

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit Worship
Sunday 10th August 2025

Do not be afraid - Led by Reverend Sarah Knebel

Hello and welcome to what today will be a quieter, perhaps a little more reflective service as we consider the words 'Do not be afraid' and what they might mean for each one of us.

Call to Worship:

Let's begin with a call to worship taken from Psalm 33: 20-22

Our soul waits for the Lord;
He is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him,
Because we trust in his holy name.
Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Let's pray:

Gracious God, Holy Trinity,
God above us, God below us, God around us,
blessed are you and worthy of all praise.
Teach us at this time to rely on your grace,
to trust in your mercy and to respond to your love,
that we may welcome the opportunities this day brings
and know the encompassing presence of your Holy Spirit
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(from 'Called to Prayer: An anthology compiled by Maureen Edwards', p3)

As we still ourselves for this time of worship we sing

Hymn: StF 481 - [The Lord's my shepherd](#)

1. The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me lie in pastures green,
he leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.*

2. He guides my ways in righteousness,
and he anoints my head with oil;
and my cup — it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.

3. And though I walk the darkest path —
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.
4. And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.

Stuart Townend (b.1963)

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Reading: Genesis 15: 1-6

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’ But Abram said, ‘O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.’ But the word of the Lord came to him, ‘This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.’ He brought him outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed the Lord.

Prayer:

Gracious God,
Your amazing love embraces all humanity
and the world you have created.
We thank you for your presence,
encouragement, hope and sustaining grace
in the midst of human suffering.
Give us renewed courage and faith
to participate with you in your liberating mission.
Teach us to love as Jesus did;
to be in solidarity
with all who are not able to develop their potential
because of abuse, discrimination, injustice or deprivation.
Empower your Church
to proclaim the good news of abundant life
with boldness, faith and conviction;
in Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

(from ‘Called to Prayer: An anthology compiled by Maureen Edwards’, p133)

A Reflection: Do not be afraid

The words ‘Do not be afraid’ seem to hold difficult counsel at a time such as this. When we look to the world around us, when we watch the news, when we hear reports about our localities or receive bad news from friends there can often seem to be so much to be afraid of. I wonder what you might be afraid of at this time? Perhaps you have received some difficult news yourself, or are struggling with uncertainty. Perhaps you are afraid of what the future holds, or perhaps it’s something more mundane than that, such as being afraid of spiders.

To live in fear is a terrible thing. Imagine various scenarios: you’re a victim of domestic violence and dread your partner’s return. You’re bullied at work or at school and wake each day with an awful feeling in your gut. Someone you care for deeply is in danger and there is nothing you can do. You’re on a boat crossing the channel and it’s deflating. People in the community have got it in for you and you know it’s only a matter of time. The bombs are

dropping ever closer and you know next time it might be your home or your neighbourhood that gets hit. Perhaps you can add your own scenarios to some of these.

Fear dominates, it closes down all else; the horizon shrinks to its size. It may not be dramatic, but it lurks in our hearts and minds and in anxieties that can become catastrophic before we know it. And once fear grips us, how easily our perspective goes; our judgement is impaired.

As we hear of Abram in our reading from Genesis, what does his life hold? Exhausted from tribal warfare, living the insecurity of the wilderness, Abram is fearful that he has no descendants, no future to live for. In the midst of these things, God comes to him in a dream and says, 'Do not be afraid.' How Abram wrestles with these words as he seeks reassurance and certainty from God. Holding on to faith, holding on to hope when all seems lost, can be the hardest of things, and yet we too, all too readily say, 'Do not be afraid. Everything will be alright', without, ourselves, giving any indication or showing any knowledge of how.

Recognising his struggle, God instructs Abram to look up, to consider the stars, to count them even, if he is able. At the darkest times in our lives, when our horizons crowd in, leaving no room to breathe or move, it is then we too might consider the stars. Pinpricks of light in the darkness, which help us to see beyond the cramping fear that holds us. For what are stars but the reminder of light, of endless possibility, of hope. The reminder that it is not fear that holds the earth and the universe on course, but something far stronger, the Creator of all that is. The promise of the future is the promise of the eternity of the stars.

So in the nighttime of our fear, the words 'Do not be afraid', whether spoken by God or by another, encourage us to consider our fear, to see beyond it, to the bright spark of hope that shines in the night. The hope we cannot see in the grip of fear. These four words transform the oh-so-human fears of our hearts and minds, not by running away from our fear but by staring deep into the fear, naming it, grasping it, overcoming it by recognising that, within the fear, there is another kingdom, another alternative outcome, where fear is banished and where love reigns.

Often the hardest thing, in the midst of our fear, can be to place our trust in God, to give to God that over which we have no control. And yet, I have learned through experience, that it is only in giving our deepest fears, our deepest misgivings to God and trusting in God for the outcome, that we find peace and a way to look beyond the fear that grips us to the pinprick of light at the end of the tunnel.

Whatever you may be fearful of, may God be with you in the midst of your fear, and may God bring you comfort, peace and hope.

(taken and adapted from 'The Canterbury Preacher's Companion 2022', p197-9)

Hymn: [Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you](#)

*Do not be afraid,
For I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name;
You are mine.*

1. When you walk through the waters I'll be with you,
You will never sink beneath the waves.
Do not be afraid, ...
2. When the fire is burning all around you,
You will never be consumed by the flames.
Do not be afraid, ...
3. When the fear of loneliness is looming,
Then remember I am at your side.
Do not be afraid, ...

4. When you dwell in the exile of a stranger,
Remember you are precious in my eyes.
Do not be afraid, ...
5. You are mine, O my child; I am your father,
And I love you with a perfect love.
Do not be afraid, ...

Prayer:

Loving God,
all around us in the world there are people who are fearful,
including ourselves.

We pray for all who are fearful for their life,
whether as a result of oppression, discrimination, prejudice or violence,
for all who are caught up in the atrocities of war,
and for all for whom the impact of war is still a cause of pain and torment.
Compassionate God, where there is fear, help us bring your hope.

We pray for all who are fearful for the future,
for young people who are looking for work,
but hear nothing in response to their applications,
for parents who worry about what the world will be like
when their children grow up
for farmers whose livelihoods are impacted by the changing weather patterns.
Compassionate God, where there is fear, help us bring your hope.

We pray for all who fear they will never achieve their hopes and dreams,
for families struggling to conceive,
for children in education awaiting exam results,
uncertain of the outcome,
for all who are struggling to make ends meet;
who long for greater security.
Compassionate God, where there is fear, help us bring your hope.

In a moment of quiet we bring our own prayers to God, our own fears for ourselves and for others:
Remembering all who are ill and all who are grieving ...

Compassionate God, where there is fear, help us bring your hope.

We pray for your Church, help us be a caring presence in these difficult times, bringing the touch of your love into every fear-filled or painful situation. Breathe your comfort onto those who are fearful or hurting, we pray. May they be assured that you never leave them or forsake them.
Compassionate God, where there is fear, help us bring your hope.
This we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Let us say the **The Lord's Prayer**, using which ever form or language speaks to your heart.

Hymn: StF 776 - [In the Lord I'll be ever thankful](#)

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful,
in the Lord I will rejoice!
Look to God, do not be afraid;
lift up your voices, the Lord is near;
lift up your voices, the Lord is near.

Taizé Community
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Blessing

Whatever we face, we do not face it alone,
wherever we go, we do not journey alone,
however we suffer, we do not bear it alone,
for Christ is with us.
In times of fear and uncertainty
he is our strength, our help, our comfort, our shield.
So go in the assurance of his presence,
the knowledge of his goodness,
and the certainty of his love.
Amen.

Every blessing to you all.
Rev Sarah