

North Staffordshire Circuit (11/22)

Service Sheets For the Month of January 2026

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Sunday 4th January 2026 – ‘Epiphany’

This service has been compiled by Rev’d James Pritchard

Opening Prayer

Yours O God is the glory the majesty, the power and authority. Open our hearts to worship you and to offer you our worship this day. Amen

Hymn: Joy to the world, the Lord is come! (StF 330)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King;

let every heart prepare him room,

and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!

Let all their songs employ;

while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains

repeat the sounding joy,

repeat the sounding joy,

repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,

and makes the nations prove

the glories of his righteousness

and wonders of his love,

and wonders of his love,

and wonders, wonders of his love.

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

A Prayer of Thanks and Praise: ‘Almighty God, praise be to you.’

Holy God, we bring you our praise.

We give you thanks for the blessings you have poured out upon us,
for the difference you have made to our lives.

For gifts beyond measure: not the gold, frankincense and myrrh

the wise men brought to Jesus at Epiphany,

but gifts of forgiveness way beyond what we deserve,

for love everlasting, light in our darkness and hope in our despair.

Almighty God, **praise be to you.**

We give thanks for the constancy of your being, eternal, unchanging, reliable and secure, which grounds us when life around us seems constantly in flux. You are the God of all time beyond us and our expectations at yet present and closer than our breath. Almighty God, **praise be to you.**

We give thanks for the glimpses we catch of you unexpectedly as we go about our daily living. Glimpses in the light and in the dark. Glimpses that uphold and sustain us. Glimpses of your love and light. Almighty God, **praise be to you.**

We thank you for the wonder of being able to know you and know that we are loved by you - loved so much that you entered fully into our lives. And so, we offer you the thanks and praise of our hearts.

(consider what might you want to offer thanks or praise today?)

A Prayer of Confession:

Loving God, as we remember your goodness we acknowledge too our need of your grace and mercy. We turn to you again seeking your forgiveness as we pause in confession.

(pause to remember our need of forgiveness)

Eternal God, as we start this new year, we confess our failings and our shortcomings.

We confess that so often we pack your challenges away with the Christmas cards and wrapping paper. We do not explore your gift of your very self enough, we do not always let the knowledge of you coming amongst us change us, you have promised so much to us, so we desire to be the people you want us to be, and to live the best life we can.

By the birth, death and resurrection of Christ we are set free, our sins are forgiven. So we receive more of God's grace offered freely to us, may we know ourselves forgiven by our loving God. We thank you for your Grace and ask that the power of your Spirit might continue to live and work in us and bring the light of your love into every part of our lives. **Amen.**

Introduction to Reading from Isaiah 60

In the aftermath of the return from exile (around 520 BC), life back in the land of Israel is not great. In chapter 60 of Isaiah the writer articulates

what God will do for the people and consequently what his people are called to be in the world. The whole chapter is an amazing portrayal of the nations flocking to the mountain of the Lord bringing the fruits of their industry and culture to lay at the feet of God.

In this context, the chapter is good news to the returned exiles. Their capital city still lies ruined, and they lack the resources to rebuild it however, God promises not only that more of their own shall return to the city, but also that the nations are coming with the very abundance they lack. It is a time for joy and celebration. As Judah lifts her eyes to see what God is doing, she breaks into a broad grin and a song of praise that has begun on the lips of those bringing their treasures into the city.

Reading Isaiah 60:1-6 New International Version - UK

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

²For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

³Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you;

your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

⁵Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

⁶A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Hymn: As with gladness men of old (StF 224)

As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold,
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright,
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,
Saviour, to thy lowly bed,
there to bend the knee before
thee, whom heaven and earth adore,
so may we with willing feet
ever seek thy mercy-seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
at thy cradle rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy,
pure, and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way;
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown,
thou its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
alleluias to our King.

William Chatterton Dix (1837–1898)

Introduction to the reading from Matthew 2:1-12

Matthew tells us the story of the Magi or wise men. In his gospel he often quotes or alludes to Isaiah, he echoes the prophet's vision in the way he frames this story, a story unique to his Gospel. The magi mirror what the nations did in Isaiah 60 in bringing their gifts, here they bring them to Jesus to mark his significance for the whole world and not just Israel. As in Isaiah's vision, so here events in the backwater of Judea have world-changing potential.

This story is rooted in the messy politics of our world: the magi went to pay their respects to Herod – they were in his territory and protocol

demanded it. Matthew makes much of the nation's religious leaders telling Herod where the Messiah is to be born. They quote Micah 5:2 with its message of a king from the line of David, but that is not what the magi had asked – they had travelled to mark the birth of a Judean king. The passage continues in order to show that the child they were led to is of global significance, a figure worthy of their worship – suddenly their gifts felt profoundly appropriate. Not just gold for a king and incense for worship but myrrh, generally associated with death (but a costly spice in itself). God intervenes directly at this point, telling them not to make a return visit to Herod and risk the king's anger being unleashed.

Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Hymn: Brightest and best of the sons of the morning, (StF 227)

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us your aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;
low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
vainly with gifts would his favour secure;
richer by far is the heart's adoration;
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us your aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid. Reginald Heber (1783–1826)

Reflection:

‘For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.’ Isaiah 60:2

‘Thick darkness.’ Close your eyes for a while and think of those two words. *Thick darkness.* What does it look like, what does it feel like? Thick darkness is a phrase that describes a state of intense darkness, making it difficult or impossible to see. It can also be used figuratively to describe situations of fear, uncertainty, or despair – maybe there have been times life has felt like that for you. In Isaiah 60, the author talks about a darkness that would cover the earth, and a thick darkness that would cover the peoples. Can you relate to those words or images? Have you ever felt like

you were covered in thick darkness? Or maybe, as you look at your community, or at the news, you can see people who are currently experiencing ‘thick darkness’?

If there was an opposite phrase or image for thick darkness, we might also find it in Isaiah 60. The author paints the picture of the light from God, which is bright, beautiful, and all-consuming. It’s a light that eradicates thick darkness, a light that draws nations and kings to it, a light that brings rejoicing.

The author of Isaiah 60 calls the Israelites to ‘*Arise, shine*’ for the glory of the Lord was to rise upon them. These were people who had experienced thick darkness in exile, and even though they were back on home soil, life was still difficult. Even in the midst of the darkness, they were called to shine God’s light, not just on each other but on all people. They were also called to do this in an active way, in a way that would draw nations and kings to God’s light and in a way that would eradicate the thick darkness that was covering the earth and people.

When was the last time you gazed up at the stars? It might not be a common practice for us, but, in ancient times, stargazing played a pivotal role in navigation, agriculture, weather forecasting and, for some, understanding the will of God. Over 2,000 years ago, a shining star rose in the sky and pointed the way to a new king who had been born. The Magi saw this star and knew that something special was happening. They knew they had to follow the light. And so, they made the long journey and were overwhelmed when they found the very special child – Jesus, the light of the world. In this season of Epiphany, we reflect on Jesus and the light that he brings to the world, and how we may share that light with others.

A New Year is a time to celebrate and reflect. Often, it’s a time to write New Year’s resolutions: things we want to try or change. Often, our resolutions focus on ourselves: I want to lose weight; I want to start a new hobby; I want to travel more. There’s nothing wrong with these resolutions but, today, let’s consider what it might look like if everyone’s New Year’s resolution was the opening words of Isaiah 60 – ‘*Arise, shine!*’

How would our families, communities, churches, and countries change if we were to all actively shine God's light? How would people, living in thick darkness, be impacted by that light? Who would be drawn to that light? This year let's actively seek to shine God's light and to look for it shining in our world.

Prayers of Intercession:

Eternal God, whose birth in human form we have celebrated and welcomed, we gather our thoughts and prayers for those in need at the dawning of this new year; as the old year passes we embrace the new. We pray for the light of your love to shine in our world and for those for whom we pray.

We pray this day for those who have spent a lonely Christmas and those who continue to feel alone or lonely, may they find comfort and peace. We pray for those with no family to turn to, no friends to support them, no neighbours who care; may they find inner strength for the day ahead and companionship in knowing you.

We pray for those whose finances have been stretched beyond bearing by Christmas, and now face a bleak new year of struggle, deprivation and debt. We pray for those whose larders are as empty as their purses, whose hunger makes them as cold as their homes. We pray for those who have no homes to heat and who feel helpless and hopeless and rootless. We pray for those whose Christmas and New Year celebrations have been to excess and yet it brings them no peace, no love, no joy, no purpose and gives them no meaning to life.

We pray for those who feel stranded in a foreign land, a long way from home, uncertain of when and if they may return to their homes. We pray for those whose homes feel empty or changed as the result of the death of a loved one. Those surrounded by the grief of loss through illness or violence. For all those whose celebrations is indelibly scarred by the death of others.

We pray for those whose illness weighs them down in these long dark days of winter. Those who face another year of pain, discomfort and uncertainty because of waiting lists and NHS crises.

We pray for peacekeepers around the world who strive to bring order out of chaos; who strive to turn spears into plough shares; who strive to bring civility to cruelty and abuse.

We pray for those areas of the world in crisis either natural or humanmade. May this year be the time for conflicts to be resolved, care shown and equality experienced.

We pray for those on our hearts and minds in need of prayer at this time, may the light of your love shine upon them and all for whom we pray this day. **Amen.**

You may wish to pray the Lord's Prayer

Hymn: In the bleak midwinter (StF 204)

In the bleak midwinter
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.

Heaven cannot hold him,
nor the earth sustain;
heav'n and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign.

In the bleak midwinter
a stable-place sufficed
God, the Lord Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
throngèd the air —
but his mother only,
in her maiden bliss,

worshipped the Belovèd
with a kiss.

What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him —
give my heart.

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830–1894)

Closing Prayer & Blessing:

O God, we don't have gold and frankincense in our pockets, but we offer to you what we have to share. Bless the gifts we give this season so that they may bring the love of the Christchild into the cold and dark places of the world. And bless our lives too. May we become the gift that others need because we have seen the wonder of your love in Jesus. Bless us and draw near, we pray. Amen.

*Some material drawn from Roots on the web
Closing prayer Nancy Cocks (adapted)*

Sunday 11th January 2026 – Baptism of the Lord

This service has been compiled by Rev'd Joy Ventom

Call to Worship: Psalm 19

(if used in a LA could be said responsively as set out below)

¹ The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.

² **Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known.**

³ They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard.

⁴ **Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world.**

God has made a home in the heavens for the sun.

⁵ It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding. It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run the race.

⁶ **The sun rises at one end of the heavens and follows its course to the other end.**

Nothing can hide from its heat.

⁷ The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul.

The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸ The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living.

⁹ Reverence for the Lord is pure, lasting forever.

The laws of the Lord are true; each one is fair.

¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold.

They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.

¹¹ They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who obey them.

¹² How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults.¹³ Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me.

Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin.

¹⁴ May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Hymn: Born in song (StF 21)

Born in song!

God's people have always been singing.

Born in song!

Hearts and voices raised.

So today we worship together;

God alone is worthy to be praised.

Praise to God!

For he is the one who has made us.

Praise to God!

We his image bear.

Heaven and earth are full of his glory;

let creation praise him everywhere.

Christ is King!

He left all the glory of heaven.

Christ is King!

Born to share in our pain;

crucified, for sinners atoning,

risen, exalted, soon to come again.

Sing the song!

God's Spirit is poured out among us.

Sing the song!

He has made us anew.

Every member part of the Body;

given his power, his will to seek and do.

Tell the world!

All power to Jesus is given.

Tell the world!

He is with us always.

Spread the word, that all may receive him;

every tongue confess and sing his praise.

Then the end!

Christ Jesus shall reign in his glory.

Then the end

of all earthly days.
Yet above the song will continue;
all his people still shall sing his praise.

Prayers:

God of heaven and earth, we kneel in adoration before the mystery made manifest in your Son, Jesus, who stood with us, as one of us.

So, we stand with one another in adoring you by living the way of love and life he showed us, setting us free to serve in the fullness of your grace.

Lord, we confess that we tend to see our calling as individual. 'What would you have me do?' we ask. 'Where might I be best used?' And, of course, that is part of our calling, for you see us as individuals.

We are also called to stand alongside one another in our service, and we sometimes forget this. But you, Father, always see the bigger picture. Forgive us for being so caught up in our own spheres that we fail to see the need to stand with our brothers and sisters, to serve together in the advancement of your kingdom.

Amen.

Hymn: All praise to our redeeming Lord (StF 608)

All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

Ev'n now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;

concentred all, through Jesus' name,
in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what heights of rapture shall we know
when round his throne we meet!

Luke 4:14-21:

¹⁴ Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. ¹⁵ He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. ¹⁶ When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. ¹⁷ The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, ¹⁹ and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. ^[a]" ²⁰ He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. ²¹ Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!

Sermon:

There is a beautiful, profound simplicity in Paul's use of the body as an image of what it means to be part of the body of Christ. We are all equally important. Some of us may already know that we're important. Maybe we have had a childhood and education that helped us to be confident of our own worth. Perhaps we have recognised status in our communities, as a leader, an influencer, a minister, or whatever it is. But not everyone feels like that. Many of us may feel unimportant and not particularly valuable.

Perhaps we are young, queer, black, poor, disabled, female, mentally distressed. Maybe we are homeless, or refugees. Perhaps we struggle with addiction or have been abused or imprisoned. How extraordinary and powerful it is, then, to hear Paul's confident assertion that we are actually indispensable and will be treated with greater honour and respect! How affirming and strengthening does that feel?

Jesus makes it clear that the 'weaker' members of the body are those he has come to help. If we are poor, he will bring us good news. If we are imprisoned, he will release us. If we are blind, he will restore our sight and if we are oppressed, he will set us free.

But what does this actually mean? How does this liberation happen?

Oscar Romero showed us one way. As the Roman Catholic Archbishop of El Salvador, although from a humble background himself, his role put him on a par with the rich, ruling elite. This was in the 1970s and 80s, a time when there was massive inequality between the rich land-owning minority and the poor majority in South America. Worker priests, exploring the meaning of Bible passages such as today's readings, were teaching a gospel that had a 'bias to the poor' and challenged the government to reform.

Archbishop Romero was dramatically converted to this view when his friend and fellow priest, Fr Rutilio Grande, was murdered by the security forces for his activism with the poor. Romero began to teach what is known now as liberation theology. He explains it like this: 'A building is on fire and you're watching it burn, standing and wondering if everyone is safe. Then someone tells you that your mother and your sister are inside that building. Your attitude changes completely. You're frantic; your mother and sister are burning and you'd do anything to rescue them even at the cost of getting charred. That's what it means to be truly committed. If we look at poverty from the outside, as if we're looking at a fire, that's not to opt for the poor, no matter how concerned we may be. We should get inside as if our own mother and sister were burning. Indeed it's Christ who is there, hungry and suffering.'

This is the challenge for us today. To 'get inside' poverty and oppression, as though it were our family, indeed Christ, who is suffering... to demonstrate our bias for the poor.

Hymn: God's spirit is in my heart (StF 404)

God's spirit is in my heart;
he has called me and set me apart.
This is what I have to do,
what I have to do:

*He sent me to give the good news to the poor,
tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,
tell blind people that they can see,
and set the down trodden free,
and go tell everyone the news that the
kingdom of God has come;
and go tell everyone
the news that God's kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,
So I'm sending you out to be,
my witnesses throughout the world,
the whole of the world:

Don't carry a load in your pack;
you don't need two shirts on your back;
a workman can earn his own keep,
can earn his own keep.

Don't worry what you have to say;
don't worry because on that day
God's spirit will speak in your heart
will speak in your heart.

Offering (if an LA)

Intercessions:

We remember creation, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: places of beauty and brilliance, places of grandeur and spectacle, places of extravagant diversity. We pray, creating God, for places damaged and degraded for people scraping a living from land made fruitless by human greed.

Help us to live sparingly and to care for creation.

Gracious God: **Hear our prayer.**

We remember humanity, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: people of beauty and brilliance, people of gifts and grace, people of extravagant diversity. We pray, healing God, for people whose lives are diminished because they live with their own or another's mental illness; for people facing the stigma caused by misunderstanding about mental illness; for people struggling to find help when they need it.

Help us to be welcoming, helpful and more aware of those things that make for mental well being for others and ourselves.

Gracious God: **Hear our prayer.**

We remember the Church, breathed into life by God's Holy Spirit: a community of beauty and brilliance a community of love and compassion a community of extravagant diversity. We pray, inspiring God, for denominations working out how to be one family, offering an effective witness to your love in the world; for churches with projects that offer help to people struggling with mental illness; for ourselves and people in our own families and community who need to be understood, accepted and loved.

Help us to be willing to change ourselves and inspired to change the world. Gracious God: Hear our prayer.

In the name of Christ. **Amen**

We join our prayers together as we say the Lord's Prayer
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: O for a thousand tongues to sing (StF 364)

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through' all the earth abroad
the honours of your name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean;
his blood availed for me.

He speaks and listening to his voice,
New life the dead receive
The mournful broken hearts rejoice
The humble poor believe.

See all your sins on Jesus laid
The lamb of God was slain
His soul was once an offering made
That all may heaven gain.

In Christ, our head you then shall know
Shall feel your sins forgiven
Anticipate your heaven below
And own that love is heaven.

Blessing:

God, you call us to be the body of Christ in this place. Side by side, hand in hand, help us to stand together, to stand with our neighbours, to break free from all that holds us back from making the world as you want it to be. In Jesus' name. **Amen**

Sunday 18th January 2026 – The Second Sunday of Epiphany/ The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

This service has been compiled by Rev'd Liz Singleton

Everywhere we go there are sights and sounds,
things to look at, things to hear, things to notice.
Sometimes, in the busyness of our surroundings,
we miss seeing God,
we miss noticing the things that God is doing,
we miss being aware of God's people making a difference.
Today, let's come and see,
and be open to what God may reveal to us.

Hymn: Be still and know that I am God (StF 18)

Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.

In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.
In you, O Lord, I put my trust.

Prayer:

Ever present God, you invite us to come and see
your creativity in our world,
revealing the hidden **and shining your light**.
Lord Jesus, you invite us to listen to your words
and to learn from your teaching,
revealing the hidden **and shining your light**.
Holy Spirit, you invite us to come and see
where you are at work in our world today,
revealing the hidden **and shining your light**.

God of daring and diversity,
may we add our voices to the song of praise of all Christians.
Help us to open our hearts
to receive the treasures hidden in your living Word.
Give us the courage to share those treasures with others
and to reflect your love to those around us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Today's first reading talks about being delivered from despondency and how that generates in the writer a renewed sense of God's call on his life. He shares what this experience has been like with the rest of the congregation, hoping to stir them take seriously the call of God and encouraging them to respond.

OT Reading: Psalm 40 NLT

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.
He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see what he has done and be amazed.
They will put their trust in the LORD.

Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD,
who have no confidence in the proud
or in those who worship idols.
O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us.
Your plans for us are too numerous to list.
You have no equal.
If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds,
I would never come to the end of them.
You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings.
Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand —
you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings.

Then I said, “Look, I have come.

As is written about me in the Scriptures:

I take joy in doing your will, my God,
for your instructions are written on my heart.”

I have told all your people about your justice.

I have not been afraid to speak out,
as you, O LORD, well know.

I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my heart;

I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power.

I have told everyone in the great assembly
of your unfailing love and faithfulness.

LORD, don’t hold back your tender mercies from me.

Let your unfailing love and faithfulness always protect me.

For troubles surround me—

too many to count!

My sins pile up so high

I can’t see my way out.

They outnumber the hairs on my head.

I have lost all courage.

Please, LORD, rescue me!

Come quickly, LORD, and help me.

May those who try to destroy me

be humiliated and put to shame.

May those who take delight in my trouble

be turned back in disgrace.

Let them be horrified by their shame,

for they said, “Aha! We’ve got him now!”

But may all who search for you

be filled with joy and gladness in you.

May those who love your salvation

repeatedly shout, “The LORD is great!”

As for me, since I am poor and needy,

let the Lord keep me in his thoughts.

You are my helper and my saviour.
O my God, do not delay.

Hymn: The love of God comes close (StF 654)

The love of God comes close
where stands an open door
to let the stranger in,
to mingle rich and poor.
*The love of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk his way.*

The peace of God comes close
to those caught in the storm,
foregoing lives of ease
to ease the lives forlorn.
*The peace of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk his way.*

The joy of God comes close
where faith encounters fears,
where heights and depths of life
are found through smiles and tears.
*The joy of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk his way.*

The grace of God comes close
to those whose grace is spent,
when hearts are tired or sore
and hope is bruised and bent.
*The grace of God is here to stay,
embracing those who walk his way.*

The Son of God comes close
where people praise his name,
where bread and wine are blest
and shared as when he came.
*The Son of God is here to stay
embracing those who walk his way.*

The Gospel reading also picks up on the theme of God renewing people and equipping them to be a light to the nations through Jesus. John has just baptised Jesus, has seen the Holy Spirit come upon him, and now the focus shifts from all that John has been doing to Jesus, and what he is about to do. Jesus offers an invitation to two potential followers and, intrigued by what John has said and what Jesus might do, they go with him and the rest, as the saying goes, is history!

NT Reading: John 1: 29 – 42

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.’ I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.”

Then John testified, “I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. I didn’t know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God.”

The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, “Look! There is the Lamb of God!” When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them.

They replied, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

“Come and see,” he said. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”).

Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, “Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas” (which means “Peter”).

Reflection:

‘What do you want?’ or ‘What are you looking for?’ Jesus asks the two disciples of John. When they reply ‘Where are you staying?’ Jesus invites them to ‘Come and see.’ Being with Jesus, spending time with him, is the only real way of getting to learn from him and to discover how we might work in partnership with him. Faith isn’t not about believing in facts, although to know the stories is helpful. No, faith is having a living and real relationship with Jesus.

I don’t know about you, but when I have a special relationship with someone I want others to meet that person. And that’s how it was for Andrew. He went off to tell his brother, Simon, about what had happened and then took Simon to meet Jesus for himself. Andrew would go on to bring the boy with five barley loaves, a group of Greeks, and many others to Jesus. It’s the greatest gift any of us can offer Jesus – to bring someone to him.

St Augustine said that we cannot even begin to seek God unless he has already found us. In other words, God does not hide from us but is always seeking us and comes to meet us when we seek him. And that’s where we come in. Those who are seeking God often struggle and need some help and bringing them to Jesus is the least we can do. By the way we live, the way we talk, the way we interact with others we can show them who Jesus is – that’s what it means to evangelise.

A lot is said these days about the Church being in trouble – there aren’t enough ministers, the money is running out, people aren’t coming to worship any more. Well, the answer is quite simple. The Church needs more Andrews! More people who spend time with Jesus and then bring others to him. The Church grew from twelve disciples who knew Jesus and wanted others to know him. Just think how quickly the Church would grow if we each committed to bringing someone else to know Jesus.

Hymn: Hear 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 ...

Prayers:

Lord, our world is made up of many people with many different needs.

We sometimes forget the difficulties others have in very different aspects of their lives.

Jesus, break down the barriers.

We pray for people who are visually impaired.

We thank you for modern technology that helps them communicate.

Jesus says: 'Come and see.'

Jesus, break down the barriers.

We pray for people who are deaf.

We pray that they will receive the help they need so that they do not feel isolated in their own world.

Jesus says: 'Come and hear.'

Jesus, break down the barriers.

We pray for people who are living in a country
that is not their own;
facing difficulties of language, and just not feeling at home.
Jesus says: 'I am here.'

Jesus, break down the barriers.

We pray for people who are worn down
by the pressures and troubles of life.
For those who are ill in body, mind or spirit.
Jesus says: 'Come and be healed.'

Jesus, break down the barriers.

We pray for people who have been devastated
by the loss of a loved one.
Jesus says: 'I bring you my peace.'

Jesus, break down the barriers.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Lord, your Church on earth is seeking (StF 410)

Lord, your Church on earth is seeking
your renewal from above;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of your love.
We would heed your great commission:
sending us to every place -
preach, baptize, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.

Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within:
light for darkness; joy for sorrow;
love for hatred; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.

In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell,
let us show the Saviour's pity,
let us of his mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
let us serve, and seek to bring
all the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King.

Closing prayer:

As we go out into the world,
may we see more of who God is.
May we be ready to listen to the words of Jesus.
May we have the courage to say to others, 'Come and see'.
Amen.

To make you smile - a funny story about John the Baptist.....

A Bible scholar travels to Jerusalem every few years, where he enjoys walking the streets of Jerusalem's Old City. Once he was walking down a quiet alley when he was waved into a small shop. Within a few minutes he found himself with a glass of tea in his hand, sitting in the back room of a rug merchant's stall. The merchant assured him that he had a priceless treasure for him. The merchant reached beneath a pile of carpets and brought out a small bundle which he carefully unwrapped to reveal . . . a human skull.

"This," said the merchant, "is the skull of John the Baptist." John the Baptist, you will remember, was beheaded by Herod. The merchant said the skull had long been lost but recently had been found. This, he assured the Bible scholar, was a treasure indeed. Then he asked his guest how much he would be willing to pay for it.

The visitor to Jerusalem responded, "Well . . . I was in another shop just yesterday, and the man there wanted to sell me John's head as well, but his was bigger."

And without missing a beat, the shopkeeper replied, "Ah, yes. But this, this is John the Baptist's head . . . when he was a boy."

Sunday 25th January 2026 – The Third Sunday of Epiphany/ The Third 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 of light, bringing joy and freedom to all nations.

Gather us to Yourself,

call us to the light of Your presence

and help us to let that light shine to help lead others to You. **Amen.**

Hymn: Jesus Calls Us Here to Meet Him (StF 28)

Jesus calls us here to meet Him

as, through word and song and prayer,

we affirm God's promised presence

where His people live and care.

Praise the God who keeps His promise;

Praise the Son who calls us friends;

Praise the Spirit who, among us,

to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess Him

Word of life and Lord of all,

sharer of our flesh and frailness,

saving all who fail or fall.

Tell His holy human story;

tell His tales that all may hear;

tell the world that Christ in glory

came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other,

vastly different though we are;

creed and colour, class and gender

neither limit nor debar.

Join the hand of friend and stranger;

join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter;
in their common search for truth.

John L. Bell (b.1949) & Graham Maule (b. 1958)

Prayer of Praise and Adoration:

Almighty God, thank You for making Yourself known to us in Christ.
You are above and beyond us, defying definition, and yet You took on
flesh and entered our world,
revealing Yourself in human form.
Help us to glimpse Your glory - to discern Your power,
experience Your love, receive Your mercy and know Your peace.
Fill our lives with the light of Your love,
shining *on* us, *in* us and *through* us,
by the grace of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:

Loving God, thank You for Your grace and forgiveness,
Your willingness to receive us as we are.
Thank You that though we repeatedly fail You and constantly fall short
of the life we long to lead, still You love us,
Your patience knowing no limits,
Your forgiveness never exhausted.
Whenever we get things wrong, may we learn to trust in Your
transforming power,
rather than losing heart, remembering that Your love is not reserved for a
special few
but is poured out on all who recognise and acknowledge their mistakes.
Teach us more of Your ways that we may accomplish in our lives what we
could never achieve
without You. **Amen.**

**You may like to join in the words of the Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who
art in heaven Amen**

As we continue to explore the meaning of Epiphany, Matthew focuses on
how God's revelation brings deliverance to those living in darkness. From
Isaiah's word of hope to Jesus beginning this great task of restoration,

starting with a rough and ready band of fishermen, we see the unfolding of the great task of salvation, bringing the light of God to a dark world and woven through this is a call to us to be witnesses in the here and now.

Reading: Isaiah chapter 9 vs. 1 – 4 NRSV

Introduction:

This passage from early in Isaiah is in many ways the template for all the texts in Isaiah commonly known as ‘servant songs’. The central character is God (as is clear from verse 3). He is the one who both is, and who shines the great light that is the light of freedom from oppression and fear. What God does for His people here is what the servant is tasked with later in the book.

This text, with the additional three verses of 5 – 7 , is a central Christmas reading where the child of verse 6 is directly associated with Jesus. Thus, its association with Epiphany (and the coming of the light) is entirely understandable and appropriate. Notice that the text also makes reference to Gailee of the nations (v.1), picking up the idea that this region of Israel had always had a mixed population.

¹ But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴ For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

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

Dear Lord and Father of humankind

forgive our foolish ways;

reclothe us in our rightful mind,

in purer lives Your service find,

in deeper reference, 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 Your call,
as noiseless let Your blessing fall
as fell Your manna down.

Drop Your 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 Your peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Your coolness and Your balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm! John Greenleaf Whittier (1807 – 1892)

Reading: Matthew chapter 4 vs. 12 – 23 NRSV

Introduction:

The Gospel reading continues the theme of Jesus forming a renewed Israel by calling disciples. Matthew sets this in the context of Isaiah 9, suggesting that, in moving to Capernaum, Jesus was consciously fulfilling this word. It is typical of Matthew to do this, as he often speaks of how Jesus' actions fulfil an Old Testament passage. But here Matthew is plumbing the depths

of Isaiah's vision to see Jesus as the one through whom the light and deliverance of God are dawning.

And so, the calling of fishermen – and others – to become a renewed Israel points to the way God will work to bring salvation to the world.

Jesus says, 'I will make you fish for people', drawing ever increasing numbers into the net of the kingdom of God, into the light of the gospel to experience its healing and restoration.

In the light of Isaiah's prophecy of deliverance, it is deeply symbolic that Jesus' ministry begins in the heart of Galilee.

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

¹⁸ As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Reflection: 'ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL'

So what have we considered over the past few weeks?

Jesus has been baptised by John where His identity has been affirmed by the Holy Spirit as the bringer of good news:

Jesus has responded to enquirers and potential followers intrigued by what He is doing with an invitation: "Come and see".

Today, we see how the prophecy of Isaiah in Chapter 9 is fulfilled in Jesus moving on to Capernaum and centering His ministry in the heart of Galilee. He is revealed as the One through whom the light and deliverance of God are dawning. But He cannot do this alone.....

I wonder who you would consider 'essential personnel' in the community today? Perhaps recycling teams who take care of rubbish and keep our streets clean. We have all seen how badly things can go wrong in Birmingham because of the strike. Perhaps care workers who make it possible for people to keep their independence in their own home. Perhaps supermarket delivery drivers who ensure our shopping is delivered to our door. The list is endless.....

All maintenance workers, delivery workers, emergency workers, service providers - and a whole host of other people who are often taken for granted when things are running smoothly. We think of them as 'essential personnel'.

Today, we see Jesus on His mission to recruit His 'essential personnel'. No doubt He was a people watcher! As He walked the shoreline and areas of Galilee He was most likely on speaking terms with many of the people He met and often stopped to chat. It may have been that He had been watching Simon Peter and Andrew for some time. Fisherman needed to be committed and reliable. The same was true of James and John.

So what do we know about these men? As fisherman, they worked in a physically demanding, manual role, but one that required patience. Like many Israelis at that time, they were looking for deliverance from the Romans by the coming of the Messiah. Peter and Andrew lived in Bethsaida with the father, John. It is highly likely they were in partnership with James and John. Peter was known for his boldness and passion, often acting on impulse as we shall see in the coming weeks. Andrew was the younger brother whose name in Greek translates as 'manly and courageous' and he is perhaps a little overshadowed by Peter.

James and John too were brothers, sons of Salome and Zebedee - also a successful businessman and head of a wealthy family. They are frequently mentioned together in the Gospels, highlighting their brotherly bond and shared experience of Jesus. Along with Peter they formed the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. Jesus gave them the nickname 'Sons of Thunder', reflecting their zealous and often impetuous nature. They are remembered for their fervent dedication to Jesus. John is often identified as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' and is credited with writing the Gospel of John, the three Epistles and the Book of Revelation. He was the younger brother of James and possibly cousins of Jesus as their mothers were sisters.

On the day of their encounter with Jesus, they were going about their daily chores, mending the nets and tending to the boats.

Jesus called fisherman to demonstrate that God calls ordinary people for extra ordinary purposes. Their profession represented hard work, perseverance and humility, qualities that were essential for Gospel ministry. By choosing common labourers rather than scholars or priests, Jesus showed that the power of His Kingdom does not rest on human status or ability. The choice of fishermen also emphasised availability over ability, as they would leave everything behind and follow Him in faith. Their simple obedience became the foundation for spreading the Gospel across the world.

Peter, Andrew, James and John were 'essential' in their own right – as fishermen, they were relied on everyday to provide food, yet Jesus saw something more, and their lives were transformed by His presence and His power and they went on to achieve what they never could have imagined in their wildest dreams.

They were ordinary people, doing ordinary things – just like us. And it's people like us that Jesus is looking for His 'essential personnel' today. We all have unique gifts that Jesus can use when we open our lives to Him. I wonder what **Your** gift is and whether you will allow Him to use it by following Him where He leads? **Amen.**

Poem: DISCIPLESHIP

I can now follow Jesus, and believe in all He's done,
Accept Him as my Saviour and be His daughter or his son,
But there is so much difference than just to follow Him
And know He has forgiven me from all of my sin.
But to now be His disciple, to do all He commands
Is more than just to follow, it's to yield to all His plans.
To go wherever He leads me, and do what all He says,
To say, "Your will be done, Lord," each time I kneel to pray.
To change to the new creature, old things to pass away,
And ever be so willing to die to self each day.
There's followers and disciples in God's big family,
May I be His disciple to listen willingly.
I know it won't be easy, He never promised such,
But if I will just listen, I know I'll feel His touch.
And He will join there with me to help me reach that goal
Of being His disciple with heart and mind and soul.

© Clarence Billheimer

Having read our Gospel reading and reflected on Jesus' call to each of us to become part of His 'essential personnel', that invitation comes in our next hymn. Are we faithfully able to sing or say the words with a deep sense of commitment and purpose to honour His trust in us?

Hymn: Will You Come and Follow Me (StF 673)

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
Will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you
and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind

and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
and do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, Your summons echoes true
when You but call my name.
Let me turn and follow You
and never be the same.
In Your company I'll go
where Your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in You and You in me.

John L Bell (b. 1949) & Graham Maule (b. 1958)

Prayers of Love and Concern:

Almighty God, as You called your first disciples, so you call us to follow you. You call us not only to repentance and life-style changes but call us to

love others as ourselves. You call us to care and share and so we pray for all those who need us and need Your touch this day.

May our love and Your touch, O God,
be there for them this day.

For the ongoing wars where those living in fear have had their lives have turned round, upended and damaged. For those left homeless and those who grieve the death of family and friends. For those who are at the frontline of fighting and preservation of what is left. For those caring for the injured and the frail, especially those in the firing line.

May our love and Your touch, O God,
be there for them this day.

For those around the world who live with injustice, unfairness and discrimination, who live within immoral societies. For those who simply live with their situation from day to day and those who decide to stand up for what they see to be wrong in their societies no matter what brutal regimes may do to them. For those who try to get others to turn around and live more just and caring lives.

May our love and Your touch, O God,
be there for them this day.

For those in our own country who are striving to hold on to their standards of living but struggle from day to day with increasing inflation, where the money they have buys less and less. Those who daily choose between heating and eating. For those whose physical and mental health is impacted severely by the consequences of these things.

May our love and Your touch, O God,
be there for them this day.

For those who feel they have no choice but to withdraw their services and stand on picket lines seeking governments to turn around and support them more through increased pay deals and improved working conditions. For those on all sides involved in such difficult dilemmas.

May our love and Your touch, O God,
be there for them this day.

While we deal with floods, winds and snow and ice, other countries are dealing with drought and virtually no harvest, climate change in action. May the world see that we need an about turn to prevent further climate catastrophes.

May our love and Your touch, O God,
be there for them this day.

For those we know and love, our family, friends and neighbours who are in need this day – in the quietness of our hearts, in this moment we recall their names to mind...

May our love and Your touch, O God,
be there for them this day.

Almighty God, in following You our hearts are touched as we see the struggles, pains and dilemmas of the world and its peoples. Touch our lives, touch our hearts, deepen our love, and hear our prayers in the name of Christ who called us to follow You. **Amen**

Hymn: Great Is The Darkness That Covers The Earth (StF 405)

Great is the darkness that covers the earth,
Oppression, injustice and pain.
Nations are slipping in hopeless despair,
Though many have come in Your name.
Watching while sanity dies,
Touched by the madness and lies.

*Refrain: Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit we pray,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Pour out Your Spirit on us today.*

May now Your Church rise with power and love,
In every nation salvation will come

To those who believe in Your name.
Help us bring light to this world
That we might speed Your return.

Refrain:

Great celebrations on that final day
When out of the heavens You come.
Darkness will vanish, all sorrow will end,
And rulers will bow at Your throne.
Our great commission complete,
Then face to face we will meet.

Refrain:

Gerald Coates (b. 1944) and Noel Richardson (b. 1955)

Blessing:

Light of life, shine upon us.
Light of truth, shine within us.
Light of love, shine from us.
Light of the world, shine through us that we may light the way for others
to follow. **Amen.**

Some material is adapted from 'Roots For Churches'

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.

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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.