

North Staffordshire Circuit (11/22)

Service Sheets For the Month of February 2025

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Sunday 2nd February 2025 – 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This service has been compiled by Mrs Sheila Heap

Wherever you are, welcome to this time of worship.

May you find it to be a time of blessing.

Call to Worship:

God is love.

Those who live in love, live in God and God lives in them.

Let us receive afresh the love of God for us and for those around us.

Amen.

Hymn: Ye servants of God, your master proclaim (StF 340)

Ye servants of God, your master proclaim,
and publish abroad His wonderful name;
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
His Kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save;
and still He is nigh, His presence we have;
the great congregation His triumph shall sing,
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

‘Salvation to God who sits on the throne!’
Let all cry aloud, and honour the Son;
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give Him His right;
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,
all honour and blessing, with angels above,
and thanks never ceasing, and infinite love.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

Prayer of Adoration:

Holy God, You are full of love for all Your people,
even though we do not always appreciate it and respond as we ought.
Holy God, your persistence and patience amazes us –
You go on loving us even when we know we don’t deserve it.
Holy God, Your generosity overwhelms us.

Holy God, You are beyond our imagining – You are so much more.
Holy God, may we learn to be closer to You, to listen more,
to feel more, to know more of the immensity of Your love.
Holy God, this is our prayer. **Amen.**

Prayers of Confession and Forgiveness:

We are sorry, God, that we are often weak and helpless.

Come O God, You are our Saviour, forgive us.

We are sorry, God, that we do not always like to hear the truth because it hurts.

Come O God, You are our Saviour, forgive us.

We are sorry, God, that we so often lack motivation

to speak out about the way of life and the gift of love You give to us.

Come O God, You are our Saviour, forgive us. Amen.

God, who is full of mercy, hears our confession,

knows our penitence

and forgives us our sins, our wrongdoing,

our outbursts and our silences.

Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Reading: Jeremiah chapter 1 vs. 4-10 NIV ‘THE CALL OF JEREMIAH’

Introduction:

Despite Jeremiah’s belief that he is too young and too ill-equipped, God is ready to speak through him as a prophetic mouthpiece. Echoes of Moses’ uncertainty at the divine call (Exodus 3:12) are obvious and the reader is assured that when God calls an individual, it is for the purpose that God will ordain through them. Personal ability is irrelevant when divine plans have existed long before. In the same way as for the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:7), the touch of the divine commissions and empowers the doubtful human. In keeping with the Old Testament prophets (e.g. Amos 9), there is the call to declare destruction and restoration, judgement and mercy. We are asked to trust the words of Jeremiah in this section – they are trustworthy because they are the prophetic words of God.

‘The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.

Before you were born I set you apart;

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

“Ah, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.” But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord. Then the Lord reached out His hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Reflection 1: ‘NOT ME!’

WORDS - they can tie us in knots, leave us speechless, tongue tied, feeling inadequate, annoy us, offend us, confound us - the list is endless! Using the right words at the right time in the right place is often challenging, sometimes impossible

One University’s favourite course was: ‘A Survey of the New Testament’. Why? It required no homework, no reading, no tests before the exam, and for 25 years, the same lecturer had always set the same question: “Describe the Missionary Journeys of Paul.”

A young man nicknamed ‘Meathead’ by his friends took the course. All that year, his tutor helped him to prepare for the exam. When the day came, ‘Meathead’ was ready. He knew everything about every journey Paul took. He knew about Philippi, Thessalonica, Rome and Tyre. He knew about Timothy, Barnabas and Luke. He was ready.

When the exam papers were handed out, the hall of students were stunned by the question. After 25 years the lecturer asked something different: “Critique the Sermon on the Mount that was preached by Jesus.” The shock was felt across the hall. One student got up, took his exam paper, threw it down on the examiner's desk - blank. He didn't know what to say! One by one, all the students did the same, none of them were able to answer the question..... except for ‘Meathead’. He sat and wrote and wrote - for three hours filling the exam paper.

On the day of the results, the lecturer had two sets of exam papers on his desk. On his right, stood a tall stack of blank papers all marked grade F. On his left, one single paper sat with a big, bold A* right on top. It was

'Meathead's. "What on earth did you say?" asked a classmate, "read it," said 'Meathead', on the first page was the opening sentence: "Who am I to criticise the Sermon on the Mount? Instead, let me tell you about the missionary journeys of Paul." 'Meathead' was wise beyond his years. He acknowledged what he was unable to say - but was generosity itself with what he could.

Is so easy to be thrown by a challenging task we are unprepared for. Jeremiah certainly understood that. He too was a teenager who was called by God for a specific task. His name means "the Lord is exalted." He came from a priestly ancestry who lived in Ananath, two miles northeast of Jerusalem. The event we read of is known as 'the coming of the word of God', which gives the book of Jeremiah a divine quality to it. God was calling Jeremiah to be a prophet – "One who is called." His calling is probably one of the more familiar stories in the Old Testament. We can perhaps resonate with his response: 'I'm too young', 'I wouldn't have a clue what to say'; 'I've no experience'; 'I'm inadequate'; 'I'm not worthy'. I wonder how many times we've allowed self-doubt to hinder our response to God? Even so, God blesses Jeremiah and dedicates him to the work He has called him to do.

Jeremiah's prophecy was not to be good news. Daunting in the least! Like Jesus, he will face rejection: opposed by kings, princes, priests and people but throughout it all, we find a man of steel with unbending, personal courage, and God blessed him with the words to say and the strength to see the task through. But there is Good News - God will do the same for us.

Hymn: Come, divine interpreter (StF 154)

Come, divine Interpreter,
bring us eyes Your book to read,
ears the mystic words to hear,
words which did from You proceed,
words that endless bliss impart,
kept in an obedient heart.

All who read, or hear, are blessed,
if Your plain commands we do;

Of your Kingdom here possessed,
You we shall in glory view –
when You come on earth to abide,
reign triumphant at Your side.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

Reading: Luke chapter 4 vs. 21-30 NIV 'JESUS IS REJECTED AT NAZARETH'

Introduction:

Having read from the Scriptures, Jesus declares that they have been fulfilled and declares Himself a prophet. Jesus continues by telling stories of Elijah and Elisha and how they helped outsiders, not just their own people. The people are enraged and respond by trying to throw Him off a cliff, but Jesus walks through them and goes on his way.

'..... and He began saying to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

All spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: "Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your home town what we have heard that You did in Capernaum."

"I tell you the truth," He continued, "no prophet is accepted in his home town. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for over three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed - only Naaman the Syrian."

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove Him out of the town, and took Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But He walked right through the crowd and went on His way.'

Pause for Thought: 'TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE HAS BEEN FULFILLED'

We knew what He was going to say, even before He said it, and if at first we'd been filled with pride, delighted to hear one of our own read so

beautifully, in a trice it all changed, our mood changing to anger at the sheer presumption of the man. There had been a note of challenge in His voice from the start, as though He understood those words of Isaiah as applying directly to Himself and was daring us to suggest otherwise. So when He returned the scroll and sat back down, our eyes never left His, nor His ours. It was like a battle of wills, a test of strength: who would dare to lay things on the line first? Eventually, it was Jesus who broke the silence, confirming our worst suspicions.

‘Today,’ He said, ‘this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’, implying it was somehow fulfilled in Him! What rubbish!

We knew who this man was, having seen Him grow up among us, Suckle at His mother's breast, labour in His father's work shop – He was just an ordinary person like you and me. So what gave Him the right to put on such airs and graces. Alright, so He'd caused a stir in the surrounding villages with a few signs and wonders, and He knew the Scriptures better than the rest of us, but that didn't make Him God's gift, did it? He came up then with some fancy line, suggesting a prophet is without honour in his own country, as though that somehow proved His point. But it didn't, not to my mind, for He was making Himself out to be much more than that, The fulfilment of God's promises of old. No, we'd have recognised a prophet all right, but for Him to be who He said He was, He'd have had to be someone far greater - the promised Messiah, Son of God – and, in all honesty, could anyone miss that?

Hymn: God has spoken – by His prophets (StF 157)

God has spoken - by His prophets,
spoken His unchanging word;
each from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
‘Mid the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holding fast;
God eternal reigns forever,
God the first, and God the last.
God has spoken - by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;

Spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time began;
Light from Light, to earth descending,
Christ, revealing God to all.

God is speaking - by the Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long Word expounding
God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith is standing fast;
God still speaks, the word unchanging,
God the first, and God the last.

George Wallace Briggs (1875 – 1959)

Reflection 2: 'REJECTION'

The ministry of Jesus had begun at a pace. After His baptism and time in the wilderness, He began to preach God's gospel of love. Following his preaching in Galilee, he entered his home town of Nazareth. As a young boy, He would have attended the synagogue with Joseph and took part in community worship regularly. He would have listened attentively to the Scriptures read from the Book of the Law, the Psalms and the prophets. He grew in knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Now, the son of Joseph had returned, knowing that what he would say would not be received well.

As there were no permanent Rabbis in the outlying villages, visiting ones were always welcome. When Jesus came to worship, He was invited to read Scripture and reflect on it. The scroll handed to Him on this particular occasion was from the prophet Isaiah where it is written: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.* [Chapter 4 vs. 18 – 19]. Wrapping this scroll up, He handed it to the attendant and said: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." [Chapter 4 v. 21]. The congregation stared Him out, amazed by His words. Then He dropped a bombshell! He told them that God's love

was for **ALL** people, Jews and non-Jews. **OUTRAGE!** Infuriated they turned on Him. How dare He? The son of Joseph dared to say that God's love extended outside God's chosen people. How dare He say this, they wanted a sign of His authority to say such things: **PROVE IT!** Jesus refused. He knew He had been rejected. He could do no miracles there for the people lacked faith. Rage took over and they tried to drive Him out of town to kill Him, but Jesus walked right through them, a prophet not accepted in His home town. The people He had grown up with lacked love and they had rejected the Son of God's love. Jesus left Nazareth and never returned.

So, the gospel of love was presented to others. Miracles were done where faith existed. His words received by those with open hearts. God's love was demonstrated in word and action.

Rejection has a devastating effect whether it is rooted in words or actions
.....

A minister was sharing his thoughts about love with a couple preparing for marriage. He told them that to love - really love - was to reach out with only one desire: to care, share, comfort, encourage, or give hope. "Not everyone is loving," the woman replied, "if that is what it means to love." My parents are loving people. They made sure I went to Sunday School and worship. Faith was very important in our family. My little brother Jimmy was born after I left home. He was physically and mentally impaired, which presented in challenging behaviour. My parents loved Jimmy so much and they wanted him to know that God loved him too. Every Sunday, they took him to church. One afternoon the minister went to visit and said, "Jimmy's behaviour is very disruptive. Wouldn't it be fairer for everyone if Jimmy stayed home on Sundays? Jimmy was rejected because he didn't fit in. After that visit, his parents stopped going to church. A few years later the minister moved Circuits and a replacement was welcomed. As he looked through the membership files, he noticed the parents' commitment in sending their weekly offering although they never attended worship or joined in any events. Asking the church secretary, he learned the story of Jimmy. That afternoon he went to visit the family. He assured them of God's love for Jimmy and invited them to share in worship the following Sunday.

Rejection - it is so hard to deal with - whatever the circumstances are.

Jesus was rejected because He didn't fit the role of the expected Messiah. After all - He was just a carpenter - Joseph's son, a native of the village. In this passage, Luke chooses to launch Jesus' public manifesto. In His teaching Jesus' emphasis is good news for all, giving everyone a voice and a sense of hope. Jesus was not afraid to challenge deep rooted prejudices.

Where do we see rejection today? Who are the 'Jimmy's in our experience? Our words and actions should mirror those of Jesus: God's love is for all and we are all invited to listen and respond - not with rejection but with welcome, love and acceptance, even when the message may make us feel uncomfortable.



Prayers of Love and Concern:

In a world where many are rejected because of inequality or ability, let us pray to God:

Loving God, as food prices rise and fuel costs increase, we pray for Your guidance and wisdom in how we use the world's resources. We pray for those who struggle to pay their bills and those in debt. We ask your blessing on food banks, debt counselling services and credit unions. Help us all to be generous in supporting one another and sharing what we have.

May your kingdom come

through our prayers, actions and words.

Loving God, we pray for our justice system, for the police, lawyers, judges, probation officers and those who work in our prisons. May justice be served in the courts. May all be treated fairly and equally. Be with those who have been convicted and those serving prison sentences and support their families and all whom they love. May your presence bring comfort and hope.

May your kingdom come
through our prayers, actions and words.

Loving God, in these challenging times give wisdom and strength to those who are trapped in lives of addiction, who feel there is no escape. We pray for all organisations who seek to show people a path through addiction and offer kindness and support.

May your kingdom come
through our prayers, actions and words.

Loving God, we thank you for the mission and ministry of Jesus, for the challenge He offers, the peace with which He fills us and His love which inspires us. We pray that we may find imaginative ways to share His love and to proclaim His good news. Bless the Church throughout the world. Enable the stronger to support the more vulnerable that Jesus' name may be known and honoured in every place.

May your kingdom come
through our prayers, actions and words.

We pray in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

Hymn: I, the Lord of sea and sky (StF 663)

I, The Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Refrain: Here I am, Lord.

Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord,

If you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have born my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

Refrain:

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Refrain:

Daniel L. Shutte (b. 1947)

Blessing:

Loving God, thank You for Your great love for us,
love which is patient, kind, protecting and persevering.
Help us to take Your love out with us this week
and show it to those who feel they are outside of your family.
Give us Your passion to reach those who don't yet know You.
We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Some material is adapted from 'Roots for Churches'.

NOTE:

If you read the Reflection of Sunday 12th. January which spoke of the Radio Stoke Christmas Coffee mornings which were the result of a conversation with a listener, you might be pleased to hear that 20 venues responded to the appeal and were a great success. As a result, all have committed to continue holding regular meetings this year for refreshments and conversation with new friends and relationships being made – which all began from a throw away comment made by the radio presenter. Sometimes, a few words can be transformational and we don't know where they will lead. If you can think of someone who might appreciate this, details of the venues are available from Radio Stoke.

Sunday 9th February 2025 – 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This service has been compiled by Rev'd James Pritchard

Call to Worship:

With the Psalmist we praise God – 'I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart - I sing your praise' (from Psalm 138)

Hymn: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! (StF 11)

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:

holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,

God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.

Reginald Heber (1783–1826) (*alt.*)

A Prayer of Praise:

God, for your love that never fails, **we thank you.**

For answering us when we call, **we thank you.**

For encouraging us to share your love, **we thank you.**

We thank you that you nurture our faith, helping us to believe
and to live out our lives through your calling to us: **We thank and praise
you.**

We thank you for your constant love and faithfulness: **We thank and
praise you.**

We thank you that you hear us, answer us and strengthen us: **We thank and praise you.**

We thank you for your promises and your care: **We thank and praise you.**

We thank you that we cannot hide from you

and for the assurance that you are always with us: **We thank and praise you.**

(What might you want to thank or praise God for today? Offer it to God in prayer) Amen.

Introduction to Isaiah 6:1-8:

This is the story of Isaiah's call as a prophet. God's people have gone astray, and God needs someone to proclaim their message to them. Isaiah recalls for us the great moment his call and commissioning by God. Verse 1 refers to King Uzziah, who died in 739 BC. He was a strong king, originally favoured by God, but who then lost God's approval by becoming too proud (see 2 Chronicles 26 for his story). Human kings and leaders may fail us but here the true king, Yahweh/God, speaks from God's royal and heavenly throne. The rich imagery used is essentially metaphorical - God 'resides in' the Temple (though God cannot really be contained in such a way). The passage invites us to look and see into the heavenly throne room. The two seraphim continually proclaim the holiness of God, reinforcing not only the sovereignty of the heavenly king but also God's utter and complete holiness. Unsurprisingly, if even the seraphim have to cover their faces because of the holiness of God, then Isaiah feels even more inadequate! Yet, there is a solution – the coal from the altar (v.7) is used to atone for Isaiah's sins symbolically making him clean. God makes a way for Isaiah to be made clean and to meet with God in this powerful passage.

- As you read the passage think of the imagery, what does it say about God?
- I wonder how you might have responded to God in that moment?

Reading Isaiah 6 1-8:

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him

were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Pause for Reflection:

- Do you listen for God’s voice? How might you recognise it? Do you look for signs and symbols? Do you wish there might be angels pointing the way, or can you catch glimpses in the everyday?
- How might it feel to say to God ‘here am I’? and what might God say in response to you?

Hymn: Dear Lord and Father of mankind (StF 495)

Dear Lord and Father of mankind
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,

let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

O sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let thy blessing fall
as fell thy manna down.

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!

A Prayer of Confession:

When Isaiah met with God in the temple he became extremely aware of his failings and faults, in the presence of God's perfect beauty he was mindful of all that marred God's image in him. God does not wish for us to dwell in our failings but is willing to forgive and renew, to purify and redeem. So we can be honest with God and seek Gods transformation.
(*silence*)

Holy God, we know that on our own we fail and fall,
falter and stumble, but we know that with you we can be better.
You call us to be the best we can be, and we know we have failed.
We confess those failings and seek your forgiveness

(silence)

Our holy God has heard our confession,
felt our pain, knows our desires, has forgiven us,
renewed us, freed us, refreshed us.
Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Hymn: Purify my heart, (StF 508)

Purify my heart,
let me be as gold
and precious silver.
Purify my heart,
let me be as gold,
pure gold.

*Refiner's fire,
my heart's one desire
is to be holy,
set apart for you, Lord.
I choose to be holy,
set apart for you my master,
ready to do your will.*

Purify my heart,
cleanse me from within
and make me holy.
Purify my heart,
cleanse me from my sin,
deep within.

Reading: Luke 5:1-11

5 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ²He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”

⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” ¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Reflection:

What a day these fishermen had, in fact what a night and day! They have been toiling away all night with little to show for it, along comes Jesus as they are clearing up for the day, washing and sorting their nets. Jesus is telling people of God, and then he gets into their boat. Jesus is a carpenter, not a fisherman by trade, but he quickly shows the fishermen how it's really done. Obviously, Jesus showing off his fishing skill is not really the point of this story, Jesus isn't trying to humiliate, or even to just help the fisherman have a bumper catch. Rather Jesus is trying to encourage and indeed trying to point towards what is possible with God... Like Isaiah 6 this is at its heart a story of being called by God, it's a story of invitation to share in God's life and work. The fishermen are called to leave what is familiar and to have it transformed into something bigger, something greater, something of more value. They are called no longer simply to catch fish, but to 'fish for people'. Called to share the good news of God's love, to be part of a bigger community, be part of God's

abundance, just like the abundance they found in their nets when they trusted in Jesus and put their nets back into the water.

If we see it as a story of call then we might notice that the initial response from Simon is rather hesitant, a bit like Isaiah, Simon Peter is reluctant and though he calls Jesus Master he is all too aware of the reasons why he can't, or shouldn't follow... He is aware of his own limits, which are in stark contrast to the abundant gifts of Jesus. Jesus has given this great sign of what is possible with him, he has produced a miraculously large catch of fish, but for Simon its just more of a reminder that he doesn't feel worthy. The story tells us of Simon's very human response. Simon who is very much like Isaiah, both in the face of God's power and majesty, recognises their deep need, their inadequacy, their 'sin'. As a result, Simon rather than responding to Jesus' call by saying '*great Jesus what a wonderful thing you've done, yes I'll follow you*' turns to Jesus saying "*Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!*" – he knows he needs mercy. Jesus responds, as Jesus so often does, with grace, with comfort, with encouragement. Luke records: 'Don't be afraid from now on you will fish for people', so they pulled their boats up on the shore they left everything and followed him.' There is something in Jesus' invitation and encouragement that leads them to change, to be able to leave behind their fear, their sense of inadequacy, or unworthiness and to follow...

So what about you, what might these stories be saying to you today? You might want to sit and ponder for a few moments...

We may not be in the temple, or on the shoreline but listen for God drawing near to you... *Pause and ponder...*

May you know God's encouragement when you need it, may you be open to God's voice and call and may you be ready to listen, to follow and to fish (for people) as we share in God's life in the world today. **Amen**

Hymn: I, the Lord of sea and sky, (StF 663)

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.

Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord.

Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord,

if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them.

Whom shall I send?

I, the Lord of wind and flame,

I will tend the poor and lame.

I will set a feast for them.

My hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.

I will give my life to them.

Whom shall I send?

Prayers of Intercession:

Let us pray,

God of power and holiness, we pray for those whom you have entrusted with prophetic messages for your world.

Those called to speak out against governments that are cruel, oppressive or unjust.

Those who work in the political sphere speaking out for those whose voice is weak.

Those bringing fresh insights, asking challenging questions and provoking thought.

Loving God open the ears of your people so that we might truly hear you.

God of wisdom and salvation, we pray for the Church which you have entrusted with the truths of faith.

We pray for those beginning their Christian journey, those keen to learn of you and your ways of love.

We pray for those whose faith is being tested, by illness, bereavement, or the suffering of others.

For those who cling onto faith though others around ridicule them.

For those who must hold their faith privately for fear of persecution.

Loving God open the ears of your people so that we might truly hear you.

God of inspiration and love, we pray for your children whom you have entrusted with the gospel of your unfailing love.

We pray for those who express it in loving concern for those around and in acts of service.

We pray for those called to preach, teach and lead others.

For those who seek to be an example of you in their daily work and life.

Loving God open the ears of your people that we may truly hear you.

(name before God those people, places and situations on your heart this day)

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: O Jesus, I have promised (StF 563)

O Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
Lord, be for ever near me,
my master and my friend;
I shall not fear the battle
if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if you will be my guide.

O let me feel you near me;
the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,

the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me, and within;
but, Jesus, now draw nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear you speaking
in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
Lord, speak, and make me listen,
O guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, you have promised
to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory
your servant shall be too;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow
my master and my friend.

Concluding Prayer:

Gracious and holy God, continue to speak to us with gentle tones of grace. Bless us with your mercy and forgiveness, encourage us on life's way. Help us to trust you for today, for tomorrow and for every day.

Know God's grace and peace, the love of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen

Some material adapted from © Roots for Churches

Sunday 16th February 2025 – 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This service has been compiled by Rev'd Liz Singleton

Opening words:

Let us worship God,
who has called us here
to think and be and wonder and grow,
in this space, this place, where all are welcome.

Hymn: All creatures of our God and King (StF 99)

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing,
alleluia, alleluia !
O burning sun with golden beam,
and silver moon with softer gleam :

*O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia !*

O rushing wind that is so strong,
and clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia !
O rising morn, in praise rejoice ;
and lights of evening, find a voice :

O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
sing 'Praise him, alleluia !'
O fire, so masterful and bright,
giving to all both warmth and light :

Dear mother earth, who day by day
unfolds rich blessings on our way,
O praise him, alleluia !
The flowers and fruits that bloom and grow,
let them his glory also show :

And all who are of tender heart
forgiving others, take your part,
sing, 'Praise him, alleluia !'
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God, and on him cast your care :

And now, most kind and gentle death,
waiting to hush our fading breath,
O praise him, alleluia !
You homeward lead the child of God,
and Christ the Lord the way has trod :

Let all things their creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness ;
O praise him, alleluia !
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One :

Prayer:

Almighty, everlasting God, you give us good ground to grow in,
rich and full of life.

You are our foundation, our rock, our scaffold.

You support us and uphold us.

You soothe our pains, are balm to our suffering,
a comfort in our distress and hope eternal.

You stand with us, walk with us, talk with us,
feed us and quench our thirst.

You bless us day by day and we worship and adore you.

Amen

Our first reading today is Psalm 1. It is one of the so called 'wisdom' psalms that explore the meaning of life, focussing particularly on the problematic question – why do God's people suffer while the wicked prosper? In the psalms the wicked are considered to be those who are opposed to God and so also opposed to God's people. In Psalm 1 these people are described as being like 'chaff that the winds blows away.' In contrast those who are in a good relationship with God have stability and

feel secure because they are living God's way and God is watching over them.

The picture is of healthy plants that have all they need to grow and to flourish. The imagery of a tree suggests deep-rootedness and so resilience, the ability to stay standing and to live despite hardships and storms.

Reading: Psalm 1 NLT

Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.

But they delight in the law of the LORD,
meditating on it day and night.

They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.

Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.

But not the wicked!

They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.

They will be condemned at the time of judgment.

Sinners will have no place among the godly.

For the LORD watches over the path of the godly,
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

A Thought:

Trees grow best when they grow alongside other trees, especially those with which they have something in common eg those of the same species. Isolated trees have shorter lifespans than those in a forest. Below the surface their roots are entwined and they nourish each other, sharing food and water. What does this say to us about the significance of growing deep roots of faith and the need to nourish and sustain one another?

Hymn: A charge to keep I have (StF 658)

A charge to keep I have :

a God to glorify ;

a never-dying soul to save,

and fit it for the sky ;

To serve the present age,

my calling to fulfil ;

O may it all my powers engage

to do my Master's will !

Arm me with jealous care,

as in your sight to live ;

and O your servant, Lord, prepare

a strict account to give !

Help me to watch and pray,

and on yourself rely,

so shall I not my trust betray,

nor love within me die.

Our second reading from Luke's gospel is often titled the 'Sermon on the Plain.' Shorter than Matthew's 'Sermon on the Mount', it has a more practical rather than spiritual focus. Luke had a huge heart for the poor and the marginalised and these words stress his concern for justice for those on the edge of society. He stresses the better future that awaits those who suffer now and the contrasting woes, not present in Matthew's version, point us away from complacency and back to the need to be in good relationship with God and so being in tune with his concern of justice for all.

Reading: Luke 6: 17 – 26 NLT

When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus on a large, level area, surrounded by many of his followers and by the crowds. There were people from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from as far north as the seacoasts of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those troubled by evil

spirits were healed. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.

The Beatitudes:

Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

“God blesses you who are poor,
for the Kingdom of God is yours.
God blesses you who are hungry now,
for you will be satisfied.
God blesses you who weep now,
for in due time you will laugh.

What blessings await you when people hate you and exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way.

Sorrows Foretold

What sorrow awaits you who are rich,
for you have your only happiness now.
What sorrow awaits you who are fat and prosperous now,
for a time of awful hunger awaits you.
What sorrow awaits you who laugh now,
for your laughing will turn to mourning and sorrow.
What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds,
for their ancestors also praised false prophets.

Reflection:

For many in our society today, being rich and famous is the aim. Advertising suggests that we need to have the latest phone or gadget, up-to-date fashion items, a dream house, a fast car and a luxury holiday. It's suggested to us that without these our lives are somehow impoverished. We're persuaded to think that we are missing out, even underachieving. Social media especially would have us believe that being a celebrity – be it

a film star, football player or social media 'influencer' – is seen as a pinnacle of achievement.

Our readings this week present us with a very different picture. In Psalm 1, the 'happy' and successful are those deeply rooted in a relationship with God. Looking to God for guidance is the strapline here not some punchy advertising blurb superimposed over an attractive picture of a villa or a sports car or a bottle of perfume. The things that the society around us seems to think we can't possibly survive without!

And Jesus' words in Luke's Gospel are just as counter-cultural and 'topsy-turvy'. They challenge the principles that are so prevalent in society. He tells us that the poor, the hungry, the weeping and the reviled are the ones being blessed and rewarded in heaven. And it is the rich, the well-fed, the laughing and the popular who are the ones who are unfortunate and distressed.

Luke's audience is made up of the poor and outcast of society, people often with little status, and those who were not Jewish. At that time there was, as today, a big divide between rich and poor. The distribution of wealth and status left many in poverty both physically and politically. This injustice is a key factor in Luke's account of Jesus' words.

In addressing the poor and the hungry, Jesus is reaching out to those struggling to make ends meet. He speaks to people who are weeping, acknowledging the pain and suffering caused by injustice. He recognises a broken society and the hardships experienced by those who have little or no status, and no voice to challenge or bring about change. And he calls these people 'blessed', promising that the injustices they endure now will be eradicated.

Lifestyle and attitude changes are needed for the kingdom values taught by Jesus to be experienced by all. Think about those who have built up riches, power, status? Jesus' repetition of the phrase 'woe to you' indicates that a time will come when these people will be called to account. What they have gained will be reversed. They will suffer as they

have caused suffering. Living in a society where kingdom values prevail will deny these people the power and status they built and they will feel their loss.

What is the challenge to us today? Are we 'rooted' in superficial values, surface things that will pass away? Or are our roots deep in God's word and living out the values of God's kingdom?

Hymn: Speak, O Lord, as we come to you (StF 161)

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us ;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail ;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds ;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.

Prayers:

Knowing our need of God,
let us pray.

Father, we bring to mind our Church,
our Circuit, and the Church throughout the world.
It is for right values and right priorities
that we pray, in all that we decide and do.

Lord our God:

in you we put our trust.

We bring to mind all who lead and govern,
and all meetings where important decisions are made.
We pray that justice and mercy are upheld
in line with your loving will.

Lord our God:

in you we put our trust.

We bring to mind our own circle of family and friends
with whom we share the good
and the difficult times.
We pray for the grace to discern more readily
the good in each person
and the gifts they have to offer.

Lord our God:

in you we put our trust.

We bring to mind those caught up
in the frenetic pressures of life,
and those who are stressed to breaking point.
We pray for insight and courage to change things.

Lord our God:

in you we put our trust.

We bring to mind the sick and the dying,
especially those who are alone,
and we remember those we know who have died.

May they and we share
in the everlasting joy of your presence.

Lord our God:

in you we put our trust.

We thank you for all the wise teaching
you have given us through Christ.
Give us grace to be doers of the word
and not just hearers.

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

'Roots' by Pat Marsh

My child,
though you may not know it
I have brought you to this place in your life
for a purpose.

I have been with you always,
though you have not always known it,
and all that you have been through
has been leading you
to that which you now are.

And all that is still to be
rests safely in my hands.

I love you with a love so great;
infinitely greater than you can imagine.
The love that you have glimpsed
is just a fraction
of the immeasurable love I have
for you.

Like a delicate, tender bud
you hold within you
the secret promise of a beautiful flower yet to bloom.

Allow yourself to blossom, child.

Let the life that is in you
grow as it should.

Put down strong roots
into the richly fertile soil of your experience.

Let me nourish you
with the life-giving water of my love
and sustain you
with the sunshine of my peace.

Trust in me

and let yourself grow
into that which you were born to be.

Hymn: Teach me to dance (StF 477)

*Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart,
teach me to move in the power of your Spirit,
teach me to walk in the light of your presence,
teach me to dance to the beat of your heart.
Teach me to love with your heart of compassion,
teach me to trust in the word of your promise,
teach me to hope in the day of your coming,
teach me to dance to the beat of your heart.*

You wrote the rhythm of life,
created heaven and earth ;
in you is joy without measure.
So, like a child in your sight,
I dance to see your delight,
for I was made for your pleasure,
pleasure.

Teach me to dance...

Let all my movements express
a heart that loves to say 'yes,'
a will that leaps to obey you.
Let all my energy blaze
to see the joy in your face,
let my whole being praise you,
praise you.

Teach me to dance ...

Prayer:

Life-giving God,
keep us well rooted in you,
so we can grow and be strong
through all that happens this week.
As you encourage us,
may we encourage others to live and grow well.

Amen

Sunday 23rd February 2025 – 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This service has been compiled by Rev'd Joy Ventom

Call to Worship:

We are called into this place, at this time,
to worship: God who loves us;
Christ who teaches us,
and the Holy Spirit who enables us.
Let's be ready to respond
to the generosity of God.

Hymn: Great God your love has called us here (StF 499)

Great God, your love has called us here,
as we, by love for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

We come with self-inflicted pains
of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half-free, half-bound by inner chains,
by social forces swept along,
by powers and systems close confined,
yet seeking hope for humankind.

Great God, in Christ you call our name
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right or claim,
but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.

Then take the towel and break the bread
and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends

to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do
while love is making all things new.

Brian Wren (b.1936)

Prayers of Adoration and Confession:

God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you have given us far more than we ever could have imagined.
We trace the history of your people through the Scriptures,
learning from the devotion of prophets, priests and kings;
disciples, apostles and followers,
and readers, writers and companions on the way.
You help us see our purpose in your creation:
to love and care for the earth that feeds us,
to cherish the gifts we have and to love those we live alongside.
With joy and with gladness we worship you

Lord, the world around us is in a sorry state.
We see the effects of climate change affecting the poor the most.
Forgive us for our misuse of the earth's resource.

Lord, **forgive.**

We see people in some parts of the world crying out in hunger.
Forgive us for so much unequal sharing and wasting so much.

Lord, **forgive.**

We see wars and conflicts around the world destroying
lives and futures.

Forgive us for not speaking out for peace.

Lord, **forgive.**

We see the strong and powerful bullying the powerless.
Forgive us for not standing up to those who misuse
their authority.

Lord, **forgive.**

God forgives us and understands our regrets and our hopes.
Let us go in peace and love to serve our generous God.
Amen.

Poem: A Gift From God

Love can't be described.
It has no shape, it has no form.
Love is not an object.
Love does not conform.

Love enters our lives
The moment we are born.
From the cradle to the grave,
Love's in everyone.

Love burns like a candle
That sometimes flickers but never dies.
Love may be invisible,
Although it's right before your eyes.

Love can leave you empty,
Love can make you whole.
Love can make or break you,
Love is in your soul.

Love is in your heart,
Love is in your mind.
Love doesn't discriminate,
Love is always blind.

Love is universal,
It encompasses the globe.
No matter where you are,
Love has a language all its own.

Love is all around you.
There's plenty of love to spare.
You cannot see or touch it,
But love is everywhere.

Love's the greatest power,
And yet it is so small.
Love's a gift from God
To be shared amongst us all.

John P. Read. "A Gift From God." Family Friend Poems, October 27, 2014.
<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/loves-a-gift-from-god>

Hymn: Let love be real (StF 615)

Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
without the need to manage and to own;
a haven free from posing and pretending,
where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
give me your love wherever we may go:

*As God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
that strange embrace that holds yet sets us free;
that helps us face the risk of truly living,
and makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my words are weakness,
give me your love in spite of all you know:

*As God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Let love be real, with no manipulation,
no secret wish to harness or control;
let us accept each other's incompleteness,
and share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and disappointments,
give me your trust when all my failings show:

*As God loves us, so let us love each other,
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.*

Michael Forster (b.1946)

Bible Readings:

Psalm 37.1-11,39-40;

A psalm of David.

¹ Don't worry about the wicked
or envy those who do wrong.

² For like grass, they soon fade away.
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.

³ Trust in the Lord and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

⁴ Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you your heart's desires.

⁵ Commit everything you do to the Lord.
Trust him, and he will help you.

⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,
and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

⁷ Be still in the presence of the Lord,
and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.

⁸ Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.

⁹ For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land.

¹⁰ Soon the wicked will disappear.
Though you look for them, they will be gone.

¹¹ The lowly will possess the land
and will live in peace and prosperity.

³⁹ The Lord rescues the godly;
he is their fortress in times of trouble.

⁴⁰ The Lord helps them,
rescuing them from the wicked.

He saves them,
and they find shelter in him.

Luke 6.27-38

²⁷ “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. ³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. ³¹ Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

³² “If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! ³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! ³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.

³⁵ “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

³⁷ “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back. [a]”

Sermon:

The words in this passage from Luke 6 seem to be so counter-cultural:

- Is Luke overstating or exaggerating the expected reactions in the situations he mentions?
- Might he be grabbing our attention to encourage us to look at our motivation to act, and challenge what might have become our and society’s norm?
- Maybe he wants us to look at what happens to us if we build up animosity towards our enemies and those who wrong us.

- What happens if we build up anger and a sense of being cheated or a sense of complacency or lack of compassion when faced with those less fortunate than us?
- Where is our desire to love and be and do like Christ?

Jesus' teaching here has a focus on the actions and responsibilities of the people of God, people who are learning to live by kingdom values. In the bigger picture, is Jesus encouraging us to take our eyes off ourselves and look at the people around us? In shifting our focus, we become more aware of the needs of others and become open to sharing the love God has shown to us with others, both those we like and those with whom we may have a more strained relationship. These are the actions coming out of a spirit of generosity, a generosity that has already been shown to us through Christ's love and is developing in us as we try to live by his values. As we interact with others, we too can expect to be recipients of generosity. The generosity shown goes beyond what can be earned or bought. It goes beyond what is deserved or not deserved. It is generosity echoing the generosity of God who loves unconditionally.

This is echoed in verse 31 – 'do to others as you would have them do to you' – and is also echoed at the end of the passage when we are encouraged to act as we would like others to act towards us. How grateful are we when we are shown generosity of spirit, when we are treated not as we deserve? This is how God treats us, showing mercy and love. When we treat others with the same mercy and love we are responding with the same generosity as shown by God. We are also beneficiaries of these actions as bitterness, hatred, unforgiveness and retribution can rob us of peace and fellowship with God. Although the passage can be seen to be overstating our expected generosity, it is with the aim of making our relationship with God our life focus, rather than material wealth and status.

Hymn: The Kingdom of God (StF 255)

The kingdom of God
is justice and joy;
For Jesus restores
what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory

in Jesus we know;
And here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace;
The prisoners are freed,
the sinners find place,
The outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share;
And hope is awakened
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice:
Believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
God's love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross:
Our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal;
In Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole.
The heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call;
And all things cry "Glory!"
to God all in all.

Bryn Rees (1911-1983)

Prayer of Thanks:

Praise to the Lord in whom we trust.
Give thanks to the Lord who puts trust into our hands.
Praise the Lord who blesses us with happiness.
Give thanks to the Lord that we can share it with others.
Praise the Lord for being patient with us.
Give thanks to the Lord that we are taught patience

with each other.

For all God's blessings to us,
seen and unseen, known and unknown,
we give thanks and praise.

Amen.

Offering (If LA)

Intercessions:

Loving Lord, the people of old looked to you to rescue them from Roman oppression. But instead of being the conquering heroic messiah they expected, you were, and are, The Messiah like no other: conqueror of the enemies of sin and death through the cross with forgiveness and immeasurable love.

We pray for your church. For all people under oppression today because of their faith. For Christians being persecuted and imprisoned around the world.

We pray for all around the world living amid conflict; the innocent victims fearing for their survival. We pray also for those who seek to conquer others. We think particularly of those places facing war and unrest. Loving Lord, release Christians from captivity. Soften the hearts of the persecutors. Overcome the enemy with your love. Bring peace and unity. Lord, fill all with the measure of your love.

Lord, we pray for people at war with enemies within. We pray for people today fighting inner turmoil. Those riddled with self-loathing, doubts or regrets. Those struggling with anger issues. We pray for others fuelled by the enemies of drink, gambling, drugs.

Loving Lord, release all who suffer, all who are stuck fast in addiction. And strengthen those who fight to remain free of such enemies. Lord, fill all with the measure of your love.

Lord, we pray for all those in the clutches of debt and all those fearing the spiralling cost of living. We pray for our communities as shops and other amenities struggle to survive.

We pray for the sick and the housebound.

For those who are waiting for medical appointment or having treatment at home or in hospital.

Loving Lord, release all from their worries and fears. Heal, strengthen and provide.

Lord, fill all with the measure of your love.

Loving Lord, you bid us love one another; the good and the bad. We pray for those who have wronged us. May we measure with love not judgement. Lord, fill all with the measure of your love. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Here the call of the kingdom (StF 407)

Hear the call of the kingdom
Lift your eyes to the King
Let His song rise within you
As a fragrant offering
Of how God rich in mercy
Came in Christ to redeem
All who trust in His unfailing grace

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To be children of light
With the mercy of heaven
The humility of Christ
Walking justly before Him
Loving all that is right
That the life of Christ may shine through us

*King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name*

Hear the call of the Kingdom
To reach out to the lost
With the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the cross
Bringing peace and forgiveness
And a hope yet to come
Let the nations put their trust in Him

*King of Heaven we will answer the call
We will follow bringing hope to the world
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
Salvation in Jesus' name*

Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980) & Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Closing Prayer:

Help me to be forgiving
when others are unfair or unkind or unfriendly.
Help me to show a generosity of spirit
in the way I respond to others,
for that is how you treat me.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all,
now and evermore. **Amen.**

Our printed services do not include an offering but if you feel you would like to respond to God's love in this way please contact the treasurer of your church or contact the Circuit Office. Thank you.

If you no longer wish to receive this printed sheet, could you let either your Minister or the Circuit Office (tel: 01782 612648 e-mail: northstaffscircuit@hotmail.co.uk) know please, or equally, please let us know if there's someone you know who would like to receive it.

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