



"Friends"

A service over Zoom on Sunday 9th May 2021

A gathering prayer

Lord Jesus, we are from separate houses,
in one street and another.

We may be zooming together with others,
we may be alone;

but we are all neighbours and friends.

We are different but equal.

We are here to worship you, our 'Ultimate Friend', and to commit ourselves afresh
to one another and to you.

Amen

StF 351 In Christ alone

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and
storm.

What heights of love, what depths of
peace

When fears are stilled, when strivings
cease

My Comforter, my All in All

Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.

Lord's Prayer

Talk - Philip

If you search the internet for the word Friends, pictures of these 6 dominate the results. It's a US sitcom which I have only ever watched under sufferance when my kids and now grandkids were watching TV. Believe me there are many more aspects to Friendship than that depicted here. C S Lewis, the writer of many books including 'The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe' deemed friendship as very important and described it as a shared love for something. The best vitamin for making friends is B1.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of
Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Keith Getty (b 1974) Stuart Townend (b 1963)



Let me ask - What kinds of friendships do you have? Perhaps you are you a friend of a local community group – a theatre group or wildlife conservation project or something like that. Friends of the Riverside. Ilkley Moor, Manor House are just a few known to me in Ilkley. If you use Facebook, you probably get many people asking you to be their friend. You might, by virtue of belonging to the organisation, be a 'Friend of the Earth'. Remember Friends Reunited? Some will still be in touch with a few friends from school, even if that was a long time ago and maybe you haven't seen those friends in person for years. Would you recognize them? Perhaps, however, you meet up once a week (or more) with friends at the pub or in the coffee shop, or at weekends you might have a group of friends with whom you go to watch your favourite sports team. – I wish! Perhaps there are other ways, other contexts, in which the word friend crops up. If you included them all, can you count how many friends you have? It is a difficult ask; probably impossible. Some of these friendships are deep and lasting; others come and go. In some – for most of us, with those few people that we would describe as our 'best friends' – there may be a deep and mutual understanding of who we are, a sharing of confidences, a true love and respect for one another. In others, there may be little more than a temporary convenience – friends for now. Without doubt there are many different kinds of friendship. So, let us take a few moments to think about friendship with Jesus. What kind of friendship do you have with Jesus? What kind of friend is he? What kind of friend do we want him to be? And, since friendship is by its very nature, mutual, reciprocal: what kind of friend do you think Jesus wants us to be? And are we? And if not, what can we do about it?

StF 531 What a friend we have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus
 All our sins and griefs to bear
 What a privilege to carry
 Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations?
 Is there trouble anywhere?
 We should never be discouraged
 Take it to the Lord in prayer

Oh, what peace we often forfeit
 Oh, what needless pain we bear
 All because we do not carry
 Everything to God in prayer

Can we find a friend so faithful
 Who will all our sorrows share?
 Jesus knows our every weakness
 Take it to the Lord in prayer

Joseph M Scriven (1819-1886)

Reading John Ch 15 v 9 -17

⁹ I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. ¹³ The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them. ¹⁴ And you are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name. ¹⁷ This, then, is what I command you: love one another.

Talk – Philip

Do you read all the 'Terms and Conditions' (Ts&Cs) before signing an agreement or similar? Even if we start to do so, there are usually so many that we don't read them all – but we still sign. What are the 'Ts&Cs' of following Jesus? Have you read them all? Do you know what you are 'signing up' for? Is there a difference between those of Jesus and those of the church (i.e. the organisation) to which you belong? In fact, Jesus' Ts&Cs are rather straightforward and brief: 'Love one another as I have loved you' and 'You are my friends if you do what I command' – and perhaps a few more similar phrases. Love and obedience are the essentials, remembering, of course, that for Jesus, love is less about feelings and more about actions. Jesus encourages his disciples to keep his commandments and above all to love one another as he loved them. He says that those who do this are his friends and he emphasizes that this is his choice rather than theirs. So love is indeed divine excelling all.

STF 503 Love Divine all loves excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling
Joy of Heaven to Earth come down
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling
All Thy faithful mercies crown
Jesus, Thou art all compassion
Pure, unbounded love Thou art
Visit us with Thy salvation
Enter every trembling heart

Finish then Thy new creation
Pure and spotless let us be
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee
Changed from glory into glory
'Til in Heaven we take our place
'Til we cast our crowns before Thee
Lost in wonder love and praise

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Come almighty to deliver
Let us all Thy life receive
Suddenly return and never
Never more Thy temples leave
Thee we would be always blessing
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing
Glory in Thy perfect love

Talk – Gary This is Christian Aid Week. In 2020 its slogan was, 'Love never fails. Love unities us all.' In Christian Aid Week we think about people whose lives and circumstances are very different from ours. But deep down we all share so many values and aspirations. This is particularly true with Christians around the world. Might these people in distant lands also become our friends?

This year's Christian Aid slogan is '**Stand together against the climate crisis**'. If you are able to visit www.caaid.org.uk you can see a video clip of Florence, a very jolly Kenyan woman farmer. Despite her husband having passed away and there having been a severe drought for several years she and her friends, with the help of Christian Aid, have built a small earthen dam close to the village

Talk - Chris Sadly millions of people throughout Kenya and beyond are desperately struggling to survive droughts. We can help another community build an earthen dam, so that many more people will have the water they need to sustain their families. We need to give generously to help more people like Florence and her neighbours to thrive.

But the question is how can we raise money to support people like Florence. Well here is the answer! In fact there are 3 ways to give so you can choose what is best for you!

1. We have set up a Christian Aid e-envelope for friends and family of Christchurch Ilkley. To find the link see this week's 'Christchurch Noticeboard'. If you have any problems at all with that just ring Chris or Gary on 01943 430634 and we will send you the link by email. We are aiming high and hope to raise £750.
2. If you are not comfortable with using the e-envelope, no problem, just give us a ring on 01943 430634 and we will bring over to your house the traditional Christian Aid red envelope.
3. We can not hold a big coffee morning this year to raise money BUT WE CAN hold lots of mini coffee mornings or afternoon teas of no more than 6 people outside. So if you feel able to host a mini event please give us a ring and let us know. We can supply you with a poster, balloons and the red envelopes. All you need to do is invite a few friends, bake a cake (or buy a packet of scones!) and make a cuppa for everyone. What a great way to support the work of Christian Aid and, at the same time, celebrate seeing friends again after lockdown.

These options are also outlined in the latest Wider Horizons and in this week's Noticeboard. We look forward to hearing from you in the next few days.

Prayers of Intercession – Chris & Gary

Reader 1 Gary: God of abundant life, we see your goodness all around us and we thank you for every part of it; from the plants and animals which play their part in complex ecosystems, to the dry deserts and stormy seas which test the limits of life.

We pray that in this time of climate crisis and ecological emergency, you may help us to rediscover your love of creation and to reflect this love in our own lives.

God, in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

Reader 2 Chris: God who speaks through unexpected people, we thank you for contemporary prophets who are challenging us to act on climate change; for indigenous people and their invaluable knowledge of the land and sea where they live, for scientists dedicating their careers to warning us about changes to the planet, and for young people striking for their future.

We pray that you will help those in power to hear their prophetic voices. Help them to see beyond short-term political priorities and business plans. and give them wisdom and courage when they face difficult decisions.

God, in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

Reader 3 Gary: God of second chances, we recognise the damage we have done to the Earth and the injustice we see in society every day, all of it fuelled by worship of profit and possessions. We pray for the coming of a better world with justice, kindness and humility at its heart. We ask that you guide us to be co-creators of this new world.

Give us confidence to follow the prophetic voices, to stand against injustice to people and to our planet, so that together, in your strength, we stop this climate crisis.

God, in your mercy **Hear our prayer.**

We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ **Amen**

Special Song - A little bit of Love

A little bit of love goes a long, long way
A little love
A little love
A little bit of love and I'm on my way
A little love
A little love

A long way but we'll get there together
A long way but we'll get there soon
Along the way we can lean on each other
A little love goes a long, long way

A little love
A little love

A little bit of love and the sun comes shining
A little love
A little love
A little bit of kindness and someone's smiling
A little love
A little love

A long way but we'll get there together
A long way but we'll get there soon
Along the way we can lean on each other
A little love goes a long, long way

A little love
A little love

Little drops of rain can trickle down into a puddle
Then the puddles get together making streams that make a river
The rivers fill the valleys with a roaring and a rushing
Then the little drops of rain have made a
Wide, wide, wide, wide
Wide, wide ocean

A long way but we'll get there together
A long way but we'll get there soon
Along the way we can lean on each other
A little love goes a long, long way

A long way but we'll get there together
A long way but we'll get there soon
Along the way we can lean on each other
A little love goes a long, long way

A little love
A little love
A little love

Graham Kendrick (b 1950)

Blessing

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