

## Call to Worship

Keep your promise, Lord, and forgive our sins, for they are many.

**HYMN 137** New every morning [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu\\_\\_RsnSMZk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu__RsnSMZk)

1. New every morning is the love  
our waking and uprising prove;  
through sleep and darkness safely brought,  
restored to life and power and thought.

2. New mercies each returning day  
around us hover while we pray,  
new perils past, new sins forgiven,  
new thoughts of God, new hopes of  
heaven.

3. If on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find,  
new treasures still of countless price  
God will provide for sacrifice.

4. The trivial round, the common task,  
will furnish all we ought to ask,  
room to deny ourselves, a road  
to bring us daily nearer God.

5. Only, O Lord, in thy dear love,  
fit us for perfect rest above,  
and help us, this and every day  
to live more nearly as we pray.

John Keble (1792–1866)

## Prayers of Approach and Confession

Lord, we pray for the times when we have got it wrong, when we have messed up, when we have caused others anguish and pain. Forgive us for our foolishness, forgive us our mistakes, give us better judgement, clearer sight, an instinct for what is good and right, that carries us clear above the foggy sight of our human nature.

Give us a talent for tending the wounds of our fractured relationships, a healing touch, and an ability to turn strife to peace.

O God, you prepare all your creation for the world it meets.  
You furred the fox against winter  
And gave the salmon knowledge of its far home  
Give us your Spirit to guide us  
Your word to nourish us  
And your Son with us in our hearts  
As an example always to be with us.

My we not forget these things;  
May they drive us each day in all we do;  
In all our work; in our relations with others;  
In our happiness, in sadness, disappointment and fear.

May we see you in every face; in the work of nature and the work of hands that make and mend; in hands that care and protect; and in the hands of the unfortunate stretched out to us.

For the value in our lives is there as you placed it; And as all goodness comes from you, we approach you now to ask that you invest the eternal truth that is your essence within our reach.

Let us not expect life to be too nearly perfect; let us not think that to be fortunate and avoid suffering is to have your favour. As Jesus's life on earth was short and full of suffering, let us take what comes and tackle it with your help, so that good may come of it.

*Turn to us, Lord, and be merciful to use, because we are weak, and need your guiding hand. Relieve us of our worries, and save us from our frailty.*

And now, we say the prayer Jesus himself taught us.

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

## Junior Church

Video: Leaps and Pounds <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwHLt9KGzXo>

Intro by James Allen

**Junior Church Hymn: Good To Us** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfnDNm\\_lR8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfnDNm_lR8)

*Chorus* (x2)

We rejoice in your goodness, God,  
Your love endures for ever.  
We rejoice in your goodness, God,  
Your love endures for ever.

1. Oh, give thanks to Him,  
Bring your praises to Him.  
He is God, He is great, He is good to us!  
Every living thing  
Come together and sing,  
He is God, He is great, He is good to us!  
*Chorus*

2. When the morning comes,  
While there's breath in our lungs,  
Every day, we can say, He is good to us!  
When our work is done  
There's a song to be sung,  
Every day, we can say, He is good to us!  
*Chorus*

3. In the highs and the lows,  
All the places we go,  
In it all, we can know, He is good to us!  
As we change and grow  
We are never alone,  
In it all, we can know, He is good to us!  
*Chorus* (x2)

## Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

<sup>21</sup> Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?  
<sup>22</sup> He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.  
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.  
<sup>23</sup> He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.  
<sup>24</sup> No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.  
<sup>25</sup> "To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
 Who created all these?  
 He who brings out the starry host one by one  
 and calls forth each of them by name.  
 Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
 not one of them is missing.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?  
 Why do you say, Israel,  
 “My way is hidden from the LORD;  
 my cause is disregarded by my God”?

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?  
 Have you not heard?  
 The LORD is the everlasting God,  
 the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
 He will not grow tired or weary,  
 and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
 and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,  
 and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD  
 will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
 they will run and not grow weary,  
 they will walk and not be faint.

### Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

<sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.

<sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

### HYMN 611 Brother, sister, let me serve you. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JahFRDrSCs> (alternative)

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| 1 | Brother, sister, let me serve you,<br>let me be as Christ to you ;<br>pray that I may have the grace<br>to let you be my servant too.            | 4 | I will weep when you are weeping ;<br>when you laugh I'll laugh with you ;<br>I will share your joy and sorrow<br>till we've seen this journey through. |
| 2 | We are pilgrims on a journey,<br>and companions on the road ;<br>we are here to help each other<br>walk the mile and bear the load.              | 5 | When we sing to God in heaven<br>we shall find such harmony,<br>born of all we've known together<br>of Christ's love and agony.                         |
| 3 | I will hold the Christ-light for you<br>in the night-time of your fear ;<br>I will hold my hand out to you,<br>speak the peace you long to hear. | 6 | Brother, sister, let me serve you,<br>let me be as Christ to you ;<br>pray that I may have the grace<br>to let you be my servant too.                   |

**Sermon**

From Psalm 147 (*Translation by Timothy Dudley-Smith*):

Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,  
sing and praise your God and mine!  
Great the Lord in love and wisdom,  
might and majesty divine!  
He who framed the starry heavens  
knows and names them as they shine.

Praise the Lord, his people, praise him!  
Wounded souls his comfort know;  
those who fear him find his mercies,  
peace for pain and joy for woe;  
humble hearts are high exalted,  
human pride and power laid low.

Praise the Lord for times and seasons,  
cloud and sunshine, wind and rain;  
spring to melt the snows of winter  
till the waters flow again;  
grass upon the mountain pastures,  
golden valleys thick with grain.

Fill your hearts with joy and gladness,  
peace and plenty crown your days;  
love his laws, declare his judgements,  
walk in all his words and ways;  
he the Lord and we his children:  
praise the Lord, all people, praise!

Last time I was with you, and in an evening discussion session since, we discussed how the Law provides a solid rock for Israel, and also how Jesus, whilst upholding the Law, says that it is to be interpreted in a way that puts people first. And Paul says, work with the fragility of people's faith. Don't drive them into sin by frightening them with the difficulty of achieving correctness.

Now, this morning, we heard Paul saying he adapts himself to the circumstances of his audience. He describes himself as a servant, or a slave to everyone; in order to speak intelligibly to Jews, he puts himself under the Law. In order to find common ground with Gentiles, he puts himself outside the Law. In order to win the weak, he becomes weak; in short, he becomes everything to men of every sort, so that in one way or another, he says, "I may save some". So, we can see that Paul is imagining himself into the shoes of his audience, and drawing near to them so that he can speak to them on the level.

In my previous church, I was active in the Forum of Faiths in Kensington & Chelsea. You may well think of that borough as an immensely posh place (which it is), but it includes some very poor areas in the north of the borough, with a high ratio of immigrants. There is nothing new about this; if you read the accounts of those who came over from the West Indies in the Empire Windrush, you will find that it was the same in those days. North Kensington was a sort of ghetto.

I am speaking of a few years ago, when the war in Syria was at its height. The forces of Islamic State were powerful and brutal. They were recruiting in North Kensington and using the Al-Manaar Mosque as a meeting place. This was all without the knowledge or approval of the Mosque authorities, but it happened. The Forum of Faiths was active in bringing together leaders on every side, including local government, the police, the anti-terrorist police and Prevent, which is a government-led multi-agency that tries to stop people being sucked into terrorist organisations.

We were doing well at that level, but we were not making much progress at grass roots level. I was perplexed at how to change this, and thought of the experience in Northern Ireland that led to the Peace Process and the Good Friday Agreement. Those who had been involved in that knew how to dissolve barriers.

It turned out that Robin Eames, now Lord Eames, the former Archbishop of Armagh was able to be a big help to us. He described going into strongly Republican areas of Belfast, alone and unprotected, and listening to what people wanted to say.

He described the first, clandestine and frankly terrifying meeting with Gerry Adams. Once the conversation had got going, Gerry turned out to be a different man from his public persona: shy, academic, asking hesitant naïve questions. Similarly, when Robin Eames went into a street notorious for killings and kneecappings, and knocked on a door, the whole population of the street came to listen and to speak.

What he learned from these encounters was that what people really wanted was to be heard and understood. The hard-line policies of the Republicans were in some cases a coded way of saying this. The violence was to some extent an act of frustration by those who felt that everything they felt and said was ignored.

The skilled, courageous and committed communicator of integrity can open doors just by getting on the same level as his or her audience. This is what Paul describes when he says that he “makes himself like one of them”. This gives us an insight into what made Paul great. It was not just running a network of infant churches set around the eastern rim of the Mediterranean, or writing all those theological letters; it was getting alongside those who don't belong to the Church, and speaking to them in their way, a way that has meaning within their own lives and culture.

Are we doing that now? Interreligious dialogue has reached a plateau state, in which the faiths are happy to co-exist and have cordial relations. It is also a time of less meaningful discussions and not much dynamic activity. We are content in our own boxes, and happy to remain there, commending the benefits of diversity.

When I look back on my time in London, it seems to me that the most real and authentic form of church we had was the night shelter for the homeless. There, all were welcome, and all were received because what counted was their need, not their creed. Those who came to help at the night shelter, of whom there were many, were also from every faith and none. When we prayed before opening the doors and welcoming in our homeless guests, there was little difficulty in producing a prayer of hospitality which all could subscribe to wholeheartedly. Despite the diversity of our team, the motivation of the individuals was something in which Jesus could be recognized, and Paul's voice heard.

The philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch spent years trying to come up with a code for living that did not depend on religion<sup>1</sup>. She thought that was necessary because society found religion to be outmoded and hard to believe in. She never managed to complete her project, and gave reasons for her failure: “Prayer...is an attention to God which is a form of love...can those who are not religious believers still conceive of profiting by such an activity?”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, how does any code of conduct – ethics – make its definitions if love is a key ingredient, and love has so little possibility for a close factual definition?

But for us, imperfect as we are, within the ambit of religion, love is our starting point. Although ethics cannot cope with it, faith can, and this is the framework for living which we offer to the world around us. So, let us think of Paul getting down there on a level with his audience, and doing so with love.

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<sup>1</sup> Murdoch, Iris. *The Sovereignty of Good* London: Routledge, 1970

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.53-4

**HYMN 595** Lord, we have come at your own invitation.

(Alternative organ recital of Tune Was Lebet: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnZF\\_sCOqKc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnZF_sCOqKc) with extra verse)

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| 1 Lord, we have come at your own invitation,<br>chosen by you, to be counted your friends ;<br>yours is the strength that sustains dedication,<br>ours a commitment we know never ends.        | 3 When, at your table, each time of returning,<br>vows are renewed and our courage restored,<br>may we increasingly glory in learning<br>all that it means to accept you as Lord.         |
| 2 Here, at your table, confirm our intention,<br>give it your seal of forgiveness and grace ;<br>teach us to serve, without pride or pretension,<br>Lord, in your Kingdom, whatever our place. | 4 So, in the world, where each duty assigned us<br>gives us the chance to create or destroy,<br>help us to make those decisions that bind us,<br>Lord, to yourself, in obedience and joy. |

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

**Communion: Introduction**

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the space is thin between them.  
Distance may divide, but Christ's promise unites  
Those bounded by time, and those blessed by eternity.  
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the church above and below is one.  
Peter is here, and Paul, Martha and all the Marys,  
Columba and Francis, Theresa and Luther King;  
The saints from far back, and those who left us not long ago.  
And only sight prevents us from seeing them,  
One with us on the other side.  
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

Minister Heaven is here, and earth, and the God who made them is present.  
The Lamb, glorious on the throne, sits beside us;  
The Spirit of God, the Dove, makes her resting place among us.  
God inhales the breath of our prayers and spreads a table for our satisfaction.  
Let heaven be glad

All **Let the whole earth cry 'Glory'.**

We come as we are, because Jesus told us only to have a loving heart, and we remember his invitation and his promise:

“Come”, he said, “ all ye who travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you peace. Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest”

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger; and he that believes in me shall never thirst. I will not cast out the one that comes to me. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; they shall be satisfied.”

We come today in that peace, to inherit that rest.

**Song: Lord of Life** (v.1) StF 651 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcVaAfoie6A>

Lord of Life, we come to you  
Lord of all, our Saviour be,  
Come to bless and to heal  
With the light of your love.

## Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you  
**And also with you**  
Lift up your hearts  
**We lift them to the Lord**  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
**It is right to give thanks and praise**

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our pleasure to give thanks to God for his grace; for his bountiful creation, for the love which has fathered us forth, for his great gift to the world, our Lord Jesus; for his guiding ministry, for his death on the Cross, and for his presence ever with us, alive in the world, we give our heartfelt thanks and praise. Amen

## Breaking

In doing this, we follow Jesus's example and command.  
On the night when he was arrested, Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in memory of me. Likewise, after supper, he took the cup, and said, "This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Whenever you drink it, do so in memory of me."

**Sharing** *Please take bread and wine/juice as you are able*

## Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.  
**And also with you**

**Song: Lord of Life** vv 1 & 2 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiYa1zXs\\_Dk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiYa1zXs_Dk)

Lord of Life, we come to you	Through the days of doubt and toil
Lord of all, our Saviour be,	In our joy and in our pain,
Come to bless and to heal	Guide our steps in your Way,
With the light of your love.	Make us one in your love.

## Peace

On the evening of the first Easter Day, when the disciples were together behind locked doors for fear, Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you!" he said; then he showed them his hands and his side. On seeing the Lord, the disciples were overjoyed. Jesus said again, "Peace be with you".

Joyful in the presence of our risen Lord, let us share, as we are able, signs of peace.

## Prayers for Others

Lord, we think of the events of the week:

The coup d'état in Myanmar. Disquiet again in Northern Ireland. Unrest and street demonstrations with many arrests in Russia. Bushfires in Australia. Maybe this week was more worrying than some, but the suffering of the world goes on.

Lord, we pray for all who suffer, for individuals, and for whole peoples, and we think today of those third world countries where Covid-19 is uncontrolled when vaccine is hardly available..

We pray for mental health, in a situation where so many are traumatised. Mind has mountains, cliffs of fall dreadful, sheer, no-man -fathomed.

So often these matters lie beyond our reach, but when we can help, give us the will to do so, and the grace to do so as you would have us. Let us stretch out our hand.

You know we are not always kind or generous. How easy it is to say something negative when we feel unsure, or are not ready to be welcoming.

Small gestures, body language, a friendly word said, or else withheld; these are things that make a difference. It is just us, little us, small, insignificant individuals as we are, and others like us, that shape the world, in lots of ways, by the choices we make. May we be worthy of that responsibility.

Let us start each day, knowing that in our small actions, we have the power to do your work, or not to do it; let us be reminded each day that everything counts; that no-one and nothing does not matter.

And let us make our contribution with others to change what is wrong; Lord, let people of faith come together to stand united for justice and fairness in the world. Let your Spirit form within us all a love of all your people; let us share *your* love of all that has been created, and do our part in looking after your world.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. *Amen.*

**HYMN 481** The Lord's my shepherd <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7eloQjVN54>

1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;  
he makes me lie in pastures green,  
he leads me by the still, still waters,  
his goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone,  
and I will trust in you alone,  
for your endless mercy follows me,  
your goodness will lead me home.*

2 He guides my ways in righteousness,  
and he anoints my head with oil;  
and my cup - it overflows with joy,  
I feast on his pure delights.

3 And though I walk the darkest path -  
I will not fear the evil one,  
for you are with me, and your rod and staff  
are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend (b.1963)

## Blessing

May the God of peace go with us  
As we travel from this place;  
May the love of Jesus keep us  
Firm in hope and full of grace.  
*Amen*

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