

THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:

Telephone Service for Sunday 11 June 2023 – the feast of Barnabas the Apostle

The service can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley Benefice for Sunday 11 June, on which we celebrate the feast of St Barnabas. This service has been put together by Liz Howlett, drawing on liturgy from the Iona Community and with intercessions by Sue Taylor.

O God, you summon the day to dawn; you teach the morning to waken the earth.

Great is your name, great is your love.

For you the valleys will sing for joy, the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Great is your name, great is your love.

To you the monarchs of earth shall bow, the poor and the persecuted shall shout for joy: **Great is your name, great is your love.**

Your love and justice shall last for ever, fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise.

Great is your name, great is your love.

Hymn: Will you come and follow me

1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown,
in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

3 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

4 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.

In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

John L Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019) © 1987 WGRG, www.wildgoose.scot CCLI Licence 2370586

Prayer of Confession and Absolution

Each thing we have received – **from God it came**. Each thing we enjoy – **from God it comes**.

Each thing we pray for – **from God it will be given**. God of life, you are the source of all goodness and the satisfaction of all our desires.

Our understanding of you is small; **increase it**. Our desire to do your will is weak; **enliven it**. The seed you have planted has yet to bear fruit; **ripen it**.

But first, create in us clean hearts as, in your sight, we unburden ourselves of guilt, of anger, of fear, of pride, of hardness of heart, of weakness of intention. (pause)

Jesus, Son of Mary, **have mercy upon us**. Jesus, Saviour of the world, **have mercy upon us**.

Christ, king of glory, **be with us and for us wherever life takes us**.

And may the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

The Collect

Bountiful God, giver of all gifts, who poured your Spirit upon your servant Barnabas and gave him grace to encourage others: help us, by his example, to be generous in our judgements and unselfish in our service; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Reading: Acts 11: 19 - end

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Gospel Reading: John 15: 12 – 17

Jesus said to his disciples, 'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.'

Reflection

St Barnabas, the Son of Encouragement

We had a family staying at Othona recently – nanny and granddad, mum and three children – a girl of 12 and twin boys aged 5. The boys were healthy, energetic, full of life and loved all their family, but particularly adored their granddad. How they enjoyed being with him! They both had to sit next to him at meals, they wanted him to come when they had a nap in the sitting room, or when they were playing a game outdoors. And I could see why they loved him so much – granddad was infinitely patient with them – when, for example, we were all sitting around a bonfire toasting marshmallows, granddad helped them remember time after time the rules about being safe with a fire and when they got something right, he was so encouraging! He really struck me as being a brilliant role model for new grandparents, such as myself!

Barnabas, whom we celebrate today, was a wonderfully encouraging person in the early church. In our reading from Acts we find Barnabas authorised by the apostles to go to Antioch to see what had been going on there. There were new developments – Greeks, in other words non-Jews, were hearing the message about Jesus and were convinced by it. The church up to this point had been overwhelmingly full of Jewish followers of Christ, just like the first disciples and apostles – but changes were happening fast – how should the 'leaders' of the movement who were based in Jerusalem react? Should they try to keep things as they had been – familiar, comfortable, predictable – were they tempted to keep the new believers out in the cold, or should they be open to a wider vision of what God was doing in the world? Their response to these new developments would be so significant – and their choice of Barnabas to act as their representative was a good one. He was already well known in the Christian community in Jerusalem – he was a Levite, originally from Cyprus but had moved to Jerusalem and along with others,

when the church was in need of support, he had sold a field that belonged to him and had given the proceeds to the church. Interestingly, Barnabas wasn't the name given him at birth – it was a nickname. His parents had named him Joseph and it was actually the early church community which gave him the name Barnabas, because it means, 'Son of Encouragement'. So when the church leaders sent Barnabas to Antioch to see what was happening, they knew that he would have the right approach. (He was also a Cypriot, just like those who had preached to the folks in Antioch, so that would have been a good connection that he brought.)

I wonder if there have been people in your life who have given you encouragement – perhaps someone in your family, or maybe a teacher at school, possibly there has been someone in church, or a wise and caring friend in later life. For me, there have been times when someone has said something which has helped me to believe in myself and my abilities. I've been able to hold onto their confidence in me, before I have discovered my own confidence in myself! We can be quite fragile at times, not sure which way to go, or whether the path we have in mind is possible for us. A word and/or an act of encouragement can be so significant at those times.

As far as we are aware, Barnabas didn't know the folks in Antioch prior to this visit but he listened to their story of what had happened and 'saw what the grace of God had done, and he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts'. What I find so interesting in this encounter is that Barnabas didn't just pay a flying visit, with a swift blessing all around as he turned to leave. He stayed long enough to form a plan which, if it worked, would help not only the folks in the church, but also someone else who was at a crossroads in his own life. This person was Saul, more often known as Paul, who had had his life turned upside down some time before, when he encountered Christ in a vision on his way to Damascus. He had quite thought that he was on his way to round up and arrest those who were following Christ in the synagogues in Damascus. Instead, he found himself the most surprising convert to the Christian faith. He had been the arch enemy, feared by all in the churches and people were initially still suspicious of him. It had been Barnabas, that great encourager, who had convinced the church leaders in Jerusalem that Saul was genuine in his conversion. And now, Barnabas put his plan into action: he went to Tarsus to get Saul, to bring him back to Antioch and give him a role, teaching and preaching alongside Barnabas himself in the Christian communities. This they did for a year, building up the faith and the confidence of the followers in Antioch, before they were sent to Jerusalem with financial support for the church there.

I wonder what strikes you most about this story of Barnabas. I wonder what you would ask him if you could talk with him about his gift of encouragement. I wonder who there is in your life who would welcome a word or an act of encouragement from you. We never know the impact our words can have on others, long after we have spoken them and quite possibly forgotten the conversation altogether. As we prayed in the Collect earlier, may we be generous in our judgements and unselfish in our service, as we seek to follow Barnabas' example in serving our bountiful God, the giver of all gifts. Amen.

Song: Clap your hands all you nations

1 Clap your hands all you nations,
Amen, Hallelujah!
shout for joy all you people
Amen, Hallelujah!
Holy is the most high;
Amen, Hallelujah!
mighty over the earth
Amen, Hallelujah!

2 To the shouting in triumph,
Amen, Hallelujah!
to the blasting of trumpets,
Amen, Hallelujah!
God has gone up, Amen, Hallelujah!
God ascends over all. Amen, Hallelujah!

3 Those on earth who are mighty
Amen, Hallelujah!
still belong to our Maker,
Amen, Hallelujah!
God exalted on high,
Amen, Hallelujah!
God forever our Lord.
Amen, Hallelujah!

*John Bell (born 1949) after Psalm 47) from Psalms of
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Gathered in love and fellowship; let us pray together now for the church and for the world and let us thank God for His goodness.

Father of all, we, your church give thanks for all those here in the Bride Valley who walk with us on our journey of faith, that we may grow in grace, and shine as a light in the world.

Lord in your Mercy **Hear our Prayer.**

Father of all, in the world we remember all those living in fear who are suffering as a result of the conflict in Ukraine, Russia, Palestine, and the Sudan. We pray for all world leaders, and those who live in the public eye, that they may be blessed with integrity and compassion.

Lord in your Mercy **Hear our Prayer.**

On this day we ask a blessing on all churches throughout the world which are dedicated to St Barnabas. Grant O Lord that they may be places of inspiration, peace and consolation to all who enter. Lord in your Mercy **Hear our Prayer.**

Father of all, we commend to your enfolding love, all those whose health is failing or are in anguish of mind. In a space of silence, we bring to God's love all those known to us personally who need strength and courage today. Lord in your Mercy **Hear our Prayer.**

Rejoicing in the fellowship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the Saints and Angels, we commend ourselves and all people to God's unfailing love. Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

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

Closing Responses

Now may God who brought us into the joyous light of this new day, bring us to the guiding light of eternity.

God above us, God beneath us, God behind us, God before us, God in quietness, God in danger, God in heart of friend and stranger. Amen.

Song: The Spirit lives to set us free

1 The Spirit lives to set us free,
walk, walk in the light.

He binds us all in unity,
walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord*

2 Jesus promised life to all,
walk, walk in the light.

The dead were wakened by his call,
walk, walk in the light.

Chorus

3 By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
walk, walk in the light.

The Father's kindness is revealed,
walk, walk in the light.

Chorus

4 The Spirit lives in you and me,
walk, walk in the light.

His light will shine for all to see,
walk, walk in the light.

Chorus

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