

**Please take the time to go through this Service slowly  
to receive the words of light and life, which God has for you  
this day, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

**Today is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany and today we will be looking  
at the work of the Leprosy Mission**

**Opening Prayer:**

We come together O Lord  
though apart, we are all always in your sight.  
We bring you our praise and our thanks  
for everything we have, for your love for us.  
We lift to you our prayers  
for our family, friends, neighbours and community,  
trusting in your great goodness  
and knowing that you are with each and every one of us.  
We are together in you.  
Amen

In our monthly mission giving, during January we support The Leprosy Mission and so today we are looking at their work.

The Leprosy Mission's Global Fellowship partners with governments, churches and other organisations in 28 countries around the world. Their work supports people living with leprosy today as well as serving future generations by aiming to end transmission of the disease. The Leprosy Mission's vision is simple: leprosy defeated, lives transformed.

It is extraordinary to think that this now preventable and treatable disease is still just as prevalent in certain parts of the world as it was in Jesus' time. People with leprosy are left disabled and are often subject to life-limiting discrimination.

**We begin today by saying the words of Psalm 139, vv1-18.**

You have searched me, LORD,  
and you know me.  
You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.  
You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.  
Before a word is on my tongue  
you, LORD, know it completely.  
You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.  
Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.  
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me  
and the light become night around me,"  
even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.  
For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.  
My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.  
How precious to me are your thoughts,<sup>[a]</sup> God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand—  
when I awake, I am still with you.

### Reflection on the Leprosy Mission Logo

In a few moments of quiet let's take a look at this logo together. What do we see?



Perhaps after noticing the name, our eyes are drawn to the figures on the left. One figure is reaching down to help another, and that other is reaching up – do you notice how the figures are actually joined? Their arms are connected. Reflecting on just the first line of the Psalm for today, Psalm 139 there is something from this line in this image:

“You have searched me, LORD and you know me.”

This psalm speaks of God’s close relationship with us, his love and care for us. He knows our needs. We are assured we are not forgotten because he has been with us from the very beginning. Knowing this is something we all need to feel right now, more than ever. We have been living with this struggle, with our fears and frustrations, with isolation and separation from our families and our communities for a little under a year now and our need for God’s presence is ever greater. We may be able to have some small insight into the difficulties that people with leprosy are living with on a daily basis. Our insight may be tiny, but may it give us empathy with their struggle and draw us closer with them in our prayers.

The psalmists words are reflected in this simple image – our God does know us, and just as we are searching for him so he is reaching out to us. This relationship is not just one way and it is ongoing. We are connected with God because he is everywhere we are. Our fears can be defeated because God is all powerful as we are reminded in the verse from Isaiah 41:10:

*“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

Comforting words. And there is something of comfort in this image too. You may see something different, but I see two people seeking to be connected – they are drawn as one continuous line. There is no division between the helper and the one being helped. Their faces are close together, with only a little space between them. They are facing each other. They are one in their purpose and connection. So it can be in our relationship with God.

We may assume at first glance that God in this image is the one reaching down to help the other up. But is that really true? Look again. If they are joined, they are one image. Which figure could be God?

The last line of the hymn for today, “O God, you search me and you know me”, based on Psalm 139, speaks of how we can trust ourselves to God’s hands and how his unending love makes all things new. The strapline on the logo above also reflects this – in defeating disease lives are transformed.

We can learn much from this, just as we can from reading the psalm and applying it to our everyday lives. Living a life in God and trusting in his ways can lead us to a life where our own fears are defeated and our lives can be transformed.

## **Responses**

Loving God, in your goodness  
teach us to reach for you in everything we think and say and do.  
**That we may be one with your purpose.**

Living God, in your goodness  
show us that you are with us all in our joys and in our suffering.  
**That we may feel your living presence working in our lives.**

Loving God, in your goodness  
help us to be connected with others, in prayer and in care.  
**That we may continue to serve you in the everyday.**

Living God, in your goodness  
guide our actions, that we may be always see beyond our prejudices.  
**That we may see everyone as your loved children.**

Loving God, in your goodness  
be with us, with our families and friends and with our communities.  
**That we may be safe and held in your loving embrace.**

Living God, in your goodness  
draw closer to all your children around the world.  
**That we may all know your transforming healing love.**

**In your love make all things new.  
In your love make us new.  
In your love make all things new.**

We take a moment together to let ourselves be held in the love of God. And we lift before Him those who have asked for our prayers, and those who have no one to pray for them this day.

*Let us hold the silence.*

We draw all our thoughts and prayers together in the words of the Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, who art in Heaven,  
hallowed by 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.**

**The Collect, the special prayer for today:**

Almighty God,  
in Christ you make all things new:  
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,  
and in the renewal of our lives  
make known your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen**

**Hymn**

O, God, you search me, and you know me  
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze  
When I walk or lie down, you are before me  
'Ever the maker and keeper of my days

You know my resting and my rising  
You discern my purpose from afar  
And with love everlasting, you besiege me  
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord  
You have known its meaning through and through  
You are with me beyond my understanding  
God of my present, my past and future, too

Although your Spirit is upon me  
Still I search for shelter from your light  
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you  
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight

For you created me and shaped me  
Gave me life within my mother's womb  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you  
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new

(You can sing or sing you can sing/ listen here: <https://tinyurl.com/y4hxqf7v>)

## **Closing Prayer**

We pray to our loving and living God, knowing that he hears our prayers.

We pray to you, our God  
in this time of pandemic, asking for your help and protection  
we lift before you all those around the world  
who live with leprosy or other debilitating disease  
that they may know your love  
and see your face in those who come with help  
and a promise of a better future.  
We ask this in the name of your son Jesus Christ  
Amen

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
In the name of Christ  
Amen

## **Blessing**

May the love of God  
besiege us this day.  
May his unending goodness surround us and protect us.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
Be with us this day and always.  
Amen



If you want to know more about the work of The Leprosy Mission, see the website:  
<https://www.leprosymission.org.uk>

Bible stories to read about Jesus healing lepers:

Luke 17: 11-19  
Matthew 8: 1-4