



ORDINARY 20A

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

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A
16th August 2026



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

588 STF – I come with joy, a child a God OR

109 STF – In the darkness of the still night

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

652 STF – Lord, we come to ask your healing OR

685 STF – In Christ there is no east or west

Readings: Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 133; Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15: 21-28

Hymn:

421 STF – Empty, broken, here I stand, Kyrie eleison OR

277 STF – My song is love unknown

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you OR

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR

608 STF – All praise to our redeeming Lord

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

The light shines in the darkness,
The joy comes in the morning,
The hope rises, each new day.

As we gather in your name, Lord Jesus,
Help us to see you in our midst, we pray,
And to hear your call on our lives, as we seek to follow you,
God of all grace.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

588 STF – I come with joy, a child a God OR
109 STF – In the darkness of the still night

Opening Prayers

Throughout this month, The Vine's opening prayers come to us from All We Can, as part of joining with them in a commitment to pray, act and respond to the conflict in Palestine/Israel, and include an invitation to support their Middle East Justice Appeal.

Let us pray.

Holy God, we hold a moment of quiet, in which we bring ourselves to you in prayer,
Giving thanks for all that we have received,
And holding in the light of your love all the burdens that we carry.

[Pause]

Come, Prince of people, come Lord of light, and help us to know ourselves forgiven by your grace, and our burdens lifted by the knowledge of your unconditional love for us.

As we worship you, O God, help us to recognise the part we have to play in seeking justice and peace for others around the world, including our siblings in Palestine, impacted by Israeli occupation, and all affected by the violence in the Middle East.

As we worship, we give thanks for all who work for peace and reconciliation in the region, including The Just Peace Coalition, which All We Can are a part of, and for the work supported by the Middle East Justice Appeal being run by All We Can and the Methodist Church.

Let us hold them in prayer for a moment of stillness, and invite the light of God's love into that complex and painful situation.

[Pause]

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

Strengthen us that through our prayers, action and giving we may strive to be co-creators of the vision you offer the world, in the name of the Wonderful Counselor and the Prince of Peace.

Amen.²

To find out more and make a donation on behalf of your church – you could visit allwecan.org.uk/appeals/middleeast

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

You will need a chalkboard and chalks as part of this activity.

In one of our bible passages today, we hear a story of forgiveness. Have any of us needed or tried to forgive somebody? Can you remember a time when someone upset or was unkind to you, they said sorry and asked you to forgive them?

What was that like? Did you find it straightforward and easy? Or was it more complicated?

Perhaps you simply felt you couldn't forgive them at all; it was just too difficult. We all respond in different ways, it's part of what makes us human.

Sometimes forgiveness can take a lot of courage. Forgiving someone can be a messy business – a bit like a tangle of thoughts and feelings like this: *(draw a big messy squiggle on the chalkboard)*.

It looks like a jumble and hard to see where it begins and ends.

The central figure in this story from Genesis, took a brave step and decided to forgive those who had been cruel, nasty and spiteful. His life had turned out well despite all that he had experienced, and he was able to see how God had been at work through his difficult circumstances.

He chose in the midst of everything to trust God and keep his eyes fixed upon him. I wonder what we might have done in his shoes? *(You may wish to pause here and take some suggestions from those gathered)*.

Somehow in the middle of all the messy business of his life *(add some more squiggles to the one already on the chalkboard)* he found a way to forgive and make a fresh start. *(Wipe the chalk board with a cloth or board rubber, it's ok if some smudges remain)*.

He quite literally wiped the slate clean. Of course that didn't mean what had happened was forgotten, there were still some signs of what had taken place. But, in making the choice of forgiveness, he and his family were able to find a new way forward to live together, knowing that God was always with them.

Amen.³

² Opening prayers written by All We Can

³ All Age Talk written by Gail Adcock

Hymn:

652 STF – Lord, we come to ask your healing OR

685 STF – In Christ there is no east or west

Readings: Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 133; Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15: 21-28

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Reflections on the readings

‘How good and pleasant it is when siblings live together in unity’ – Psalm 133

Today we hold two passages side by side. The first from Genesis where Joseph reveals his true identity to the brothers who had sold him into slavery. The second the healing brought to the daughter of a woman whose faith caused her to argue with Jesus – and win! On the surface two distinctly different stories, but scratch the surface and we find similarities.

Recognition

The story of Joseph and his amazing technicolour dream coat is probably familiar to most of us. He was the annoying kid brother who was not only a know-it-all but his Dad’s favourite. Okay, so maybe leaving him in a pit was a bit extreme but as the story is told he goes on to be the hero of the story, not just for his own people but for his captors too. It’s such a good story I don’t know why someone doesn’t turn it into a musical!

In today’s passage the tale twists around at the point of recognition. We can only begin to imagine the emotions that go through the brother’s minds as they realise not only that their brother is alive but is glad to see them! As the scales fall from their eyes, they are confronted not only with their own guilt but also with their own forgiveness. Recognition isn’t just about seeing but it’s also about understanding and being understood.

And we find this being worked out in a similar way in our second story. The encounter between Jesus and the Canaanite woman can feel austere. The woman’s daughter is suffering from something she describes as ‘demon possession’. And, not to put too fine a point on it, she’s being such a pest, shouting out to Jesus that the disciples want to shoo her away. Jesus’ response is also harsh: why bother with an outsider when there was enough to be done amongst his own? But in her response the two recognise each other, she calls him Lord, acknowledges her outsider status ‘surely dogs would be given scraps?’ and we see the mutual recognition which leads to healing.

I wonder when in our lives we have recognised when something deeper is going on and seen someone with fresh eyes?

Forgiveness

The story of Joseph is remarkable in many ways but not least because of the reconciliation that occurs within the family as a result of Joseph’s forgiveness. After all, he had every

reason to be so angry with his brothers that he didn't need to embrace them again. But in this story, not only does Joseph rejoice at seeing them but he also tips them off about the famine that's on its way. His dreaming capacity that so annoyed them previously will now be used to save them. Forgiveness turns the narrative from a tragedy into a story of redemption.

In the story of the Canaanite woman, her bold response to Jesus is not for herself alone but for her daughter. She is emboldened to question the assumption that she is beyond redemption because she is an outsider and the story is transformed from a harsh condemnation into a loving revelation. Suddenly healing is not restricted by nationality but rather open to all.

Forgiveness is a hard concept when we have been deeply wounded, I wonder where in our lives a response or challenge has enabled us to see someone who has hurt us in a different light?

Healing

Both these stories result in healing of a sort. With the Canaanite woman the daughter is healed because of her courageous faith. In the story of Joseph, the family is restored to right relations: but not just that, the outsiders are also going to be fed through the foresight of Joseph's dreams. Healing is much more than fixing a problem but rather the restoration of relationships in such a way that others are healed too. Healing isn't magic, it is the result of recognition, reconciliation, forgiveness and generosity and this is hard work.

I wonder when in our lives we have been able to recognise another's vulnerabilities and move on to forgive or restore right relationships?

The Psalmist says that it is good and pleasant when brothers (and sisters) live together in unity. But recently brothers and sisters have been anything but that with wars across Europe, the Middle East and with political squabbles closer to home.

I wonder how we can begin to recognise our shared humanity, see each other as flawed yet loved human beings and be agents of healing and hope? How good and pleasant that would be!

Gracious God,
Creator of this beautiful earth, full of colour and dreams,
We pray that we will be able to recognise the shared humanity in each other.

Forgive us our 'othering' of people we don't understand.

Change our narrowness of vision into wide vistas of forgiveness.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you OR

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell

⁴ Reflection written by Barbara Glasson

Prayers of intercession

For our intercessions, we will hold three short periods of quiet, in which each of us is invited to bring our own prayers to God.

Firstly, we pray for those close to home, calling to mind the name or the face of somebody in our own family, amongst our church congregation or a close friend. In the quiet, we hold them and their situation up to God.

[Silence]

Living God, you know our hearts and our hurts. We commit them to you now, and invite you to come close to those we have prayed for, bringing them your healing, your comfort, your hope.

Secondly, we pray for situations further afield – taking a moment to pray for something we have heard in the news that troubles us, or for someone we have never met but whose story has affected us. In the quiet, we hold these people and situations up to God.

[Silence]

Living God, you know the pains of your world. It can feel like a dark world when we switch on the news, or read our newspapers. In the darkness, bring your light. In the conflict, bring your peace. In the brokenness, bring your healing.

[Silence]

Finally, we spend a moment praying for the church: perhaps this church congregation, the wider Christian church, or all people of faith. In the quiet, we pray for all who are gathering in worship today.

[Silence]

Living God, help us – your people – to be your hands and feet in the world. May we find ways to be an answer to prayer, to bring transformation in our own lives, communities and our world.

We pray these, and all our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Living, loving God, we are holding onto our hope in you, our faith in you, our love for you. May these gifts, and the gifts and graces available to all of us be put to the use of your kingdom, changing lives and bringing peace in Jesus' name, we pray
Amen.⁶

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR

608 STF – All praise to our redeeming Lord

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Blessing

May you go from here, with the love of Christ in your hearts.

May you head out into whatever this week has in store for you, with the guidance of the Spirit at work in your lives.

May you face the challenges and concerns you are carrying, with the creativity of the Creator in your minds.

In Jesus' name I pray,

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker