

Service Two Holy

Before using this service outline, read the notes on this page about how to use the outline

These outlines are intended for Local Arrangements. They are built from the MWOL service outlines at [MWOL service outlines - The Methodist Church](https://www.methodist.org.uk/faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/mwol-service-outlines/#c)
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These notes are intended as guidance, a starting point- recognising that you know your context and community best.

Pick whichever activity is best for you and the people in your congregation. Or just use the theme and songs and create everything else yourself. You can take these notes apart and rebuild them in a way which works best for your situation or use them 'off the shelf' as a script.

You could change the songs using the section "Our Journey with God" in Singing the Faith (455-488)

Grace would very much appreciate your feedback grace.cauldwell@methodist.org.uk so we can make these suitable for every methodist congregation in Cumbria! Tell her what has worked, what hasn't worked- which songs you used, and which you changed!

Green denotes an option- pick one or the other

Red denotes a reading or song (feel free to change these!) or in **light type** other action, or tips for what to do!

You will need-

Paper if your congregation would prefer to write or draw than discuss. You can also encourage folk to simply reflect quietly- make sure to leave space if you do this!
MWOL pocket guides or beer mats, or giant mat, or printed sheets. (see end page)
Paper pins and board, stones and bowl. (optional)

Starting on the next page- Read the words in black- you could use a group of people and switch when the next hymn is announced.

Start Reading Here!

You may have heard someone say, 'God is here with us right now' and wondered – but what does that mean? Or maybe, like almost everyone, you've had moments of thinking, 'I don't feel God anywhere near me'. Maybe you've even thought that you don't deserve to have God anywhere near you.

Take a moment to close your eyes, and imagine Jesus is looking at the world. Where do you think his gaze might be drawn? Why is that?

(Pause)

We pray

God who sets us on a journey, thank you for being with us this morning as we worship, and every moment of our lives. Thank you for everyone here today as we journey together with you. Thank you that you have created the whole universe to explore, that you send your Holy Spirit to guide us as we follow you, and that you never ever stop inviting us to join you on the journey. Amen

Our first hymn sets us firmly as God's people in this place as we gather to worship and reflect on God's call to us

SING StF 25 God is here as we his people

So then, let's ask that question again,

imagine Jesus is looking at the world. Where do you think his gaze might be drawn? Why is that?

take a moment to ask people to shout out their short answers.

Now imagine Jesus zooms in, and looks at your local area, or your neighbours. Imagine the people going about their day. Where do you think God is? What is Jesus saying to them?

You may wish to invite people to share their thoughts. or pause and reflect

As we gather right now as a community of Christians and those exploring what that word means, do you think God is any more present with us than with anyone else?

You may wish to invite people to respond to this question as a group, or with the person next to them.

We sometimes talk about ‘thin places’ – places in the world where God’s presence is somehow felt more powerfully than in others. They are often places where prayer and pilgrimage has been taking place for many, many years – even centuries.

Here, you could mention any that are local to the church, share a story of when you have visited one, or ask others to share their stories – what does a thin place feel like?

As we continue to reflect, let’s sing a Wesley hymn, that reminds us God’s grace extends to all.

SING 436 what shall I do my God to love

Readings

We are going to hear our readings now- which remind us God is always present, and calls us to be light in the world, wherever we find ourselves

1Kings 19:3-6, 11-13

Matthew 5:14-16

Jesus often retreated into isolated places to pray, away from the crowds, and made a special trip to the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before his betrayal to the Jewish and Roman authorities. Many people, like Elijah have profound experiences of God in places of nature.

Sometimes what might be a thin place for one person might feel nothing to another person. Some people experience cathedrals as thin places, whereas others hate them! Perhaps it's not the case that some places are more holy than others – it's more that we approach them in a slightly different way. Because we ourselves could be described as ‘thin places’. Everywhere we go, God goes with us.

When we choose to follow Jesus, we have a particular calling to be ambassadors or representatives of God. In Matthew 5, Jesus compares his followers to a light shining on a hill – like a beacon, leading the way.

So yes, God is here with us. God is also on the street, talking with those he encounters there. God is in the shelter, comforting people who have fled from abusive relationships. Because these are the kinds of situations where we see Jesus time and time again in the Bible.

How do we develop our ability to look for God in the world, and to be those lights on a hill?
John

Wesley, who founded the Methodist movement, taught that though God’s love for us doesn’t have to be earned, there are things that we can do that help us encounter God in this world.

He called these ‘means of grace’, and they included individual and community practices of mercy and piety. Broadly, works of mercy are about helping those in need and challenging injustice, and works of piety include more overt ‘faith activities’ like reading the Bible, prayer and worship. [A Methodist Way of Life](#) encourages twelve modern practices which can help us recognise God at work in the world and in our lives, many of which overlap with those encouraged by Wesley.

Let’s Sing again

SING 251 Jesus Christ is waiting or 256 when I needed a neighbour

But of course, these activities are not distinct. Challenging injustice can be an act of piety, helping us to recognise the presence of God in people marginalised by society. And Bible study and prayer can be, or inspire, acts of mercy as we learn about God’s heart for those on the margins, and commit to praying for and living out God’s command that we love them also.

We must also consider how to practice these commitments inclusively. What does Bible study look like for someone who doesn’t speak the dominant local language, or is blind, or struggles to read? What does it mean to challenge injustice when you are yourself marginalised by society and the justice system? Because we all have a different relationship with Jesus, our means of grace and piety will also all be different.

None of these acts make us perfect people – that’s impossible. But they can help us recognise and grow in the holiness that is already within us, because God is within us.

We are going to sing our intercessions now, using the familiar tune He’s got the whole world... let’s take a moment to suggest or write some phrases that matter to us, and then we will sing a few of them together.

For example “He’s got our primary school” “He’s got world leaders” “He’s got the housing estate” whatever matter to us here and now.

Give folk a chance to think, then either ask them to write down, or write down the phrases, so that they can be sung by everyone.

Sing He got the whole world

Our Father... **(use whichever version of the Lord’s Prayer you are most familiar with)**

Amen

If your congregation takes up an offering take it up here

As we reach the end of this service, we remember that we carry on in our service and worship, as we seek God in the ordinary, as lights on a hill shining God’s love into the world around us. Commit to becoming more aware of God at work in the world, in other people, and in you. **Share something you intend to do this week with the person next to you. Pin commitments to a board. Gather pebbles in a bowl to mark your commitments.**

And to mark our commitment we sing our final hymn

SING 465 Guide me o thou great Jehovah or 473 Moses I know you're the man

Prayer of blessing¹

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.
Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

We share together in the Grace. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with us all, ever more
Amen

1 from John O'Donahue's *Blessing For a New Beginning*



