



Billericay **Methodist** Church 
Queens Park, Western Road & Herongate

Sunday 23 January 2022
10.30am.

Free to serve

Music beforehand : This is amazing grace/Living hope/ Reckless love/
Cannons.

Call to worship:

Just as we are, Lord, we gather in your presence.
Help us to be the body of Christ in this place;
to stand together with our neighbours;
to bring the good news to the poor;
to help set the oppressed free.
In your strength and in your name, we pray.

Amen.

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Reading 1: Nehemiah 8.1-3,5-6,8-10

All the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel.

So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded,

“Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Hymn: Amazing Grace (my chains are gone)

Amazing grace — how sweet the sound —
that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

*My chains are gone, I've been set free.
My God, my Saviour, has ransomed me.
And like a flood, his mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace*

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forbear to shine.
But God who called me here below, will be forever mine.

My chains are gone, I've been set free....

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We praise you for the freedom we take for granted, Lord –
the freedom to serve you every day of our lives,
openly and seldom challenged.

We give so little thought to this freedom
that we sometimes fail to exercise it.

So, we thank you, Lord,

for every opportunity that comes our way
to be your hands, your eyes, your heart in this world;
to do your will, to see things as you do, to share your love.

We praise you that in serving, we stand alongside
our sisters and brothers in Christ, in a ministry stretching down
the generations from Jesus himself.

All thanks and praise be to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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Prayer of Confession

Almighty God,
when we do not understand why we do the things we do,
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom:

set us free.

When we speak out of spite and not in love,
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom:

set us free.

When we act out of anger and not in mercy,
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom:

set us free.

When pride overcomes humility,
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom:

set us free.

When jealousy is more important than generosity,
forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom:

set us free.

Lord, by your Spirit teach us when we do not understand why we have fallen
short of your ideal.

Forgive us our sins and transform us by the perfect law of freedom,
in your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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HYMN: STF No longer slaves

Ooh, oooh, ooh, oooh.

1. You unravel me

With a melody

You surround me with a song

Of deliverance

From my enemies

2. 'Til all my fears are gone

I'm no longer a slave to fear

I am a child of God

I'm no longer a slave to fear

I am a child of God..

3. From my mother's womb

You have chosen me

Love has called my name

I've been born again

Into Your family

Your blood flows through my

veins

4. *I'm no longer a slave to fear*

I am a child of God

I'm no longer a slave to fear

I am a child of God

I'm no longer a slave to fear

I am a child of God

I'm no longer a slave to fear

5. I am surrounded
By the arms of the Father
I am surrounded
By songs of deliverance
We've been liberated
From our bondage
We're the sons and the daughters
Let us sing our freedom
Ooh, ooh, oh, ooh
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh.

7. You split the sea
So I could walk right through it
My fears are drowned in perfect
love
You rescued me
So I could stand and say

6. You split the sea
So I could walk right through it
My fears are drowned in perfect
love
You rescued me
So I could stand and say
I am a child of God.

I am a child of God
I am a child of God
Yes, I am a child of God.

Reading 2: Luke 4: 14-21 Jesus reads from the scroll

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Sermon: See Pastoral Letter in CWEO.

Prayer of Intercession

Jesus, you lived so that we might know freedom from sin. You lived to bring oppression to an end. Please hear our prayers that all may know the truth of these words.

O loving God, as we remember the gift of freedom, and the choices we can make – what to do, where to go, when to buy:

Help us to use our freedom wisely.

When advertisers bombard all our senses and claim our worship and allegiance, bless and strengthen those who find it difficult to resist the tempter's advert.

Help those who are bowed down by the burden of debt or the tyranny of feeling inadequate to give their children what they cry out for.

Help us to use our freedom wisely.

Be with those who are faced with difficult decisions:

for health authorities deciding how best to use scarce resources;

for bosses deciding whether to hire people or make them redundant;

for governments, working out how to serve their people;

for children exploring their futures.

Help us to use our freedom wisely.

Be with us, O God, in the decisions we face. In silence we offer them to you.

In our doubts or with our certainties,
guide us by your Spirit.

And as we remember the freedom we have and enjoy,
we pray for the places in our world where freedom is a longed-for gift.
We pray for the Church throughout the world,
and especially for Christians persecuted for their faith.

We pray for Christians in our own community,
that we might be freed and emboldened to live the fruit of the Spirit in
our daily lives.

Set us free that the world might know your love.

O Spirit of the Living God,
to freedom you have called us.

**Set your children free,
that all might be free indeed.**

Amen.

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HYMN: In the wonder of Creation

1. In the wonder of creation,
when all nature shares one song,
showing God's imagination,
all may see his love goes on.
Through the Holy Story spoken,
of God's people called as one,
gathered, exiled, saved and broken,
this we learn : his love goes on.

2. In the Christ who died to save us ;
in God's risen, living Son ;
through the Spirit, whom he gave us ;
this we know : his love goes on.
In the telling of the gospel
Matthew, Mark and Luke and John
join the Church in testifying
through the years : his love goes on.

3. From the perfect days of glad-
ness
when the sun has brightly shone,
to the slog of working madness,
all the while his love goes on.
Through the times of harsh temp-
tation,
seeking strength but finding none,
in our human desperation,
mercy comes : his love goes on.

4. In the joys of celebration,
of new birth or victory won,
in the deep peace of salvation,
tell the world his love goes on !
Through the dark days of depres-
sion,
when all sign of faith is gone,
hope may find no fresh expression,
but we trust his love goes on.

5. Through the hopes of our to-
morrow,
and the things we've left undone

—
future joys and present sorrows —
through all time, his love goes on.
In our Kingdom-shaped endeavour,
when God's glorious work is done,
to the promise of forever,
God is here : his love goes on.

Blessing

We have worshipped in freedom,
but the world is groaning in chains,
torn by division, and desperate for love.

Now send us out, dear Lord,
to bring your freedom, harmony and love
as we share the life-changing message of Christ the Saviour.

Amen.

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[Ongoing worship and pastoral care](#)

For those worshipping online, as the service finishes we can join together in a time of fellowship via Zoom. For those without internet access why not get on the phone to someone in similar circumstances to yourself, and encourage and help each other as part of your ongoing worship and care of one another. To watch all or any part of this or previous worship services click [HERE](#) to go to the church website archive or see website for details of all other material billericaymethodistchurch.org