**Sunday May 22nd 2022**: Sixth Sunday of Easter and Aldersgate Sunday

*For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or other suitable time.*

**Hymn StF** 416 **H&P**

There’s a wideness in God’s mercy / like the wideness of the sea;

there’s a kindness in his justice / which is more than liberty.

There is grace enough for thousands / of new worlds as great as this;

there is room for fresh creations / in that upper home of bliss.

For the love of God is broader / than the measures of the mind;

and the heart of the Eternal / is most wonderfully kind.

But we make his love too narrow / by false limits of our own;

and we magnify his strictness / with a zeal he will not own.

If our love were but more simple / we should take him at his word;

and our lives would be illumined / by the presence of our Lord.

Frederick William Faber (1814 – 1863)

**Prayer**

Praise and thank God for his wonderful love. Say sorry for the occasions when ‘we make his love too narrow’. Sit for a minute or two receiving God’s forgiveness and love.

**Psalm for Aldersgate Sunday**: Psalm 130

**Epistle Reading for Aldersgate Sunday**: Romans 5 v 1 – 11

**To think about**

What is your understanding of the first seven words of this reading: ‘since we have been justified by faith’? If you are not sure what it means, ask a minister or local preacher.

**Message from a Circuit friend**

As today is Aldersgate Sunday, I feel it would be remiss of me not to reflect on John Wesley’s experience of his heart being ‘strangely warmed’ during the reading of Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans at a meeting of a ‘Religious Society’ on the 24th May 1738.The meeting took place in Aldersgate Street (hence Aldersgate Sunday). John Wesley recorded the experience in his journal on that day and it is an entry that many of us will be familiar with; “In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed.” Although I know the passage well, what caught my eye recently was that he went very unwillingly. We might expect, given the profound effect of his conversion, that he might have written after the fact ‘I went with joy’ or ‘I went with great anticipation’ , but he doesn’t, he is very honest about how he felt going into that meeting (Luther’s Epistle to the Romans is a long and rather dry tome - I might well have felt the same!) and acknowledges that he really didn’t want to be there, yet that is the exact time and place that God reached into his heart and he received that great and complete assurance of God’s love and forgiveness. Of course God has rather a habit of reaching people when they least expect it, including when they are reluctant (think of Moses at the burning bush for example). We cannot predict where or when God will warm our hearts, but I think we must be prepared for it to be in the most ordinary of places, or even, as in John Wesley’s case, a place or time where we would rather not be - and if we go forward to these times and places with our hearts open - how many more ways might we find to sing our great Deliverer’s praise?

**Sam Parfitt (Local Preacher and Lay Pioneer in Blakeney and Walsingham)**

**Hymn** (To the tune of Bunessan, ‘Morning has broken’)

John and Charles Wesley / brothers together / searching for service / to please their God.

Straining and striving / preaching and teaching / method and order / all for the good.

John and Charles Wesley / brothers together / wanting much more than / doing what’s right.

Seeking assurance / God’s affirmation / needing advice on / finding the light.

John and Charles Wesley / brothers together / caught by the Spirit / out of thin air.

Hearts strangely warmed with / personal salvation / souls set on fire – / answers to prayer.

John and Charles Wesley / brothers together / knowing God loves them / without one plea.

Renewal coming / changing church history / telling their story / of hearts set free.

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**Collect for Aldersgate Sunday**

Almighty God, you raised up your servants, John and Charles Wesley,

to proclaim anew the gift of redemption and the life of holiness.

Pour out your Spirit, and revive your work among us;

that inspired by the same faith, and upheld by the same grace in word and sacrament,

we and all your children may be made one in the unity of your Church on earth,
even as in heaven we are made one in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**Prayers of Intercession**

Pray for the world, for our country, for the Church, for those in need, for your local community, for your neighbours, family, friends, and yourself.

**Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord’s Prayer…**

**Hymn StF** 345 **H&P**

And can it be that I should gain / an interest in the Saviour’s blood?

Died he for me, who caused his pain? For me, who him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be / that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

He left his Father’s throne above – so free, so infinite his grace –

emptied himself of all but love / and bled for Adam’s helpless race.

Tis mercy all, immense and free / for, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay / fast bound in sin and nature’s night;

thine eye diffused a quickening ray – I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,

my chains fell off, my heart was free / I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

No condemnation now I dread / Jesus, and all in him, is mine!

Alive in him, my living Head / and clothed in righteousness divine,

Bold I approach the eternal throne / and claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

**May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us, and all those we love, this day and always, Amen.**

**Circuit News**: Our next ‘Big Sunday’ is on **June 5th** and, of course, coincides with the Queen’s Jubilee weekend and also with the Christian celebration of Pentecost. As usual, there will be an extended Worship Sheet which contains the script of talks and prayers that will be given on zoom and recorded for youtube. Churches can adapt the material for their own use and individuals will be able to use the Worship Sheet at home in the usual way.

The service can also be watched as a live-stream from Watton Methodist Church. The Sunday morning service from Watton is now live-streamed every week and can be accessed at <https://wattonmethodist.chessck.co.uk>.