

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit Worship

Sunday 6th September 2026

Reconciling Conflict

Led by Reverend Sarah Knebel

Hello and welcome to this time of worship during which we will be reflecting on passages that offer wisdom and encouragement on the theme of reconciling conflict.

StF 565 Only by grace can we enter

Only by grace can we enter,
only by grace can we stand;
not by our human endeavour,
but by the blood of the Lamb.
Into your presence you call us,
you call us to come.
Into your presence you draw us,
and now by your grace we come,
now by your grace we come.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions,
who would stand?
Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
by the blood of the Lamb.
Lord, if you mark our transgressions,
who would stand?
Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
by the blood of the Lamb.

Only by grace can we enter ...

Gerrit Gustafson
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 565

Prayer:

God of the vastness of all that is,
of all peoples and communities,
here we are;
gathering to worship and adore you,
marvelling at your love and care and your persistence with us.
You are beyond our imagining.
Again and again, we are engulfed in your vastness and love.
How can we do anything but praise you, again and again?

O Lord our God,
we sometimes tremble as we think of who you are and who we are.
Bring us now, in this moment, to know you.
See us as we are and see our yearning to be more like you.
May we lay aside anything that hinders our journey with you,
and with our friends and neighbours in this moment,
as we focus our thoughts on you and your word for us.

Amen.

(Adapted from www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/109-september-october-2020-a/proper-18/prayers)

Reading: Romans 13: 8-14 (NIV)

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Prayer

In the higgledy-piggledy ways of life, Lord,
with challenges and changes pulling us this way and that,
we sometimes find it hard, in the heat of the moment,
to know what is right and what is wrong.
Forgive us for our failings and wrongdoings.
Forgive our insensitivities to the ways of others.
Forgive anything that cuts us off from each other or from you.

Amen.

(From www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/109-september-october-2020-a/proper-18/prayers)

A Reflection: Reconciling Conflict

I wonder when the last time was that you found yourself in a situation of conflict? The truth is conflict is so much a part of our everyday lives; internationally, nationally, locally within our own communities, in our homes and within ourselves. Often, when we think of conflict, we think of countries that are at war, of tensions within society, of disagreements between friends or family members, some of which may involve us directly, others of which we may feel we have no control over. But, how often do we think of the inner conflicts that we face every day regarding the choices we make? Those lifestyle choices, for example, about what is right or wrong, choices that impact ourselves, others, the environment even, that can do harm as well as good. And, how do we reconcile conflicts that directly involve us in a way that is life-giving?

In many ways, I think we would all agree that it would be good if we could avoid conflict in the first place, but our Bible reading today recognises that as human beings, as Christians, we are not amazingly perfect people and so situations of conflict will be present within our lives. In wrestling with this subject, Paul wraps the ten commandments given to us the Old Testament, in the command to love our neighbour as ourselves and asks what that might look like in practice in the world. Paul argues that if love of self and love of neighbour was at the source of all our actions then we would not be compelled into situations of conflict.

However idealistic that may feel, it is in this light that Paul gives us that striking phrase: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another.” It is an extraordinary way of resolving conflict. It’s not that love replaces the commandments; but that love reveals what lies at their heart. If we genuinely love our neighbour, then we should not simply treat them as an object for our own desires. We should not steal from them, because their wellbeing matters to us. We should not deliberately hurt them, because their lives matter to us. We should not covet what they have, because we recognise their dignity and their right to flourish. Love, in other words, should change the way we see and treat all people. It is not simply

a warm feeling towards people we know, it calls us to hold all people in high esteem, and in so doing that should have an impact on the choices we make.

This sense that love should underpin all of our choices and actions is perhaps especially important in a world where conflict can so easily become about getting our rights, our needs, our point of view across as being of greater importance or significance than that of another, no matter what the cost. We see it in politics. We see it in social media. We see it in arguments about the environment, migration, poverty, economics, identity, war and peace. We see it in the Church. We can become so convinced that we are right that the person who disagrees with us becomes not simply someone who thinks differently, but someone we must oppose. Into such situations, Paul asks us a different question: What does love require of us?

Love, Paul suggests, requires us to ask that all important question, “What would Jesus do?” It requires us to put on the armour of Christ, to think about any given situation with the compassion of Christ, and to respond in a Christ-like way. It is perhaps encouraging, therefore, to read within the Gospels that even in the early church matters of conflict were present and so it shouldn’t surprise us, either, that within the pages of the Gospels we find Christ-like instructions on how to resolve conflict.

The Gospel Matthew in chapter 18 verses 15 to 20 offers very practical advice and clear steps to follow on what to do in matters of conflict between two people. It recommends that if an individual has done us wrong the first step should be to go and talk to them one to one. We should never ignore the hurt and hope that it will go away, it is much better to name it and let them know how we are feeling. Far better to do this than to gossip about them or gather a crowd against them or put them on social media trial. When we meet our conversation should be as much about speaking as listening compassionately. We should also be open to hearing the other person’s point of view. Sadly, Jesus knows that this will not always work. The person who hurt us may not always be open to talking or may not react well. If that does happen the second stage is to ask for help, to take a third person with us who can mediate for us and help to find a way forward. If necessary, there is a suggestion that the matter be brought before a wider community, noting that the purpose of this would not be to humiliate but to continue to seek healing, restoration and reconciliation.

This takes courage, though. It takes courage to confront another person lovingly. But it also takes courage to be confronted. Because sometimes the person who needs to hear the difficult truth is not someone else. Sometimes it is us. And this brings us to that other place where conflict happens; within ourselves. We can carry around enormous amounts of inner conflict. We know what we ought to do but want to do something else. We make a choice and later wonder whether it was the right one. We fail someone we love. We make a mistake. We carry guilt from something that happened years ago. We struggle between competing desires, responsibilities and loyalties. We tell ourselves that we should be stronger, better, more faithful, more disciplined. And sometimes we can become our own harshest judge.

So what does “love your neighbour as yourself” mean when we are struggling to love ourselves? It certainly does not mean pretending that everything we do is right. Christian love is not self-indulgence. It is not saying, “Whatever I do is fine because God loves me.” Jesus’ teaching reminds us that love sometimes requires us to name what is wrong in ourselves, recognising that reconciliation is not simply about putting two people back together. It is about being brought back into right relationship with God, with others, with creation, and with ourselves.

The challenge before us, then, is not to imagine a world without conflict. Conflict will always be part of human life. The Christian calling is to learn a different way of meeting it. A way shaped not by fear, pride

or the desire to win, but by love. To tell the truth without destroying the person. To challenge wrongdoing without abandoning compassion. To listen before judging. To seek reconciliation without pretending that injustice does not matter. And to recognise that sometimes the person we most need to reconcile with is ourselves.

Let's pray:

Compassionate God,
we reach out to you in thankfulness knowing that you will bless us
with stability in turmoil, courage in conflict, and grace in unity.
May we both challenge and change those things in ourselves,
in our church, our community, and our world, that dishonour your
love for us and spoil our relationships with one another, so that
we may grow in the likeness of your Son, and bring peace where
there is brokenness – to your glory.
Amen.

StF 712 Put peace into each other's hands

- 1 Put peace into each other's hands
and like a treasure hold it,
protect it like a candle-flame,
with tenderness enfold it.
- 2 Put peace into each other's hands
with loving expectation;
be gentle in your words and ways,
in touch with God's creation.
- 3 Put peace into each other's hands
like bread we break for sharing;
look people warmly in the eye:
our life is meant for caring.
- 4 As at Communion, shape your hands
into a waiting cradle;
the gift of Christ receive, revere,
united round the table.
- 5 Put Christ into each other's hands,
he is love's deepest measure;
in love make peace, give peace a chance,
and share it like a treasure.

Fred Kaan (1929–2009)
Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 712

Prayers:

We begin our prayers for the world, for others and for ourselves with the Lord's prayer:

Lord's prayer

Let's bring now our concerns for the world to God:

Eternal, ever-living God,
 we pray for those who this day need our prayers:
 those we see around us...
 those we have left at home...
 family and friends near and far...
 strangers and communities we will never meet or know,
 but whose peril we hear of and see on our screens...
 those whose life is ebbing away
 consumed by old age, frailty, illness or neglect...
 those who grieve deeply for lives and loves lost...
 those who cause grief and chaos in society
 and who live seemingly with different values from ours,
 for them and their victims and their families...
 those who are forgotten, unnoticed, unloved, unmissed...
 Lord God, in your abundance of mercy,
 hear these and all our prayers.

Amen.

(From www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/109-september-october-2020-a/proper-18/prayers)

StF 266 All the room was hushed and still

1 All the room was hushed and still,
 and when the bowl was filled
 he stooped to wash their feet.
 And when it was complete,
 he said, this is what I'm asking you to do,
 this is why I'm kneeling here beside you.
 This is what I want my Church to be,
 this is what I want the world to see —
 who it is you follow.

*Love each other,
 one another.
 Love each other
 in the way that I have loved you.
 Walk together,
 and whatever comes,
 love each other in the way that I have loved you.*

2 Let the room be hushed and still,
 let us go to where he kneels
 and join him as he serves,
 and learn his ways of love.
 He said, this is what I'm asking you to do,
 this is why I'm kneeling here beside you.
 This is what I want my Church to be,
 this is what I want the world to see —
 who it is you follow.

Love each other, ...

Graham Kendrick (b.1950)
 Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 266

Blessing

God of peace,
we pray for peace throughout the world.

Send us out as peacemakers,
to set things right where there is
disagreement,
and to resolve conflict.

Show us the way of peace in our own lives,
and in our homes and places of learning,
in our streets and throughout our community.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.

(Adapted from www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2023/127-september-october-2023-a/proper-18/prayers)

Every blessing to you all.
Rev Sarah