

# twelvebaskets



## ORDINARY 27C

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:**

**595 STF – Lord, we have come at your own invitation OR**

**564 STF – O thou who camest from above**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**601 STF – We do not presume to come to this table OR**

**694 STF – By the Babylonian rivers we sat down in grief and wept**

Readings: Lamentations 1:1-6; Psalm 137; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

**Hymn:**

**255 STF – The Kingdom of God is justice and joy OR**

**351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**668 STF – Teach me, my God and King, in all things thee to see OR**

**643 STF – When, O God, our faith is tested**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**596 STF – Now let us from this table rise OR**

**663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky**

Blessing

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The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

**Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).**

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## Call to worship

Come amongst us, O God,  
By your Spirit,  
And let us be ready to notice you,  
To find you in our midst,  
And to come to see what is ours to do in the building of a better, brighter world,  
In your name

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

595 STF – Lord, we have come at your own invitation OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

## Opening Prayers

*If you do not have the option / technology to share the liturgy with everyone in the congregation, these prayers could be read as two voices, with one person reading the ‘all’ sections.*

Loving God,  
As we come to you this morning / evening,  
open our minds that we may grow in understanding –  
of you, of ourselves, and of the world around us.

Help us to notice all the gifts of this day.

**All:** Give us faith to know that we are not alone and that your love surrounds us always.

As we come to you this morning / evening,  
open our hearts that we may feel more deeply –  
the beauty and the brokenness of the world you have made.

Help us to love it more fully.

**All:** Give us faith to know that we are not alone and that your love surrounds us always.

As we come to you this morning / evening,  
open our hands that we may reach out –  
to serve, to comfort and to build community with all your people.

Help us to truly know that we are part of something greater than ourselves.

**All:** Give us faith to know that we are not alone and that your love surrounds us always.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## We say together the Lord's Prayer

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

## All Age Talk

[Prep: If you have the facilities, display a PowerPoint of images cycling through while you speak. NASA offer a range of great images, found here: <https://www.nasa.gov/image-of-the-day>]

“Space: The Final Frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilisations, to boldly go where no one has gone before!”

For those that don't know, that is said in the opening of every episode of Star Trek. It's a show that captures the thing that humans have done each and every night: Look up to the stars and wonder what's out there?

This week is World Space Week, an international celebration of science and technology, and their contribution to the betterment of humanity. It's a week that ends with the anniversary of *Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies*. Now...that's a long title, but its also known as the Outer Space Treaty. It says that no one country can own space, can claim it, can steal it, can monopolise it. Any exploration of space is for the betterment of all humanity, and that we should always look to avoid harming, contaminating, or damaging any part of space. And space isn't a place for war, that the Moon and other celestial bodies are to be used for exclusive use of peace, and that astronauts shall be envoys for humankind.

Let us just take a moment to think about that. Despite all the difference between the nations and peoples on Earth, the wars and conflicts, the natural disasters, the climate crisis, political opinion and even down to if pineapple belongs on pizza...humanity agreed that space is for all.

Star Trek embodies this way of thinking reasonably well: it's about being curious about others, the wide-eyed joy of wonder, and being open and willing to learn from what we find; but also the desire and responsibility to care for what we find, to avoid harm and be responsible for repairing the damage if we cause it.

Does that not sound like what God wants for us? To be curious? To look after the world around us? To care for creation? To look in wonder at what we see, and see it as God sees it: as good?

Let us pray:

Creator God, may we always be curious and marvel at the wonder of creation, to be responsible enough to take care of the world around us, and to boldly go where no man has gone before.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

## Hymn:

601 STF – We do not presume to come to this table OR

694 STF – By the Babylonian rivers we sat down in grief and wept

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Tim Annan-Hood

**Readings:** Lamentations 1:1-6; Psalm 137; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

**Hymn:**

255 STF – The Kingdom of God is justice and joy OR

351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found

**Reflections on the readings**

Psalm 137 is a psalm of lament and deep communal grief. It arises from a time of national trauma – the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and the forced exile of many of its people to Babylon. This was not just political displacement. It was the dismantling of a people's identity, faith, and worldview.

For the people of Judah, Zion – Jerusalem – was not just a city; it was the spiritual centre of their life. It was where the Temple stood, the place where they believed heaven and earth were to meet, where God's presence was known, and where worship gave meaning to their covenant life. The songs of Zion were sung in the Temple to celebrate God's dwelling among the people, to proclaim God's protection, and to express collective identity rooted in land, worship, and divine promise.

But now Zion lay in ruins, and the Temple – the house of God – was no more. Worshipers found themselves far from their sacred space, in a strange land, surrounded by those who had conquered them. The Babylonians, having destroyed their homeland, now mockingly demanded entertainment: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" What a cruel irony – to be asked to sing songs of hope and presence in a place of loss and absence.

The response of the exiles is powerful: they hang up their harps and weep. They refuse to sing. Not out of bitterness, but out of theological integrity and spiritual resistance. To sing Zion's songs in Babylon would be to lie – to pretend that all is well when their world has collapsed. Their refusal to perform is an act of protest, a holding on to truth in the face of forced forgetting.

**Why Couldn't They Sing?**

The question they ask - "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" – is not merely rhetorical. It is a spiritual dilemma. The songs of Zion were more than melodies; they were declarations of faith in God's abiding presence in Jerusalem. Singing them under Babylonian coercion would distort their meaning. It would turn sacred testimony into entertainment for the oppressor. It would deny the reality of their grief and the devastation of their loss.

So, they do not sing. Instead, they remember. They make a solemn vow: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither... let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth." The commitment to remember becomes a form of spiritual survival. It safeguards their identity when everything else has been stripped away.

**Lament as Faithful Resistance**

In this psalm, lament is not weakness. It is strength. It is not faithlessness; it is a defiant, deeply rooted form of faith. To lament is to tell the truth before God. It is to say: we are not okay, and we will not pretend to be. It is to cry out when there is no song left to sing.

In a culture that often demands constant positivity or polite silence, lament is a sacred act. It gives voice to pain, names injustice, and insists that suffering must not be hidden. The

exiles' refusal to sing for their captors is a refusal to commodify worship, to let their faith be controlled by those in power. Their silence is not apathy – it is resistance.

And in the midst of this resistance, God is not absent. The strangeness of Babylon did not exclude God's presence. Even in the places of displacement, trauma, and silence, God was there. The God who dwelled in the Temple also walks by the rivers of Babylon. God is present in the foreign land, in the wilderness, in the moments when worship feels impossible. God is present even in strange places.

This psalm shows us that we are not alone when we lament. Grief is not a sign that God has left us; it is often the very space in which God draws near. To lament is to keep the relationship with God alive- even if the only words we have are tears and silence. Lament is not the absence of faith; it is part of faith.

### **Where Is Our Foreign Land?**

Though we are not exiles in Babylon, many of us know what it is to live in a place – or a system – that feels foreign, even hostile.

Where is your Babylon today?

Is it the experience of displacement or migration?

Is it grief you carry that no one seems to see?

Is it the pressure to conform, to stay silent, to fit into a mould not your own?

For many people - particularly those from minorities or marginalised communities - there are daily experiences of being asked to "sing" while hiding pain, to perform joy while their dignity or culture is not fully honoured. This psalm speaks directly into such experiences. It reminds us that we do not have to sing on command. We do not have to erase our pain or suppress our identity to be acceptable.

Lament, then, becomes a way of holding onto truth and memory when the world wants us to forget. It becomes a way of remaining faithful, not by performing hope, but by naming pain honestly before God and community. And when you wonder whether God is still near, remember: God is not confined to temples or holy places. God walks with us through the exile, sits with us in our weeping, and holds us when we cannot hold ourselves. God is present, even in the strange land.

We may not always be ready to sing. But in our silence, in our tears, and in our prayers, God remains with us. And when we do sing again, let it be from a place of truth - not performance. Let our worship arise not to entertain but to witness. Not to please others, but to honour the God who hears us - even by the rivers of Babylon.

Let us not rush past lament. Let us not silence those who are hurting. Instead, let us become a community where people can bring their full selves before God: joy and sorrow, praise and protest, memory and hope.

If you are sitting by the rivers today, unsure whether you can sing – know this: your silence is heard. Your tears are a prayer. Your remembering is resistance. Your lament is holy. And God remains with you in the strange land.

May we be a church that holds space for lament.

A people who sing with integrity.

And disciples who tell the truth, even when it hurts.

Amen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Jasmine Devadason

**Hymn:**

668 STF – Teach me, my God and King, in all things thee to see OR

643 STF – When, O God, our faith is tested

**Prayers of intercession**

Let us bring before God our prayers for the Church, for the world, and for all who sit by the rivers of Babylon...

Gracious God,  
you are present even in the strange places:  
in the places of exile,  
in the silence of lament,  
and in the ache of memory.  
We come to you now, not with easy songs,  
but with our honest cries and longings.

We pray for your Church  
in all its scattered expressions –  
for communities who gather in joy,  
and for those who gather in grief.  
Give us the courage to be a people who listen to lament,  
who honour truth,  
and who do not rush to fix what must first be named.  
Teach us to worship with integrity,  
not to perform, but to witness to your presence  
even in the midst of suffering.  
Lord, in your mercy:

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are exiled today:  
for refugees and migrants,  
for those who are displaced by war, by climate, by injustice.  
For those far from home, far from safety, or far from belonging.  
Surround them with your protection and with people who care.  
Let your presence go with them, and may your Church be a place of welcome.  
Lord, in your mercy:

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are grieving:  
those who sit by the rivers and weep.  
For the bereaved, the anxious, the forgotten,  
and for those who carry pain that is hidden from view.  
Help us not to silence lament, but to honour it.  
To hold space for sorrow, knowing that you are the God who weeps with us.  
May tears be received as prayers.  
Lord, in your mercy:

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in power and leadership:  
in government, in church, in community.  
May they not demand false songs or deny the pain of the people.  
Give them wisdom, compassion, and the humility to listen.  
May they act with justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you.  
Lord, in your mercy:  
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose identities have been marginalised:  
those pressured to perform joy while hiding sorrow,  
those who have been silenced or forgotten.  
Give strength to all who resist erasure and hold onto truth.  
Let your Spirit uphold all who remember, who speak out, who lament.  
Help us to be a community where every voice can be heard.  
Lord, in your mercy:  
**Hear our prayer.**

And we pray for ourselves,  
as individuals and as a congregation.  
Wherever we find ourselves – singing, weeping, or waiting -  
remind us that you are with us.  
Even in the foreign land, you do not leave us.  
You walk with us by the rivers.  
You sit with us in the silence.  
And you will be with us when the song returns.  
Gather all our prayers - spoken and unspoken –  
and hold them in your mercy.  
In the name of Christ,  
who knew exile, lament, and resurrection,  
we pray.  
Amen.<sup>5</sup>

### **We will now take up the offering.**

God of all gifts,  
God of all grace,  
Come amongst us this day, we pray,  
And bless these gifts – that we might use them to build your kingdom here on earth.  
Come and be known to us, in the work we seek to do as part of your mission.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Jasmine Devadason

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker



**Hymn:**

596 STF – Now let us from this table rise OR

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky

**Blessing**

My God, I am yours,

And I seek to respond to your call today,

To go to those who need to hear your good news,

Who need to receive your peace.

Show me, show all of us, how to follow in your way, I pray,

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker