



ORDINARY 33C

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



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

552 STF – Here am I, Lord OR

631 STF – I lift my eyes up to the mountains

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens adore him OR

775 STF – Ewe, thina (We walk his way) OR

Readings: Isaiah 65:17-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19

Hymn:

634 STF – Fight the good fight with all your might OR

474 STF – Neither death, nor life, nor angels nor powers

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

350 STF – I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship OR

162 STF – The prophets' voice comes down the years

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

657 STF – You give rest to the weary OR

550 STF – Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

Come amongst us, O God,
Come that we might be aware of your presence,
Blessing us and inspiring us.
Come amongst us, O Spirit,
Come that we might leave here, equipped to share your love this and every week.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

552 STF – Here am I, Lord OR

631 STF – I lift my eyes up to the mountains

Opening Prayers

Holy One, bless us as we gather together.

Thank you that we have arrived safely to the end of another week and that we can worship here in safety and freedom.

Spirit, pour out upon us and let us rejoice with gladness at your wonderful works.

Loving One, help us to stand firm in our faith and may our time together be full of learning of you. Bless this time so that we may know more of you and be equipped with the words and courage we need for this next week.

Gracious One, we humbly confess the ways we have dishonoured your name this week. Wash over us so that we may go into this time of worship with full and pure hearts.

Awesome One, who moves mountains and sets stars in the sky,
Maker of the heavens and earth, we praise you for blessings you yield, for the promises
You do not break and for the peace you bring.

Let us rejoice in the precious name of Jesus,

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Has anyone seen anything in the news recently that has made them sad?

Or has anyone heard anything that made them sad?

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Phoebe Parkin

We all have bad days, or bad things that happen. Sometimes we say that the bad things make the good things feel better, we might say this to comfort ourselves. People also might say things like 'this is only for a season' or 'this too shall pass.' What do you think they mean by that?

[Give people time to think about this, perhaps sharing in small groups].

Well, what a Christian might mean if they say that, is that we have a promise from God that things won't always be as they are now. There is something else coming, new heavens and a new earth, where the bad days won't happen anymore, and we won't dwell on the bad days we've had.

When we look at the news and see that the world is in pain, there are a lot of bad days happening for people right now all across the globe. Reminding people that better days are to come isn't always the most helpful thing in the moment, it's also not a call to be complacent and just let bad things happen. God promises us that in the future there will be a place of no weeping, no crying, just joy, as Christians we can strive to try and emulate that as best we can for people in their lives now.

Are there things we can do to help people when they're having a bad day?

Perhaps if we can help people turn a bad day into a good day, they can then have a better understanding of what God's promise actually means.

Amen.³

Hymn:

86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens adore him OR

775 STF – Ewe, thina (We walk his way)

Readings: Isaiah 65:17-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19

Hymn:

634 STF – Fight the good fight with all your might OR

474 STF – Neither death, nor life, nor angels nor powers

Reflections on the readings

The following reflection and questions are inspired by the hymn 226 STF – Have you Heard God's Voice. Either speak or sing each verse between each section.

Our world is becoming increasingly polarised. There are divisions growing deeper and wider in both our local communities and in the world. Our world is trying to grow on division rather than unity – leading to fractures tearing apart any political decision and any mistake or action, and leading to anger and fear among many.

But how do we as a church respond? How can we be a voice of hope among the hatred that seems to be growing louder and louder.

Verse 1

³ All Age Talk written by Pippa Lupton

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?
Are you still prepared to follow?
Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
Though the way be rough and narrow?

Hearing God's voice is one thing, but to make the commitment to follow God and do what God calls is another. When living in a world that is becoming increasingly polarised it can be hard to keep hold of hope in God when the world seems hopeless. We are being asked if we are still prepared to follow – as people who follow Jesus, we are called to follow, live by example and work for righteousness. Practicing justice, mercy and humility aren't easy but when responding to God's call it is something we are committing to trying to live by. Unlike the church in Thessalonica where idleness was rife, we are called to be active in our faith and through our actions try and enact justice, mercy and humility.

Question for discussion, in groups or as a whole congregation. You could invite people to talk in pairs for a few minutes and share any specific outcomes.

What might living with justice, mercy and humility look like in your community and church?

Verse 2

In your city streets will you be God's heart?
Will you listen to the voiceless?
Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,
Will you share your faith with the faithless?

God calls us to stand firm in our faith and not be misled by the world around us. Politics and Christianity are becoming increasingly intertwined with the label of Christianity being used against values such as racism which don't align with Methodist values. When our faith is being used to bully and create fear – what words do we speak?

In our passage from Luke, Jesus instructs his disciples to stand firm in their faith in times of trials and also comforts his disciples with a promise that the words we need to speak will be provided to us. As we look at the life and actions of Jesus, we can also see that the words we need to speak are shown to us through the love and compassion that Jesus shared. It is holding onto the hope and love that we know through Jesus that can be our motivator to stand firm in our faith. It is not our role to judge but our role is to love and express kindness through the foundation of our faith.

Question for discussion, in groups or as a whole congregation. You could invite people to talk in pairs for a few minutes and share any specific outcomes.

How do we stand firm in our faith when our faith is being labelled as something causing harm?

Verse 3

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith,
and believe it could be different?
Will you share your views using words of grace?
Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

Imagine a world in which the world's sins and transgressions were all forgotten, where the sound of weeping and crying were no longer heard and relationships will be restored with one another. At the end of all the fearful wars and storms that Jesus describes in our passage from Luke, we see where God is wanting his people to get to – to unity.

This passage was written for a group of people who had lived under oppression. Their children died of malnutrition and their labour was exploited to build the homes of the oppressors. This passage promises them that their children will live, that they will build

houses that they will live in – it speaks of a world without people being taken advantage of or being oppressed. It speaks of unity and peace.

But an important thing to note is that at no point does the passage say that one group is right and one is wrong. In our polarised world, it is easy to sit on one fence and stare at the other, arguing about why they are wrong, and you are right. It is easy to join in with the polarisation. But this passage gives us the image of the wolf and lamb feeding together, the lion eating straw. That is not a image of one being right and the other being wrong, but rather each side learning to live together in harmony.

This doesn't mean that we need to agree but instead of a culture of right and wrong and cancelling and hating, we can look towards a community of hope. A community where people sit and discuss, wanting to engage in a conversation of understanding and hope rather than leaping into defensiveness. A community that prioritises love over hate.

Question for discussion, in groups or as a whole congregation. You could invite people to talk in pairs for a few minutes and share any specific outcomes.

What steps might you be able to take to bring a glimmer of hope into your community?⁴

Hymn:

350 STF – I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship OR

162 STF – The prophets' voice comes down the years

Prayers of intercession

For the prayers of intercession, ask people in the congregation to write on post-it notes or to yell out areas or people or situations in the world that need prayer. From those you have a list which can be used in the prayer below. There are a list of generic ideas to get the list started. You might want to leave some silence between each statement.

Let us pray

Lord Jesus as we pray, we focus on hope – hope in our knowledge of your transformational love. A love that can change hearts, heal, establish peace, challenge politicians, encourage the quiet. Let us speak into all these prayers the knowledge of your love and the hope that that can bring us

For our world that is being broken by division – **We pray a prayer of hope.**

For the warzones across the world – **We pray a prayer of hope.**

For the voices not heard – **We pray a prayer of hope.**

For those going hungry – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For the people who are faithful to you – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For those who do not feel safe – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For the work of world leaders – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For the warming oceans – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For those struggling with their mental health – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For the destruction of habitats – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For those fleeing their homes – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For those who are being misled – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For those who fear the unknown – **We pray a prayer of hope**

For those feeling desperate – **We pray a prayer of hope**

⁴ Reflection written by Naomi Prince

For those who don't yet know God – **We pray a prayer of hope**
For the people in our community – **We pray a prayer of hope**
For those who are struggling with illness – **We pray a prayer of hope**
For those who work in our hospitals – **We pray a prayer of hope**
For those facing oppression – **We pray a prayer of hope**
For the restoration of your world – **We pray a prayer of hope**

Everlasting God, in all that we have spoken and all that has gone unsaid, we entrust these prayers to you with the knowledge that you are a God that answers prayer. Hear us, Lord.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of gift,
God of grace,
God of all blessing,
Thank you for all the ways in which you have blessed us here today,
And for your love for us.
As we bless these gifts, we ask that you would help us to use them, and use our lives, that
your will, your love, might reach more people and places,
Today and always,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

657 STF – You give rest to the weary OR
550 STF – Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go

Blessing

Go out in the name of the Lord, my friends,
Go out to face all that this week might bring,
Go out to face it with love, hope and peace in your hearts,
Go out to discover the miracle of God's Spirit at work in the places that you'll be today,
Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Naomi Prince

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker