

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 34C

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:

56 STF – King of Glory, King of Peace OR

15 STF – The splendour of the King

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

480 STF – The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want OR

342 STF – All hail the power of Jesu's name!

Readings: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 1:68-79; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43

Hymn:

327 STF – Jesus is King and I will extol him OR

353 STF – Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross OR

318 STF – Christ, our King before creation

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

63 STF – Over all the earth, you reign on high OR

748 STF – Glorious things of thee are spoken

Blessing

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Call to worship

As the darkness of winter draws in,
As the coldest time of the year approaches,
As we close our doors and turn up our heaters,
Come, Lord of light,
Come, God of the warm embrace,
Come to us, Immanuel, God with us.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

56 STF – King of Glory, King of Peace OR

15 STF – The splendour of the King

Opening Prayers

Christ is King, Alleluia!
Christ is Saviour, Alleluia!
Christ reigns evermore, Alleluia!

Loving God, we come to you today to praise you and give thanks for all you have done for us as we come to the end of the liturgical year.

Thank you for the joyful songs we sing, for the prayers you hear and for blessing us with your word.

Jesus, let us praise you again for how you have worked in us this year, in ways both seen and unseen. Open our eyes and hearts once again today to your wisdom and love.

Gracious God, we come to you as imperfect people and pray that through our worship today, You will renew us to live out Your calling to be Christ's servants once again. Let us again be reminded of Jesus' life, from babe in a manger to death on a cross, from doubting disciples to ultimate ascension to the right hand of God, all rooted in unconditional love for all.

Prepare us once again as we gather to cry:

Christ is King, Alleluia!
Christ is Saviour, Alleluia!
Christ reigns evermore, Alleluia!

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Phoebe Parkin

All Age Talk

As it says in Luke's Gospel, 'Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

For some people this is one of the hardest promises to understand. We try and live good lives, do good things and be kind, but what about the people who are not those things? When Jesus speaks these words he's speaking to the thief next to him on the next cross, the thief is being punished for his crimes, we might say he is a bad person, so why does he also get to go to heaven? Does that mean that it doesn't matter if we lead a good or a bad life?

What this passage shows is that God has promised his forgiveness for everyone, even if we ask to be forgiven at the last moment. The thief accepts that what he has done is wrong, and he asks Jesus to remember him when Jesus is in Heaven. The man believes who Jesus is, accepts that he has done wrong, and asks Jesus to forgive him, that is all God asks for and therefore Jesus tells him that there is a place for him in Heaven.

Amen.³

Hymn:

480 STF – The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want OR

342 STF – All hail the power of Jesu's name!

Readings: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 1:68-79; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43

Hymn:

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Reflections on the readings

Today, let's listen to the words of Emma Dobson, a local preacher based in Copenhagen:

I wonder if you've ever heard of the principle of Universal Design?

The term was coined in the 1980s by architect Ronald Mace, but the idea has been around in various forms for much longer. I am a teacher and the international school I work at has been, for the last couple of years, taking steps towards making 'Universal Design for Learning' the centre of our practice.

Universal Design is all about how to make our world accessible for all, but in a fresher way that not only makes more sense, but is more inclusive. Universal Design highlights that much of our world is designed around an 'average' person that doesn't actually exist. Too often, we plan for the average when designing buildings, planes, education systems and

³ All Age Talk written by Pippa Lupton

other aspects of our lives, hoping that by striking a nice happy medium, we can meet everyone's needs.

Research shows that this simply doesn't work. By designing specifically for the average, we actually end up with something that doesn't fit anyone. Instead of designing something to the average, then taking pains to adapt it specifically for anyone who requires adaptations (wheelchair users, for example), Universal Design calls for us to carefully consider what needs our buildings and spaces might need to fill before laying a single brick.

The problem isn't the people who can't access our spaces, it's that our spaces aren't designed to cater to the greatest number of people. We identify the problems that people might have in our spaces, and design our spaces in a way that caters to those problems and allows for variability, so people can adjust the space to their needs. For instance, all fighter jet cockpits now have adjustable seats, so pilots can find the setting that is comfortable for them. Many buildings have lights operated by adjustable switches, so lights can be dimmed rather than simply turned on and off. In the classrooms at my school, students have the same goal for a lesson, but can choose between 3 different note-taking guides, so they have the one that best fits their needs.

The wonderful thing is that, by considering what the barriers are and removing them, the brains behind Universal Design discovered something groundbreaking. In the 1960s, Selwyn Goldsmith laid out a number of possible adaptations that could be made to our world in order to cater for wheelchair users. The most prominent of these was the dropped curb, which allowed wheelchair users to move between the pavement and the road without having to hop precariously over the curb. This was a pioneering development, but it had an unintended consequence. It soon became clear that it wasn't only wheelchair users who were benefitting from a dropped curb. It was also useful for parents with prams, as well as cyclists and delivery people. This is Universal Design at its best; creating a space that is fully accessible benefits everyone.

I will always remember the beautiful turn of phrase used by former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams when describing the mission of Jesus. He wrote that Jesus came and lived among us so that all could encounter God, "under a clear sky". Jesus came to reset some very entrenched thinking about who was and was not worthy, to counter the image of a vengeful, inaccessible God that many people carried, and to remind people that pretty faith without meaningful action was useless.

Jesus' teaching was designed to reframe humankind's relationship with God, and remove everything that was preventing us from encountering a God of infinite love. God's love is, at its heart, universally designed. God has considered everything that might stand in between our relationship, and showers us with love that is truly for all.

It's big enough, wide enough, challenging enough, comforting enough, tough enough, soft enough, majestic enough and personal enough to cater for our every need on any given day of our lives. We can approach God day to day with all the variability of a thoughtfully-designed seat in a cockpit, knowing we can come as we are and find a God who will listen to us whether we want to speak aloud, sing, scream or say nothing at all. God is truly accessible to anyone who wants that relationship, regardless of language, faith, worshipping practices and individual needs.

Yet, despite God's best efforts, there are still people in our world who feel disconnected, who feel they can't or don't want to be reached. This suggests to me that, as humans, we're a little too good at erecting barriers. Jesus came to tear down the barriers, and yet barriers still exist. Our church buildings are often choked by tradition, forcing people who

cross our thresholds for the first time to adapt to how we've always done things in order to feel welcome.

Our unwillingness to accept our doubt as a healthy part of faith bars us from connecting with people through shared vulnerability. We read our Bibles with limited room for interpretation or criticism, leaving us preaching on time capsules rather than living, breathing texts.

As a result, the church can often appear out of touch with reality to those on the outside looking in. Even worse, the church often brands certain people 'sinners' on the evidence of ancient understandings and questionably translated texts, then devotes time and energy to trying to play God and 'save their souls' in a way that leads to shame and self-hatred. The countless instances of murder, war and genocide that have taken place throughout history supposedly 'in God's name' could reasonably also be considered a barrier to someone feeling that God is someone with whom they want a relationship.

Our readings for this week paint a picture of a God who desperately wants to welcome all people home, and laments the people who prevent that from happening. Our reading from Colossians tells us, "He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together".

In the Jeremiah passage, God rages against the shepherds who scatter the sheep and fail to care for them. The Passion passage from Luke 23 tells the story of a man cast out from society, treated as less than human by a justice system that is most definitely less than just. This man screws up all his courage as he dares to ask Jesus to remember him in God's kingdom, and is met with the calmest of assurances. He is reassured that Jesus sees him and will remember his name; finally, after a lifetime of being ground down, rejected and seen as less than nothing, God is able to get through and shower him in transformational love.

What barriers do we, both as individuals and collectively as church communities, put in the way of others experiencing the love of God?

How do we get in the way of God reaching all people?

This isn't an easy question to answer, and requires us to do some deep soul searching. Perhaps it calls upon us to question traditions that are older than we are, and step out of the comfort zone we've gotten rather used to. It's tough, but no work is more important. God wants all people to know love, and to feel truly seen.

How can we help to do the work of Jesus, allowing everyone to experience that love 'under a clear sky'?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross OR

318 STF – Christ, our King before creation

Prayers of intercession

We come before you, Christ our King
The most surprising of kings.

⁴ Reflection written by Emma Dobson

A king with thorns, rather than gold, for a crown
A king born not in a palace, but a manger
A king riding not on a noble steed, but on a donkey
A king who doesn't look down, but sits alongside us.

Christ, our King

We know that you truly see us.

We know that you hear us better than when we are speaking

We lay our worries at your feet.

Christ, our King

We ask for your comforting hand upon the shoulders of all who are in distress

For our siblings displaced by conflict, suffering the worst effects of climate change and separated from family

For those dealing with loneliness, anxiety, and facing the loss of a loved one

For those for whom the future feels particularly uncertain

For victims of all kinds of abuse, finding the strength to rebuild.

Christ, our King

We ask for your strength to be your hands and feet on the earth

Give us hearts that burn with your love

Be our guide as we seek to be your people of light

Help us never to give up hope.

Christ, our King

Hear our prayers.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

As we come towards the end of November, and look forward to the season of Advent, we give you thanks for all the wonderful gifts we have received – help us to use all that we have and are to build your kin-dom here.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

63 STF – Over all the earth, you reign on high OR

748 STF – Glorious things of thee are spoken

Blessing

We go from this place, inspired by your message of inclusivity Lord God.

We go to welcome all people, to make space for all things,

We go to do all that we can, in the name of love.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Emma Dobson

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker