

10 Jan 2021

Worship Sheet for Sunday 10 January – Belonging

If it isn't too late – may I wish you a very happy and healthy 2021? Today we're thinking about belonging – belonging in Christ, bound together by the Holy Spirit whether or not we are present with one another. Often we think about Jesus' baptism at this time of year but baptised or not the Spirit helps us to belong with Jesus.

Call: Wherever we are. In this moment, we gather in God. In this place of belonging may we gather and make space to know God.

Pray Lord, even those of us who may prefer our own company and can find it hard to make connections with others like to belong. We may not rush to make friends, may not be the life and soul of the party but most of us like to feel that we belong, that we matter to others – are noticed, cared for. That can be hard for the world moves at a fast pace, and it is easy to get left behind in other's busyness. Remind us that in Jesus we will always belong – to you and to one another. Not because of what we can bring, but because your love is offered to each of us, freely and undeserved – we matter to you – you care, we belong to you and in you. We too may have questions about the Holy Spirit but remind us that Jesus gave the Spirit so that we would know his love more, recognise, experience it and share it with others. Draw near to us, forgive us all our faults, build our capacity to receive your love and enable us to share it generously in the name of your Son, Jesus who taught us to pray together: Our Father...

Read Act 19:1-7 Paul in Ephesus – The Holy Spirit.

Thought I suppose we do place quite an emphasis on having right belief. Maybe that's one of the reasons we shy away from talking too much about our faith – we don't want to put our foot in it by showing up our ignorance or coming away with some way out view. The old phrase "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs" springs to mind. Sometimes we have to be willing to be a bit vulnerable and ask a question. OK it might show that we could do with more understanding, but it is also the way we can find answers. Paul picked up that the folks in Ephesus had some odd views. He asked some questions and he was quite surprised with their answer "We haven't even heard there is a Holy Spirit". He didn't write them off, he didn't scold them – he shared more teaching and helped them. I'm not going to give you a treatise on the Holy Spirit – suffice to say the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, his gift to the Church, to draw us to him, to deepen our love, to equip us to share in his mission. The Spirit is never at odds with Jesus – their purposes are to glorify God and to equip his people to share in his mission. And today, a big function of the Spirit's work is to bind us together with one another and in Jesus. The Spirit fosters belonging among believers. We are joined together in love as sisters and brothers of the Lord Jesus Christ – much more relational than glue though! Don't be afraid of being shown up, don't be afraid of the Spirit- ask questions, seek answers, enjoy being part of Jesus' wonderful belonging, work at it, and be open to him deepening both your love and understanding. Jesus loves me this I know – so you belong!

Praise CH4 465 Be thou my vision v 1,2 & 5

Pray Lord as venture into 2021 with all its uncertainties, yet with prospects of hope for better health, for a lessening of the restrictions and a return to a semblance of normality, whatever that might mean, help us to trust not only in vaccines and the wisdom of leaders – health, political, economic and otherwise – but deep down in the love and grace of your dear Son. Humanly speaking our future is not known, at least not in detail but remind us that deep down our future in your love is secure. Help us to take seriously our belonging in Christ and to allow that heavenly security to impact upon our earthly lives, in the attitudes, decisions and outworking of our days here. We pray for all who fear the future, all weighed down by heavy burdens – their own or their loved ones. We pray for those carrying heavy responsibilities for others – in government, in industry and commerce, in education and health – we pray for an timely and effective distribution of vaccines and then a prudent opening up of society. In all this may we treat one another as real people and not just statistics, percentages or categories. In our prayer walk we remember those who live or work in Caledonia Pl, St and Court..
SILENCE

Lord hear our prayers spoken and unspoken and answer them for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen Blessing May the Lord bless you. Amen.