

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 14C

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

401 STF – Come, sinners, to the gospel feast OR

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR

462 STF – Come with me, come wander

Readings: 2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 3; Galatians 6:7-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Hymn:

404 STF – God's spirit is in my heart OR

410 STF – Lord, your Church on earth is seeking

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

615 STF – Let love be real, in giving and receiving OR

585 STF – God, whose love is all around us

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

596 STF – Now let us from this table rise OR

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you

Blessing

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Call to worship

As we sing and pray,
As we listen and reflect,
As we learn and meditate,
Join us in our worship - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Surround us with your love,
That we might glorify your name,
In these next few minutes and in all that is to come. Amen.¹

Hymn:

401 STF – Come, sinners, to the gospel feast OR

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy

Opening Prayers

Today our prayers include a simple sentence as response, which I invite you to join with me in saying: As the world around us turns, may we rest our eyes and our hearts on you.

Let's practice that now: As the world around us turns, may we rest our eyes and our hearts on you.

Loving God,

We come to worship this morning bringing all that has travelled with us this past week: our highs, our lows, our joys and our worries. We know that nothing in this life is permanent and that our constant in all of it is you.

All: As the world around us turns, may we rest our eyes and our hearts on you.

May we know that all that has come our way this week will eventually pass us by, as clouds drift by in the wind. May we remember that beyond every cloud sits an unfaltering blue sky and that beyond everything that happens to us is your unfaltering love for us.

All: As the world around us turns, may we rest our eyes and our hearts on you.

As we bring all that is on our minds with us today, may we know deeply that we are not alone and that at the heart of it all is a love so big and so real it can move not only clouds but mountains. May we feel the strength of that love today and every day.

All: As the world around us turns, may we rest our eyes and our hearts on you.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

All Age Talk

Pause for a moment, and have a think about this question: when you think about God – where do you think God is?

[Hold a moment's quiet, and then ask people to share their responses].

There are no right or wrong answers there, and for many centuries we have thought about God as distant – as somehow 'in the sky' or you hear expressions like 'God is in his heaven'. Perhaps you picture something like the Monty Python and the Holy Grail kind of God – where the clouds part and a large man in a white beard shouts down from the sky...

Certainly, there are parts of the Bible that encourage us to think of God as large, as Creator, as majestic – and probably even a little bit scary. Lots of the Old Testament paints a picture of a distant Creator, who was walking in the Garden of Eden in the beginning, but then withdrew to the skies and only appeared every now and then.

However, the Christian Church exists to celebrate and remind us that God has come close. That is what the Jesus stories are for – they are stories about God's desire to be with us, to be like us, to walk amongst us, to go through difficult times like us, to have friends like us, and to love one another like us.

Later on in our service, in our Gospel reading, we will hear one of the many times when Jesus says 'the Kingdom of God has come near'. It is one of his great themes, one of the things he is repeating all the time – that in him, God is close.

So, this week, in all that you might be going through, in any challenges you might face, in all your relationships, conversations, actions and playing – God is close. Let's not worry so much. Let's not feel so alone. Let's not get carried away by all the negativity of the world. Our God is close. God has come to be with us, and God is here to stay. Can we listen for God's voice? Can we show God's love to all the people we meet?

Let it be so for me, and let it be so for all of us.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.³

Hymn:

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR

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Readings: 2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 3; Galatians 6:7-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Hymn:

404 STF – God's spirit is in my heart OR

410 STF – Lord, your Church on earth is seeking

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

Reflections on the readings

Today we hear from Rev'd Patrick Stonehewer, the Deputy Superintendent Minister for Bristol and South Gloucestershire Circuit. Let's listen to his reflection.

For three weeks each July, those with an interest in cycling or French culture turn their attention to the *Tour de France* as it wends its way around the country in a challenging test of endurance and skill. At the head of each day's competition is *la Caravane*, a large parade providing spectators with entertainment and giveaways, announcing the arrival of the *peloton* (group of competitors) as it follows, often at great speed.

In our gospel reading, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem at a different pace, but certainly with a clear purpose and sense of urgency in mind, continuing to share the message of God's kingdom. It's quite likely he was travelling through villages which he's not visited before, although rumours and news of what Jesus is doing will likely have spread and been shared.

Jesus appoints seventy people to travel ahead of him, announcing what is on the way. They appear to be new to the job, on a kind of internship, training time while Jesus was still with them. But their task is quite clear, resonating with Jesus's own ministry:

"cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"

The choice of seventy is significant, as seven in Hebrew scripture symbolises completeness or divine perfection, so the multiple emphasises that. The appointees may be new to the tasks, but they are divinely equipped to give people a preview of Jesus's own work.

There is real urgency in the way Jesus instructs them. In the context of the day, Rome's imperial couriers would have travelled light so as to be as fast as possible. In contrast, in a society where family and friends mattered, it would have been unusual not to stop and greet others on the way, but on this occasion, time is too short for pleasantries!

There is a sense of supportive confidence in the detailed instructions which follow. The disciples are to depend on the hospitality of the communities they visit, but be confident that God will provide. With thanks, they should receive the hospitable gifts of food and shelter that are offered. In some cultures, it matters a great deal to eat whatever is put before you and engage fully in local customs: in this case, receiving hospitality balances out the gifts of healing, and the announcement of the kingdom brought by willingly sharing the bond of peace as a sign of God's presence.

With some pragmatism, nonetheless, Jesus warns them that they are likely to encounter hostility but, in what might appear a harsh step, gives them permission to publicly shame any inhospitable towns, wiping the dust off their feet.

Drawing on personal experience, a few years ago I took the opportunity offered by a sabbatical to embark on a long-distance walk. Advice to travel as light as possible was certainly valuable, as I carried tent, food and other necessities with me throughout, but needed careful thought about what I really needed to take (and I still took too much!).

When things didn't turn out as hoped, the generosity and hospitality of others was received with thanks. On one occasion I mentioned that I couldn't offer anything in return for the gift of a packed lunch, but was humbled to be told that the gift of my friendship was more than sufficient, and that from a couple who I'd only met an hour beforehand. Alongside this, many happy memories of warm welcomes in hostels, friends' and relatives' homes and also in a myriad of campsites; however in one location where I'd pitched my tent, it quickly became apparent that I wasn't completely welcome. For probity's sake, I won't name the small

village concerned but certainly heeded the advice to 'wipe off in protest the dust that clings to feet,' by re-packing my belongings and walking on to a new camping spot where I spent a peaceful evening listening to the 'dusk chorus' of wild birds.

Overall, my experience was enjoyable and beneficial; returning to the story of Jesus's interns, we read that they returned excited, announcing to Jesus that they'd actually done what he had asked of them. For his part, he encourages them to rejoice further in the assurance that they are now enrolled in God's divine community.

What about us? It could be said that this story gives us a view of the role which Jesus calls us to today: we are invited to go ahead in his name, proclaiming the good news in what we say, but also in what we do. There may be those we meet who have some indirect knowledge of the gospel passed on, but how about hearing or seeing it first hand from some one who God has sent?

I invite you to pause a moment, and let the essence of this story of some early followers of Jesus sink in; be encouraged and inspired by St Teresa of Avila's words, a reminder that Christ's ministry is held in his followers today:

Christ has no body on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out to the world.

Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good.

Yours are the hands with which he is to bless others now.

Some questions for reflection / discussion:

- What is Jesus asking of you now? Who do you need to have with you as you seek to respond?
- What do you need to help you with that, and what must you leave aside?
- How might others respond to what you are offering in God's name?⁴

Hymn:

615 STF – Let love be real, in giving and receiving OR

585 STF – God, whose love is all around us

Prayers of intercession

Holy God,

We thank you for inviting us to follow you:
may we be faithful in the tasks to which you call us,
guide our lives and how we live them.

We thank you for sending us forward in your holy name:
may we follow your way, declare your truth, share your life
in the presence of your holy and life-giving spirit.

We thank you for those who travel alongside us,
for their willingness and companionship:
may they guide and support us in your wisdom.

⁴ Reflection written by Patrick Stonehewer

We thank you for equipping us to serve:
help us to cherish the gifts you offer to us,
and to lay aside our burdens.

We thank you for guiding us to those who need to hear good news:
through our words, may they listen to your voice
and respond to your presence.

We thank you for showing us to those who need to see good news:
through our actions, may they feel your mercy
and respond to your presence.

We thank you for those who offer us hospitality and grace;
but when those appear absent,
help us to move on with dignity and courage.

We thank you for sharing your love with us:
send us out as your disciples
to a world that needs to know that love, freely given.

Let your spirit's blessings flow.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

We have been blessed with so much, O Lord.

Today, we take a moment to give thanks for all we have received, and to seek to use our gifts for the building of your Kingdom, for entering into your mission, for the spreading of your love and your peace.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.⁶

Hymn:

596 STF – Now let us from this table rise OR

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you

Blessing

Go out in peace and seek the Lord,
Who is calling you into something new this day,
Something holy, something loving, something peaceful.

Go out in peace.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Patrick Stonehewer

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker