**4th June 2023**

**Trinity Sunday**

The grace, love and fellowship of God
surrounds us today and always.
So, come, let us journey together
in the wonderful adventure
of worshipping God, the holy ‘three in one’.



A gathering prayer

Living God,
You invite us to go on the greatest adventure ever.
Meet us today as we come to worship you.
May we rest in your giant loving arms
and know your presence with us.
May we find safety and security there.
Raise us up that we may find strength when we are weary
and energy when we are faint,
so we never fail to praise your holy name.
Amen.



A prayer of approach

Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we come before you now to worship,
to marvel at your being,
to focus on your calling to us,
to know your love,
and to seek your truth.
Amen.



A prayer of adoration

On this Trinity Sunday,
O God the Holy Trinity,
we worship you
– even though sometimes we have doubts and fears.
You are the one we adore, without whom life has no purpose.
You, O Holy Trinity, meet us and greet us, support and uphold us,
provide for us and equip us, wherever we are on our journey in life.
We adventure with you, into the known and unknown,
but believing that you will always be with us,
to the end of the age.
You are the one we adore.
Amen.



A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness

A prayer of confession

Blessed God,
in thought and word and deed,
in the done and the undone,
in the known and the unknown,
we have wandered and wondered,
journeyed and backtracked,
succeeded and failed.
We have stepped out on our own,
taking no heed of your Word and your map of life.
We have delighted you and made you despair.
As we pause in the journey of adventure and intrigue
that delights and astounds us,
that challenges and changes us,
we confess before you, O God,
those times we have disappointed you
by the ways we have chosen,
by the words we have spoken,
or by the needless deeds we have done.
Blessed God, forgive us.
Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

The journey of life has its ups and its downs
and God travels with us,
waiting for us to turn and confess,
offering warmth, welcome and assurance that,
when we repent, we are forgiven,
cleansed, renewed, released, set free.
Thanks be to God.
Amen.



A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

We journey with you, O God,
because you have proved yourself to us,
revealed yourself to us,
made yourself known to us.
You have drawn us to yourself.
Thanks be to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our journey with you is adventure,
It is yearning, striving and seeking,
It is letting go and picking up,
It is trusting and following,
It is being and doing.
And in all of this you are with us on the journey.
Thanks be to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You are balm to our fears,
the glue that holds us to yourself in our times of uncertainty.
You are the Father/parent who offers us sustenance.
You are the Son who lived and died and lives with us and among us.
You are the Holy Spirit who sets us on fire, who burns within us.
Thanks be to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.



***St Patrick’s Breastplate***

With cherubim and seraphim, we bind unto ourselves this day

the strong name of the Trinity!

By power of faith, Christ’s incarnation, baptism, death

and bursting from the spicéd tomb, we bind unto ourselves this day:

the strong name of the Trinity!

By virtue of starlit heaven, glorious sun’s lifegiving rays,

pale moon’s slivery light, flashing of lightening free,

whirling wind’s tempestuous shocks and earth’s old stable rocks,

we bind unto ourselves this day: the strong name of the Trinity!

Christ be with, within, behind, and before us.

Christ be beside us, comforting and restoring.

Christ be beneath and above us, in quiet and in danger,

in mouth of friend and stranger.

We bind unto ourselves this day: the strong name of the Trinity!

*adapted from*

All Age Activity

Have three long ribbons or coloured ropes (coloured washing line works well) Green for the Father, red for the Son and Yellow or White for the Holy Spirit. Attach them to somewhere central at the front of the church, the Communion Table or pulpit works well, and have three people plaiting them, almost as if they are maypole dancing, so that it becomes one rope ­ three in one ­ a trinity. They could do this for the whole service (if the chords are very long!) or just as people come, or just for the All Age intro, as they work you could talk of the God known to us in three ways yet with an essential unity, just as the chord is made of three parts but one (hopefully beautiful) plait.

*adapted from*

*https://theworshipcloud.com/view/written/trinity-sunday-all-age-service*

Readings

*Genesis 1:1-2:4a* | *St Matthew 28:16-20*

Sermon Notes

Many graphic representations of the Trinity are Celtic designs with no visible end or beginning. This sense of no end or beginning is a useful one to play with .

These ideas were played with by the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart who, when writing of creation felt that when God the Father laughed, God the Son was born, and when they both laughed the Holy Spirit came to be. Further, when all three laughed humanity was born. It’s a lovely image, an image showing we’re born in joy and laughter, the joy and laughter of God’s own self.

It’s an image that can sustain us as we ponder Jesus’ command to the disciples, and to us, in the Great Commission in Gospel passage where we’re called to go to all peoples to baptise and make disciples in the name of our Triune God.

Affirmation of Faith

Today, Eternal One, we rub the sleep from our eyes

and discover more of who You are.

Today You give well-aimed hammer-blows

at the clay jars of the gods we want,

the gods who reinforce our own pride or prejudice,

until they fall away and reveal You.

A different God, a dangerous God, a subversive God,

a God who comes to us like a beggar with wounded hands,

a God who comes to us in wind and fire,

in bread and wine, in flesh and blood: a God who says to us,

‘You did not choose me; I chose you.’

Today, O Christ, we rub the sleep from our eyes

and discover more of who You are.

We realise You don’t fit neatly into all our little categories –

if you did You’d simply be someone we’d invented,

a neat theological answer laid out on a cold slab

in response to age old questions.

We know that when You are laid on a slab, You rise again.

Today, O Spirit, we rub the sleep from our eyes

and discover more of who You are.

You are a signpost in the dark, pointing the way.

You are the assurance of love which holds us in our pain.

You are the flame which burns in our gloom.

You call us to be people of the light.

Today, Trinity, we rub the sleep from our eyes

and discover more of who You are.

Today You remind us that You always transcend our grasp,

even our most intelligent grasps.

We know, love, and adore You, Holy Trinity of Love. Amen.

adapted from words by NT Wright in

*For All God’s Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church*

(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), p. 24.

Holy Communion

The Eternal One be with you. And also with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Most High.

Let us give thanks to God’s Eternal Majesty. It is right and just for us to offer praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks,

holy, almighty, and eternal Majesty,

crucified, yet risen, Enfleshed Word,

Flame of Love breathing through all creation.

Three-in-One we praise and adore You,

revealing Yourself again and again in glory, suffering, and new life.

We, Your holy Church, acclaim You,

we, Your stumbling people thank You,

we, Your impaired witnesses cry to You.

Holy Trinity of Love, known to us in so many ways, yet one in being and equal in glory,

we join with the angels and archangels in their unending hymn of praise…

*adapted from the Church of England’s Preface for Trinity Sunday*

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Word was with God in the beginning.

Through the Word all things came to be,

not one thing had its being but through the Word.

All that came to be had life through the Word,

and that life was the light of humanity,

a light that shines in the gloom,

a light that the gloom could neither understand nor overpower.

The Word became flesh, and tabernacled amongst us.

He came to his own people, who did not accept him,

but to all who did accept him,

he gave power to become the children of God.

And now this Word, who was born not out of human stock,

or urge of the flesh, or will of a man,

but of God, comes to us in bread and wine.

For we remember the night, when Jesus,

the Enfleshed Word, born as one of us,

met with his friends and shared in the simplicity of a meal.

During the meal he took bread, blessed it, broke it

and gave it to his friends saying:

“Take this all of you and eat it, this is my body,

which is given for you, do this and remember me.”

In the same way after supper, he took the cup filled with wine,

gave thanks and gave it to his friends saying:

“Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is my blood,

the blood of the new and everlasting promise of God,

for you and for all people. Do this and remember me.”

Let's remember Jesus as we celebrate the central mystery of our faith......

Christ has died! Christ is Risen! Christ will come again!

Holy Spirit, Flame of Eternal Love,

come upon these simple gifts of bread and wine,

and, as we receive them, lift us beyond them into Your presence,

and enable us to enflesh Jesus in our lives.

Let us be, O Triune God, words which tell of Your Word,

lovers showing Your love, and heralds proclaiming Your presence,

that with all creation, we may sing of your praise for ever,

Eternal Majesty, Enfleshed Word, Abiding Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever, Amen.

Lamb of God, Lamb of God

you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sins of the world grant us peace.

Post Communion Prayer

God of a love stronger than death,

you have given us new birth into a living hope

through the gift of your Son.

God with us, like a mother you have fed us with yourself

and strengthened us for journeying ahead.

God of truth and power, you take our weakness and our sin

and refashion us by grace.

Gracious God, may the love which bids us welcome at this table

gather all your children into one,

in your eternal presence, whole and free at last. Amen.

*from the URC Worship Book.*

Blessing

May the One who created all things, set the heavenly bodies in place,

moves the planets in their heavenly dance,

and who created you from star dust, bless you.

May the One who humbled himself to be born as one of us,

walked through the dust of earth,

endured betrayal, torture, and unjust death,

and rose from the grave,

wounded yet victorious, bless you.

May the One who danced at creation’s start,

who lifts us from the dust of our lives,

fills us with energy, joy, and laughter,

and who called the Church into being, bless you.

And the blessing of the Three-in-One, our Holy and Undivided Trinity,

be with you, and all whom you love, now and always, Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we thank you that you are a 'can do' God of positivity and power, and entrust to you our fragmented world so vulnerable and so drained by negativity.

We pray for the people of Ukraine and of Russia; of Turkey and Syria; of Israel and Palestine;  of Serbia and the Balkans; for the continent of Africa; for the people of our own nation and for all places in the world that are on our hearts where there is division, hardship, climatic challenges and suffering.
Empower the peace makers, resource the aid workers,
and unite us all with the courage to believe
that together we can make a difference. Amen.

We pray for young people sitting exams, and making career choices, that they might feel positive about their abilities and about themselves, and share their aspirations and creativity and beauty with their little corner of the world.
Empower their teachers and mentors, resource their schools and places of learning,
and unite us all with the courage to believe
that together we can make a difference. Amen

We pray for one another, our families, our friends, our church, our community, as we live out the adventure you have called each of us on, with the challenges, the opportunities, the privileges and the responsibilities. We remember especially those who are ill, those who are grieving, those who have lost their homes, those who are struggling to fit in.
Empower those who are in positions of influence, resource those who are carers, encouragers and providers,
and unite us all with the courage to believe
that together we can make a difference. Amen.



A prayer for all ages together

Lord, give us what we need
to tell people about Jesus.
Lord, give us what we need
to help people be Jesus’ disciples.
Lord, give us what we need
so that we can do this adventure together.
Amen.



A sending out prayer

God of adventure,
thank you that no matter where the journey may take us,
you will always be by our side,
giving us renewed strength, vision and hope.
Amen.

**George Whitefield**

During these summer months I am going to share the lives of some extraordinary Christians to inspire you that although wee read about Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit on the first apostles and read of their extraordinary acts in the New Testament, it didn’t end there and still today, the spirit is at work in extraordinary people and in extraordinary ways.

The first person I want to talk about is George Whitefield, whose preaching and ministry in the 18th century was the reason this church was founded.

Whitefield was born in 1714 in Gloucester. His parents were innkeepers and looked after the Bell Inn – which is still there on Southgate Stret in the town centre. His family were not well off and George had to work for a living. Working in the tavern made him a good storyte4ller and with a sense of humour and responding to banter. He loved acting and had a powerful voice. All good skills that he would deploy later in his ministry.

He was fortunate in getting a free education – which wasn’t guaranteed in those days. He so impressed his school master that he recommended George went to University. His parent couldn’t afford to send him but he got a position as a servitor (basically a servant to affluent students at Oxford University he had to shine their shoes, iron their clothes bring them food. But it got him into Pembroke College where he came into contact with John and Charles Wesley who had founded what other students mockingly called the Holy Club: a group that met for prayer and bible study.

At this time George veered between going down the taverns and enjoying card games, then feeling guilty about such worldly behaviour and doubling up his religious duties in going to chapel and saying prayers.

I detailed last week how he had an experience of the holy Spirit. After rescuing a woman from drowning she came to faith and overwhelming joy just by hearing the scriptures read to her. Whitefield thought you had to work hard to win your salvation. He doubled his efforts to the point of exhaustion and collapse and then, and only then, when he threw himself entirely on god, and was at the end of himself that he felt the holy spirit come upon him and give him the joy of knowing he was loved and accepted by god.

After he graduated at the age of 21 the Bishop of Gloucester ordained him and he began preaching in churches in Gloucester. He made a trip, the first of seven, in an age when crossing the Atlantic Ocean was a long and hazardous adventure, to North America at the invitation of John Wesley. He wrote letters back to England criticizing the dead faith of the Anglican clergy and how they needed to be born again.

Consequently, when he returned from America he found many pulpits close to him. Some clergy still invited him and one winters day he found himself preaching in a church that was full with the doors closed because of the chill. Outside may had gathered and Whitefield could smell them. They were the poor – dirty and grimy and smelling of alcohol. His heart went out to them. Churches often closed their doors to such like as going to church in those days was seen only for the respectable types. Whitefield raised his voice so that those outside the church could hear him. to the point that the church warden got nervous that his voice might break the glass in the windows. But Whitefield has a burden for those left out of the church and continued.

In 1739 an old clergy man asked Whitefield to come and preach to the miners in Kingwood, north Bristol. Miners in those days were the poorest of the poor, doing a job no one else wanted to do because it was dangerous and dirty. They lived in shacks, like a shanty town in the forest. They had a short lifespan and outside of the work would spend most of their time drinking and fighting.

Whitefield waited for them to come up from the mine at the end of their shift. He stood on a mound and like Jesus decide to start with the words from the sermon on the munt: blessed are the poor in spirit for they will see God.

The miners stopped and stared and couldn’t believe that a clergyman was speaking to them. About 200 men gathered. Whitefield went on about the love fog do and of hell, darker than any pit. He said Jesus came to call sinners, he was a friend of sinners and begged the miners to follow Jesus. He noticed that white streaks were forming on the blackened faces. Unchecked teras were streaming down the coal dust caked on their faces. Tom a young man was sent by the colliers to ask Whitefield to preach again the next day.

This time a thousand people turned up, families and children. Whitefield preached about being born again, starting a new life in Jesus.. Whitefield preached many times to the colliers and their families. The change in them was evident as they changed their lifestyle, gave up drinking and fighting, clubbed together to found a school and educate their children.

Whitefield had discovered the effectiveness of field preaching – not preaching in churches but outside – going to where people were. One such open-air congregation took place on [Minchinhampton Common](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minchinhampton_Common), Gloucestershire. Whitefield preached to the "[Rodborough](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodborough) congregation"—a gathering of 10,000 people—at a place now known as "Whitefield's tump. Thomas Adams was deeply affected by his preaching and he founded a religious society of like minded people who met weekly to study the bible, pray and encourage each other in their faith. Adams would become a great friend of Whitefield. In 1749 Adams would build a chapel in Rodborough, the first Rodborough Tabernacle.

Adams encouraged Whitefield to fit Dursley into his preaching itinerary and in 1743on Sunday March 27th Whitefield preached to a crowd of hundreds on Woodmancote Green, where the present day junction of Uley rd and Woodmancote is. Nine days later he came back and preached on the top of Stinchcombe Hill. He wrote in his journal ‘I preached with great convictions accompanying the word’. Whitefield didn’t return to Dursley again until 1769 but Thomas Adams got to work founding a society in our area, meeting first at Stancombe, on the other side of Stinchcombe Hill, which then moved into the town, eventually building the first Tabernacle across the road in 1760. This is the chair and the bible that Whitefield used when he returned in 1769.

Beginning in 1740, Whitefield preached nearly every day for months to large crowds of sometimes several thousand people as he travelled throughout the colonies, especially [New England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_England). His journey on horseback from [New York City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) to [Charleston, South Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston%2C_South_Carolina), was at that time the longest in North America by a white man.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-21) Like [Jonathan Edwards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Edwards_%28theologian%29), he developed a style of preaching that elicited emotional responses from his audiences. But Whitefield had charisma, and his loud voice, his small stature, and even his cross-eyed appearance (which some people took as a mark of divine favour) all served to help make him one of the first celebrities in the American colonies.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-22) Like Edwards, Whitefield preached staunchly [Calvinist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinism) theology that was in line with the "moderate Calvinism" of the Thirty-nine Articles.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-FOOTNOTEWhitefield20013:383-23) While explicitly affirming God's sole agency in salvation, Whitefield [freely offered the Gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_offer_of_the_gospel), saying at the end of his sermons: "Come poor, lost, undone [sinner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_sin), come just as you are to [Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus)."[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-FOOTNOTEBormann198573-24) Whitefield included slaves in his Gospel offerings, and their response was positive. Historians see this as "the genesis of African-American Christianity."[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-FOOTNOTEGalli201065-25)

To Whitefield "the gospel message was so critically important that he felt compelled to use all earthly means to get the word out."[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKidd2014260-26) Thanks to widespread dissemination of print media, perhaps half of all colonists eventually heard about, read about, or read something written by Whitefield. He employed print systematically, sending advance men to put up [broadsides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadside_%28printing%29) and distribute [handbills](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flyer_%28pamphlet%29) announcing his sermons. He also arranged to have his sermons published.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-FOOTNOTEStout199138-27) Much of Whitefield's publicity was the work of William Seward, a wealthy layman who accompanied Whitefield. Seward acted as Whitefield's "fund-raiser, business co-ordinator, and publicist". He furnished newspapers and booksellers with material, including copies of Whitefield's writings.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Whitefield#cite_note-FOOTNOTESchlenther2010-4)

His preaching met with opposition. Many clergy thought he was too emotional. Whitefield said that speaking of how God loved us sinners made him emotional. He couldn’t help it. In the First Great Awakening, rather than listening demurely to preachers, people groaned and roared in enthusiastic emotion. Whitefield was a "passionate preacher" who often "shed tears". Underlying this was his conviction that genuine religion "engaged the heart, not just the head

He was once called on to preach at a public execution. He stood by the gallows and preached to the crowd who had turned up to be entertained . Public executions in those days were spectator sports – crowds loved to see the fear on the faces of the condemned and watch how they writhed at the end of the rope. But Whitefield preached about the thief on the cross when Jesus died at calvary. He said you can know for certain that Jesus can overturn death and forgive your sins and you can see him face to face. As the death cap was put over the condemned man’s face a look of confidence came over him. The crowd went silent as they watched and Whitefield wept and wept and the rest of the crowd joined him in tears: they had been so touched by the gospel.

Whitefield would preach to royalty, to slaves, to Harvard University, to prisoners. He would always be drenched in sweat at the end of his preaching, sometimes vomiting with the exertion and the pressure. He was afraid of pride. ‘Let the name of Whitefield perish’, he said, ‘but the name of Jesus Christ be glorified.’

On one occasion he went to a sleepy church and the congregation seemed very comfortable and settled. There was an elderly gentleman on the front row who settled down for a nap. Whitefield started gently but saying, ‘If I come in my own name then by all means go asleep. But I come in the name of the Lord of Hosts then I must and I will be heard’ at which point he banged on the pulpit and stamped his feet. He knew the urgency go the gospel.

His famous prayer was ‘“God, give me a deep humility, a well-guided zeal, a burning love and a single eye, and then let men or devils do their worst!”

He once spoke at an Easter Fayre, which in those days were quite a boisterous affairs – to much drinking, fighting and gambling. A group of people decided that Whitefield was bad for business so decided to disperse the crowd. They picked up a pole and made towards Whitefields congregation. They were going to swing the pole around causing injury and panic. Whitefield saw them and stopped preaching and prayed out loud against them. The men stopped in their tracks and then started to quarrel amongst themselves and then dispersed.

On another occasion a man came out him with a knife but just before he was about to stab Whitefield a retired ex-military man reached forward with his cane and knocked the knife out of his hand. Another person had a pocket fill of stones that he was going to stone Whitefield with. He moved from the back of the crowd to get in shot of Whitefield. But by the time he had got the to the front of the crowd he had heard what Whitfield had said. The gospel had convicted him. He was so touched that he emptied his pickets. He said ‘Mr Whitefield I came to break your skull but you broke my heart. This stoney heart is now open to the Lord.

At other times people threw fruit and offal and even a dead cat at Whitefield. But he just shrugged them off and carried on. Whitefield said about preaching: ‘It is a poor sermon that gives no offense; that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher.’

His voice was so powerful that Benjamin Franklin, one of the American founding fathers and an admirer of Whitefield, calculated that you could hear Whitefield half a mile away and that he could talk to thirty thousand people. It is reckoned that Whitefield communicated with 80% of his contemporaries in the American colonies.

He is more remembered and honoured in the States than here because he preached a series of [revivals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_revival) that became part of the "[Great Awakening](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening)" and also because of his charitable efforts. He established an orphanage, a hospital and schools over in the colonies. But his record is blemished by his approval of slavery. He colluded with the slave owners to ensure they bankrolled his charitable efforts and paid for his orphanages and schools and hospitals.

Whitefield included slaves in his Gospel offerings, and their response was positive. Historians see this as "the genesis of African-American Christianity. But unlike John Wesley who was an abolitionist, he never objected to slavery, in fact the reverse, he saw the economic benefits for the plantation owners in Georgia. He would chastise the planters for their cruelty to their slaves, saying that they treated their pets dogs with more kindness, but he never told them to stop. Some have claimed that the Bethesda Orphanage "set an example of humane treatment" of black people but they were still an enslaved people.

John Newton, the writer of Amazing Grace, was much influenced by Whitefield’s preaching and Newton would be a strong advocate for abolition of slavery, working with William Wilberforce among others to end the slave trade at the turn of the 19th century, 1807, a year before this church was built.

Slavery was not the only issue on which he disagreed with John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. Theologically Whitefield was a Calvinist and so put the emphasis on God’s work in the world and in the human heart. God took the initiative and had sovereignty. Wesley was Arminian in his theology, believing that human will power was important, and that we could find our way to God in our own strength. Predestination is a thorny doctrine, next only to the trinity, in puzzling most Christians and onlookers. The mysteries of our faith.

Wesley had an imperious mind and made their disagreement public and Whitefield replied publicly, which made it difficult for either of them to back down and caused their supporters to take polarized views. This in the days before the toxic effects of social media!

A Wesleyan asked John Wesley will we see George Whitefield in heaven. John Wesley replied no we won’t see Whitefield in heaven. The supporter of Wesley felt vindicated and confirmed in his opinion. But then Wesley continued. We wont see Whitefield in heaven because he will be so close to the throne of God that we wont get a glimpse of him he will be lost in the brilliance of the glory of God!

Likewsie Whitefield tells of a dream he had. In the dream, he was ushered to the gates of Hell. There he asked, "Are there any Presbyterians here?" "Yes!", came the answer. Then he asked, "Are there any Baptists? Any Episcopalians? Any Methodists?" The answer was Yes! each time. Much distressed, Whitefield was then ushered to the gates of Heaven. There he asked the same question, and the answer was No! "No?" To this, Whitefield asked, "Who then is inside?" The answer came back, "There are only Christians here."

Wesley preached at Whitefield funeral. Whitefield’s health was failing and in 1770 he sailed into Newburyport Massachusetts. He had to be carried from the port to his lodgings but before he could go to sleep the townsfolk had gathered to ask him to preach. Whitefield, no matter how ill he was, never refused an invitation to share the gospel.

‘God forbid that I should travel with anybody a quarter of an hour without speaking of Christ to them’ was one of his sayings.

He preached until his candle burned out, then was carried to his bed where he died during the night of exhaustion. One of the famous sayings he had was ‘ I would rather wear out than rust out’.

His final sermon had been on the text of 2 Corinthians 13.verse 5.

5Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test?

He had a strict schedule of reading scripture every day, often on his knees. He was concerned at the depth of his ministry and let God be concerned for the breadth of his ministry.

He awakened an entire generation to the gospel. His preaching and that of John Wesley, changed the spiritual atmosphere in this country as both of them preached the length and breadth of it, and also in America. Historians credit their preaching for averting a bloody revolution similar to what happened in France at the end of the 18th century.

John Wesley at Whitefield’s funeral said ‘may the rising generation catch a spark of that flame that shone in the spirit and lustre in that faithful servant of the most high God, George Whitefield.

Whitefield had prayed soon after his conversion : My prayer today is that God would make me an extraordinary Christian.

Indeed he was.

This exhortation was amongst his last words:

Press forward, do not stop, do not linger in your journey but strive for the mark that is set before you.