



Faith Over Fear Sunday

16th & 23rd November

A District-Wide Methodist Witness

Faith Over Fear Sunday Resources

A District-Wide Methodist Witness of Love, Hope and Justice

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Suggested Readings and Hymns

from Singing the Faith (StF) and Hymns & Psalms (H&P)

1 John 4:16–21 - God's love as the source of courage, community, and inclusion.

StF 443 (H&P 691) Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

StF 615 Let love be real, in giving and receiving

StF 611 Brother, sister, let me serve you

StF 409 Let us build a house where love can dwell

StF 503 (H&P 267) Love divine, all loves excelling

James 2:14–17- Faith expressed in action; love that serves.

StF 256 When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

StF 706 Longing for light, we wait in darkness

StF 613 God, how can we forgive when bonds of love are torn?

StF 713 Show me how to stand for justice

StF 415 (H&P 804) The Church of Christ, in every age

StF 564 (H&P 745) O thou who camest from above

Isaiah 58:6–11- True worship expressed through justice and generosity.

StF 693 Beauty for brokenness

StF 255 (H&P 139) The kingdom of God is justice and joy

StF 712 Put peace into each other's hands

StF 693 Beauty for brokenness

StF 507 (H&P 536) O for a heart to praise my God

Stf 251 Jesus Christ is waiting

John 4 : 1–30 - Love that crosses boundaries

StF 681 Community of Christ

StF 256 When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

StF 248 I heard the voice of Jesus say

StF 255 (H&P139) The Kingdom of God.

StF 503 (H&P 267) Love divine, all loves excelling

StF 249 (H&P 145) Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love

StF 347 (H&P 255) Crown him with many crowns

Sermon Ideas

1 John 4 : 16–21

Focus: God's love as the ground of courage and welcome.

When we rest in God's love, there is no need to defend, control, or exclude.

To be Christian is to love the God who loves us, and to let that love be made visible in the way we love our neighbour, especially the one least like us. Rooted in divine love, we find the courage to love without limit, even when the world feels uncertain.

Reflection question:

Where is fear narrowing your compassion, and how might love reopen it?

James 2 : 14–17

Focus: Faith that takes shape in mercy, justice, and generosity.

James isn't scolding; he's calling us to integrity, that our faith and our lives match.

Methodist spirituality has always held heart and hand together: inner grace made visible in outward love.

Reflection question:

What small act of courage or kindness might bring faith to life this week?

Isaiah 58 : 6–11

Focus: True worship expressed in justice and compassion.

Isaiah insists that real worship doesn't end at the church door.

When we act for justice, light breaks forth like the dawn: fear gives way to hope.

Reflection question:

How can our church's worship become food for the hungry and welcome for the weary?

John 4 : 5–10, 13–15, 27–30

Focus: Love that crosses boundaries and turns outsiders into witnesses.

Jesus meets a woman alone at a well, someone avoided, misunderstood, and discounted. Yet he speaks with her, listens to her story, and offers living water that restores her dignity. In that simple act of conversation, barriers of religion, gender, and reputation fall away.

True faith, Jesus shows us, begins where love breaks through fear, where we dare to see one another as God sees us.

Reflection question:

Who are the people Jesus might meet at our "well" today, and how can we offer them living water through friendship, welcome, and understanding?

Gathering with the help of the Psalmists

Call to Worship 1 – Psalm 27:1, 3, 13–14

Leader: The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

People: **The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?**

Leader: Though fears surround us and troubles press in, we will not lose heart.

People: **We remain confident of this: we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!**

All: **We will wait for the Lord; we will be strong and take heart, and put our trust in God.**

Call to Worship 2 – Psalm 46:1–3, 10–11

Leader: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

People: **Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and the mountains fall into the sea.**

Leader: Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall, but God's voice stills the storm.

People: **"Be still, and know that I am God!"**

All: **The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.**

Call to Worship 3 – Psalm 56:3–4, 10–11

Leader: When I am afraid, I put my trust in You.

People: In God, whose word we praise, in God we trust and are not afraid.

Leader: What can mere mortals do to us, when God is for us?

People: We will walk in the light of faith, not in the shadow of fear.

All: Our hope is in God, whose love endures forever.

Call to Worship 4 – Psalm 91:1–2, 4–5

Leader: Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

People: We will say of the Lord, “God is our refuge and fortress, in whom we trust.”

Leader: God will cover us with divine wings; under them we will find refuge.

People: We will not fear the terror of the night, nor the danger that stalks by day.

All: The Lord is our dwelling place; we will rest secure in God’s love.

Responsive Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving

Option 1

Leader: God of love and light,
we come before you in praise and thanksgiving.

You are the One who calms our fears
and calls us by name.

You breathe courage into our hearts
and hope into our weary world.

When fear closes doors,
your love opens them wide.

When voices of division rise,
your Spirit whispers peace.

When we feel small or uncertain,
you remind us that your grace is enough.

All: **We thank you, God of perfect love,
that nothing can separate us from you.**

Leader: For the beauty of creation,
for the kindness of friends and strangers,
for the quiet strength that carries us through hard days
we give you thanks.

All: **Praise be to God,
whose love drives out fear
and whose mercy endures forever.
Amen.**

Option 2

Leader: Faithful God,
we praise you for the life you give,
for your mercy that renews us morning by morning.

You do not ask for empty words or hollow worship,
but for hearts alive with compassion
and hands ready to serve.

You show us what love looks like
feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger,
bringing justice where there is oppression.

**All: We thank you, God of justice and grace,
for calling us to be your people of courage and
compassion.**

Leader: For your Church,
where love is shared and hope rekindled,
for your Spirit at work in hidden places,
for moments of forgiveness and new beginning
we give you thanks.

**All: To you be glory and praise,
now and forever.
Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Prayer 1

Leader: God of love and truth,
we come before you in the quiet of this moment,
aware of the ways we have let fear shape our living.

(silence)

When we have stayed silent
when your Spirit called us to speak,
when we have chosen comfort instead of courage,
and safety instead of solidarity
forgive us, O God.

(silence)

When we have turned away from our neighbours in need,
or passed by those whose stories unsettled us,
forgive us, O God.

(silence)

When we have doubted your love for us
or failed to see your image in others,
forgive us, O God,
and restore in us the joy of faith,
the strength of hope,
and the depth of love that casts out fear.

(silence)

Absolution:

Hear the good news:

God's perfect love drives out fear.

In Christ we are forgiven, renewed, and made whole.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Prayer 2

Leader: God of mercy and justice,
we come in stillness,
bringing the truths we hold quietly within.

(silence)

We confess the times we have failed to love
when words have wounded,
or when our inaction has allowed harm to continue.

(silence)

We confess the times we have lived small,
afraid to risk,
hesitant to trust,
forgetful of your promise to be with us.

(silence)

We confess the times we have ignored your call
to share bread with the hungry,
to bring the homeless poor into our homes,
to loosen the bonds of injustice.

(silence)

God of grace,
forgive what has been,
heal what is broken,
and open our hearts to the fearless love of Christ.

(silence)

Absolution:

Hear the words of grace:
God's mercy is deeper than our imagining,
God's love wider than our fear.
In Christ, we are forgiven and made new.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Prayers for Others

Option 1 - Candles

Set five candles at the front or around the worship space.

After a short spoken introduction, light one candle for each prayer theme, allowing silence after each.

Candle 1 – For those living in fear:

For those who wake in the night afraid of what tomorrow may bring....

For those who have fled their homes...

For those who long to live without fear,
we light this candle of courage.

(silence)

Candle 2 – For those silenced or unheard:

For the voiceless, the marginalised, the unseen...

May our listening become your justice.

(silence)

Candle 3 – For the Church:

That we may choose faith over fear,
welcome over walls,
and love over indifference.

(silence)

Candle 4 – For our communities and leaders:

For wisdom, humility, and compassion
in every decision that shapes lives.

(silence)

Candle 5 – For creation and the future:

For the healing of the earth,
for the courage to live gently and generously.

(silence)

End with:

God of love, in your light we find our peace.
Hear our prayers, spoken and unspoken,
and make us bearers of your fearless love. Amen.

Option 2 - The Prayer Tree of Welcome and Courage

Use a large branch placed in a pot, a wooden stand, or even a crafted cardboard tree.

Provide tags or leaf-shaped cards in different colours, plus pens and ribbons. Set it where people can approach during the service.

Have someone gently explain that this is a tree for prayers of courage, welcome, and belonging, a sign that God's love is rooted and growing among us.

Suggested introduction (spoken by worship leader)

Today we bring before God all those in our communities and world who live with fear. Fear of being unwelcome, unheard, or unsafe.

We remember our neighbours from other countries, faiths, and backgrounds; those who are seeking home, those who have faced rejection, and those who wonder if there is still a place for them.

As we pray, we will hang our prayers like leaves on this tree, signs of life, courage, and hope.

Prayers are written and brought forward.

Leader: This is our prayer tree of welcome,
a reminder that the love of God grows
where people choose faith over fear,
and welcome over exclusion.

God of all life,
may this prayer tree stand as a living sign
of your Kingdom growing among us —
branches of compassion, roots of justice,
and leaves of hope for all who pass by.
**Through Jesus Christ, our shelter and our peace.
Amen.**

Closing and Departing

1. Blessing

Go in peace,
to live with courage,
to speak words of hope,
to build communities of welcome and grace.
May the God who casts out fear
fill your heart with love;
may Christ who walks beside you
give you strength for the journey;
and may the Spirit who dwells within you
make you a sign of peace in the world. Amen.

2. Blessing

Go now, people of faith,
to choose love over fear,
compassion over indifference,
justice over silence.
May God's light lead you,
Christ's compassion hold you,
and the Spirit's fire empower you
to live as people of fearless love. Amen.

3. Celtic-Style Blessing

May the peace of God surround you,
the strength of Christ uphold you,
and the tenderness of the Spirit breathe through you.
May courage rise when fear whispers,
and may love guide you home each day.
Go in faith,
to walk humbly, act justly, and love mercy
today and always. Amen.

Children /Young People Activity

Faith over Fear Flags

Theme: Courage and trust

What you need:

Coloured paper or fabric triangles, string, felt pens, stickers, scissors

String or ribbon to hang flags on

What to do:

Invite children/ young people to write or draw something that helps them feel brave or loved, a word, person, place, or prayer, on the their flags.

Add symbols of hope (hearts, rainbows, crosses, open hands).

Hang the Faith over Fear Flags on the string and drape across wall, Communion rail etc

Reflection thought:

Talk about how each flag represents a story of courage and love, just like the people Jesus met who learned not to be afraid.

Activities Instead of a Sermon

Option 1 Perfect Love Drives Out Fear – 1 John 4 : 16-21

Activity: Circles of Belonging

Give everyone a small sheet with three concentric circles (or draw them on a flip-chart).

Label them “God’s love,” “Our church,” and “Our community.”

Invite people to reflect/discuss:

- ✦ Where do you see God’s love at work in our community?
- ✦ Who might feel outside the circle of love right now?
- ✦ What small act could help widen the circle?

Option 2 Faith Without Works Is Dead – James 2:14-17

Activity: Faith in Action Map

Place a large sheet or table map of your town or circuit area in the centre. Provide pens, stickers, or small stones.

Invite conversation around:

- ✦ Where are signs of faith already at work here (foodbanks, schools, care homes, quiet acts of kindness)?
- ✦ Where might love be needed most right now?
- ✦ What one small, doable thing could we do that would make faith visible this week?

Faith over Fear Sunday

beyond reflection into practical discipleship and everyday courage

1. Faith Over Fear Conversations – Small-Group Practice

Activity:

Use real-life examples: “Someone says, ‘We should look after our own first,’” or “There are too many coming here now.”

In pairs, invite people to pause, breathe, and think:
What would love say here?

Practise short, kind, confident replies, not arguments but witness statements:

“I believe everyone is our neighbour.”

“My faith teaches me that love doesn’t stop at borders.”

“I’d rather build community than walls.”

Teaching point:

Jesus often began with stories and questions, not defences. We can model that same gracious courage.

Take-away:

Create a small card titled “Faith Over Fear – Words for Courageous Conversations” with three simple sentences members can keep in purse or phone case.

2. Courage Café – Storytelling Session (Café style worship)

Activity:

Set up café-style tables with tea and biscuits.

Share short prompts:

“When have you spoken up for someone and it felt costly?”

“When has someone stood up for you?”

“What helped you find your courage?”

Invite participants to link these experiences to stories of Jesus eating with outsiders, or prophets speaking truth to power.

Outcome:

Hearing each other’s stories builds empathy and readiness to act.

3. “See–Judge–Act” Reflection (Faith-Rooted method)

Purpose: To move from awareness to action in a grounded way.

See - What situations of fear or exclusion do we notice locally?
(e.g., hostility to migrants, poverty, isolation).

Judge - What does Scripture say? (Link Isaiah 58, Micah 6, James 2, 1 John 4).

Act - What one small step could we take this month as a church?

Outcome: Groups leave with a single, concrete action — letter-writing, partnership with a community organiser etc

What Next?

Church Pledge of Welcome Board

After the service or in a later meeting, invite people to write one thing they will do to be a voice of welcome such as:

“I will challenge racist jokes,”

“I will greet new neighbours,”

“I will volunteer at...”

Display the pledges publicly as a sign of collective courage.

More Resources

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/our-stories/what-can-our-churches-do-to-support-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/>

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/children-youth-family-ministry/agents-of-change/aoc-further-resources/resources-for-refugee-week-and-beyond/learning-about-the-issues/>



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