”

### *A Prayer to help us move forward with God*

*Heavenly Father,*

*I come before You in prayer believing that when I bow my head, You hear me. You are the creator of all things, and You created me with a divine purpose. The plans You have for my future are good. Thank you for your love and kindness toward me.*

*Please forgive me for anything I have done that does not align with your Divine will and purpose. Forgive me for sins of omission, when I should have done or said something, but let fear or pride get the best of me instead. I confess and repent. Would you please strengthen me and help me to do better?*

*Father God, when things change or something doesn't go as planned, it is no surprise to You. You are all-knowing. I know that things must change so that I can evolve. I ask you to help me be more open to change. Please help me face my fears by reminding me that I do not ever encounter anything alone. Let your angels go before me and at Your Word, let them open the doors You have for me and help me not to be afraid to walk through them as I allow other doors to shut. I want to move forward with You, and I ask that you please help me.*

*As I lift my head from this prayer, I lift my life to you. Thank you for holding me in the palm of Your mighty hands. Continue to mold me as you see fit. I pray this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen*

Session Three (Revs John & Lesley Riley – Appleby)

Spending time in prayer can at times be hard work for all sorts of different reasons. It has been good to have a coffee, refocus the mind.

But why do we find it hard?

Is it the being still, we want to be active, do we feel we have to put in considerable effort.

To sit, be still and quiet, well just somehow doesn't quite fit.

We need to wrestle with God.

Jacob spent a whole night wrestling with God and by the end of the night you sense that perhaps this wasn't quite what God wanted of Jacob.

Jacob was trying to do it all in his own strength and by a single touch God changed all that, Jacob no longer wrestling but leaning upon, relying upon, totally, God.

Perhaps a pointer for us this morning as we continue in prayer?

### **Genesis 32: 24 – 31.**

*So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob" he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." Jacob said "Please tell me your name." but he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.*

Dawn begins to break, weak rays of sunlight gradually gaining strength preparing to light up a new day. Holding routine, stability, painfulfilling expectations. Or maybe offering hope, opportunities, new blessings. *Silence*

Throbbing pain easing into a dull ache, human pride gradually acknowledging weakness preparation for moving in a new direction. God held, God led, God sustaining. *Silence*

Early morning mists still hug the earth, just a little longer absorbing the tranquillity busyness will soon rush in evaporating the mists in its wake.

Then rise, ready to journey on, embracing a new vision, to share a timeless love. *Silence*

Loving Heavenly Father if we are honest there are times when we find prayer hard, we struggle and wrestle trying to get it right, trying to find what you would have us do as individuals and as a church community.

Father in the time that remains this morning help us to rest in you.

To put aside our fears, the trivial thoughts that crowd our minds and in the space that appears put your peace, your energising thoughts and words.

Help us to hold on so that we might receive the blessings you have prepared for us.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **Session Four** (Caroline Shaw – Warcop)

### **Coming together/moving forward.**

As human beings we are all individual and have our own thoughts and ideas. Wherever we live in the world we are all humans and although we have hands, legs eyes etc. we are unique individuals, with our own hopes and dreams. Our dear Lord created us this way and knew we would be able to share ideas and thoughts together. How lovely it is to meet with friends for a coffee and a chat and spend quality time together.

But there is little wonder that at times we have differing opinions, maybe over how to bring up children, or were to go on holiday, how we want to decorate a house, to politics and religion, How we overcome these differences is also an art and at times is easier than others.

Sometimes we have to make compromises and learn to live with things slightly differently to how we expected, sometimes we expect others to make a compromise. We will have all known times when we have had to compromise a little.

We come together and we discuss our ideas and feelings and then try and find common ground to move forward with an idea, sometimes this may make us feel a little worried or uncomfortable, but we should not be frightened to give our opinions, like I said we are all individual. at work in education I have over the years seen many changes some I have felt for the better others I have gone along with feeling this doesn't seem right, sometimes they turn out OK other times we go full circle and go back to what was working but without people coming together and trying new ideas we never move forward. Life is not stationary it is forever changing and moving and neither should we as Christians be stationary. We should be proactive and willing to try new ideas and be prepared to come together and discuss ideas and yet also not be closed to others thoughts on the matter and make choices and compromises as needed.

I know that it seems at times more and more chapels are closing but that doesn't mean our Lord is not working it just means that we as Christians have to alter how we worship and how to involve our communities. Go to them and share with them in places that they feel comfortable, a sports match, a quiz in a village hall, out in the fields wherever. People congregate. Move forward in your Christian lives with a purpose of sharing the love of our Lord.

*Romans 8 v 26-28. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Hymn MP38 – As we are gathered Jesus is here.

**Prayer Station** (Joyce Worsfold – Brough Sowerby)



I was asked to create a prayer station for the 'Coming Together, Moving on' morning at Newbiggin, a very special morning which was a time of great blessing enabling us to be together with God and to get to know one another better. The following is an attempt at describing how the prayer station came into being.

**'A rope of 3 cords cannot easily be broken'** Ecclesiastes 4:9

Early in the year I had a strange experience, I'm sure many of you have had similar episodes. You wake in the night and cannot get back to sleep. It almost seems like a call to prayer, so you get up and pray and nothing seems to be happening, then, suddenly, a word or a phrase leaps into your brain and you just know it is a message, or maybe just a note from God.

That's what happened to me that night, this particular verse made its way home and lodged deep inside me. I couldn't even remember where it came from. Thank goodness for Google!

But Why? What had I been praying about? Well it was something like, *'Lord, what can we do to help the church on earth to grow? Or words to that effect!*

As I pondered on that verse it seemed to me that there was a simple, three-word answer.

**'Do It Together'**

Is that verse a gentle reminder that this is how it works? Where 2 or 3 worship together that is where He is, our third cord. – the Holy Spirit working *with us*, unbreakable, incredible. If it's good enough for the Trinity who are we to argue? Prayer triplets, work triplets, church triplets, denominational triplets and so on, why not?

So 'back to bed' I thought. Not so... then came the 'ear-worm'

*'Father make us one, Father make us one, that the world may know You have sent the Son. Father make us one.'*

Very simple words, easy to remember, easy to pray, anytime, anyplace.'

We are one, or are we? It is so hard, isn't it? So many different ideas and opinions, likes and dislikes, hopes and dreams. We *definitely need* to be one; plaited together, bound, blended and mixed, joined, merged and united. Yes, we keep trying to do that and of course the glue is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit our Maker, Lover and Inspirer.

We are **not** isolated individuals meeting together, worshipping a distant God and struggling to keep going. We are a great company of joy-givers, love spreaders who by working closely together with God and **for** His beloved people can effect great change. Together, with Him, anything is possible!

I'd like to end with a question if I may. How many ways can you think of to help us to grow closer to one another? How can we get to know one another better? How can we strengthen and inspire one another? What visions and dreams do we each have for our churches. All our ideas matter.

Sorry, that's several questions! Answers please, let's ponder and pray, Let's deliberate and celebrate.

P.S. If anyone would like to borrow the 3 cords prayer station and prayer cards please get in touch.