



ORDINARY 29A

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

Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A
18th October 2026



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

519 STF – Father, I place into your hands OR

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

701 STF – Heaven shall not wait

Readings: Exodus 33:12-23; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22

Hymn:

317 STF – At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow OR

434 STF – Rock of Ages, cleft for me

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

711 STF – Pray for the Church, afflicted and oppressed OR

714 STF – The God who sings

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

699 STF – God of justice, Saviour to all OR

713 STF – Show me how to stand for justice

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

Loving God,
Today as we gather in worship,
We place into your hands the needs and burdens we carry.
Hold us, this day, O God,
And accept our praise as we worship you, we pray
Amen.¹

Hymn:

519 STF – Father, I place into your hands OR
455 STF – All my hope on God is founded

Opening Prayers

Show me your ways, go with us, we pray.

Holy are you, Lord.

That you will embrace us in all our forms and choices in our lives.
That no matter the path we have found ourselves on, you will cross oceans, mountains
and streams to prove you are with us and ever present in our lives.

In a world full of uncertainty, heartaches, cruel intentions and materialistic goals tempting
us to sin, we need to ensure these temptations do not become our motivations.

Let us not be motivated by greed but by the people around us with positive influence on
our lives. Help us to show in our lives, in our relationships, how they have shaped us and
in how God has taught us.

Your presence will go with us as you do the rest.

God be with us, show us your ways.

Make us holy people made in your image with you always at the centre.

Help us to give with our whole lives, not in gifts or symbols of greed but with our time and
our relationships committing to goodness.

We do not need any luxuries, any wishes to be granted we only ask to know you and to be
in joyous presence now and always.

Continue to be the just and fair God to guide and teach us.
We commit our lives wholeheartedly to you and in your name.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Alice Arbon

All Age Talk

Can I start by asking for a few volunteers, today it requires mental agility, if that helps encourage? I'll be nice and give you a piece of paper to help you with your workings and to write the final answer. *(hand out a piece of paper and a pencil)*

Now I am going to read you a riddle and I'll give you 1 minute to calculate your answer:

As I walked to St Ives

I passed a man with seven wives

And every wife had seven sacks,

And every sack had seven cats

And every cat had seven kittens, how many in total were going to st Ives?

Leave 1 minute pause.

STOP! Now lets see what answers we have?

(give encouraging nod to the revealed answers)

now did anyone times the 7 by 7 by 7 by 7 and add the man to make a total of 2402? If you did, or nearly got there then I'm afraid you're wrong because the actual answer is just 1, (it is the man alone who is heading to St Ives)

Let us give our volunteers a round of applause, you see this is a very old riddle and some of you may have got stuck in working out the numbers ($1+7 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7 = 2402$), where actually it was all a trick.

In our gospel reading for today some religious legal experts were trying to catch Jesus out in a similar way – but for Jesus it might have meant getting into trouble whatever obvious answer he would have given, so instead Jesus answers differently/just as sneakily. But we shall return to this in a little while.³

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

701 STF – Heaven shall not wait

Readings: Exodus 33:12-23; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Matthew 22:15-22

Hymn:

317 STF – At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow OR

434 STF – Rock of Ages, cleft for me

Reflections on the readings

Wouldn't it be wonderful if faith made everything clear? If every difficult decision came with an unmistakable answer, if every prayer brought certainty, if we could see exactly where God was leading us.

³ All Age Talk written by Mark Stennett

Perhaps that is what Moses longs for in today's reading.

He has led the people out of Egypt, carrying the burden of leadership. He has argued with God, pleaded for mercy, and tried to hold together a frightened and often quarrelsome community.

And now he asks for something extraordinary: "Show me your glory."

It is a deeply human prayer:

- "God, help me to see you."
- "Help me to know that you are really here."
- "Help me to understand."

God's answer is both encouraging and frustrating: "You cannot see my face."

Instead, Moses is sheltered in the cleft of a rock while God's glory passes by. He catches only a glimpse, a fleeting vision of God's presence. Perhaps that is how faith often works, we rarely get to see the whole picture.

Looking back over our lives, we sometimes recognise moments where God was quietly present: in the kindness of a friend, in unexpected strength during a difficult season, in beauty that took our breath away, in justice slowly unfolding, or in a moment of forgiveness we never imagined possible. Often we see God more clearly in hindsight than in the moment.

Like Moses, we are invited to trust even when our vision is incomplete.

In another time, Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica with deep affection.

He doesn't begin by listing everything they still need to improve. Instead, he gives thanks for what he already sees. "We remember your work of faith, your labour of love, and your steadfastness of hope."

What a wonderful description of Christian life: faith that works, love that labours, hope that endures. Notice that none of these is simply a feeling: faith is active, love is practical, hope is resilient.

In our culture, faith is sometimes imagined as a private opinion or a personal spirituality. Paul sees something much richer, a faith that changes how we live, that shapes our relationships, that influences our decisions.

Faith, in Paul's imagination, inspires generosity, justice, compassion and courage. The Thessalonian church became known not because it was perfect, but because its life reflected the Gospel. That raises a question for us: if people who never entered this church building were asked what Christians are like, what would they say?

Would they speak first of our beliefs? Or our love? Would they describe us as people who welcome, who serve, who work for justice, who care for creation, who stand alongside those who are struggling?

Paul seems to think that the Gospel is always most convincing when it is visible.

Then we come to Jesus.

His opponents ask what appears to be a straightforward question: "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?"

But the context here is anything but straightforward. If Jesus says yes, some will accuse him of supporting an oppressive empire. If he says no, he risks being reported as a rebel. It is a carefully laid trap, set to catch Jesus out. Instead, Jesus asks for a coin and points out Ceaser's image on it.

"Then give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God." People have debated those words for centuries, but perhaps the most important question is not what belongs to Caesar, it is what belongs to God.

The answer, surely, is everything. The earth is God's, justice is God's, mercy is God's, and every human being bears not Caesar's image, but God's image.

That changes how we see one another. Can we live a life where we see every person we meet as carrying immeasurable dignity, as worthy of respect, as someone Christ loves?

Our ultimate loyalty is never to a political party, an ideology, a nation or even a particular religious institution, it is to the God whose image we bear. That doesn't mean withdrawing from public life, far from it. Christians are called to be deeply engaged in the world: to vote, to serve, to campaign for justice, to care for neighbours and to work for peace. We do so, however, whilst remembering that no earthly power deserves the devotion that belongs only to God. Whenever politics asks us to stop loving our neighbour, to fear the stranger, or to ignore injustice, the Gospel gently but firmly calls us back to a different way.

These three readings fit together more closely than they first appear:

- Moses reminds us that we rarely see the whole of God.
- Paul reminds us that genuine faith becomes visible in everyday life.
- Jesus reminds us where our deepest loyalty lies.

Together they invite us to live with humility, to recognise that none of us possesses the whole truth, to allow our faith to be seen in acts of love rather than claims of certainty. And to remember that every person we encounter bears the image of God.

Perhaps that is enough for today. We may not always see God's face, but we can reflect God's character through kindness, seeking justice, practicing compassion, igniting hope. And perhaps, when we do, someone else may catch a glimpse of God's glory in us.

Questions for reflection or discussion:

- Moses only catches a glimpse of God's glory. When have you recognised God's presence only after looking back on an experience?
- Paul speaks of "faith, love and hope" as things that can be seen in people's lives. If someone watched your week, where might they see those qualities?
- Jesus reminds us that our deepest allegiance belongs to God. How does that shape the way we engage with politics, society and the issues of our day?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

711 STF – Pray for the Church, afflicted and oppressed OR

714 STF – The God who sings

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray.

God of mystery and grace,
You revealed yourself to Moses,
encouraged the church in Thessalonica,
and in Jesus showed us a different kind of kingdom.

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

As we bring our prayers before you, help us to trust your presence, even when we cannot see the whole picture.

Pause

Loving God,
We pray for your Church throughout the world.

May we be communities where faith is active,
love is generous, and hope is steadfast.

When we are tempted towards certainty without compassion, draw us back to humility.
When we become inward-looking, turn our attention to the needs of the world.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of justice,
We pray for those who lead nations, communities, and organisations.

Grant wisdom to all who exercise authority.

Where decisions affect the lives of the poorest,
the weakest, or the most vulnerable,
may justice and compassion guide every choice.

Help us, too, to play our part as responsible citizens,
seeking the common good while remembering that our highest allegiance belongs to your kingdom of peace.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God in whose image we are made,
We pray for all whose dignity is overlooked or denied.

For refugees and asylum seekers.

For those experiencing homelessness.

For people living with discrimination because of race, disability, gender, sexuality, or poverty.

Open our eyes to recognise Christ in every person we meet,
and strengthen all who work for equality, inclusion and justice.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of comfort,
We pray for those who need your healing today.

Those who are ill in body or mind.

Those who are grieving.

Those who feel isolated or anxious.

Those facing uncertainty about work, relationships, or the future.

In a moment of quiet,
we remember them before you.

Pause

May they know your presence walking beside them,
and may your peace sustain them.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of hope,
As we leave this place,
help us to bear your image with integrity.

May our faith be seen in our actions,
our love be known in our relationships,
and our hope shine through all we do.

Though we may only glimpse your glory,
may our lives reflect your goodness,
for the sake of your world.

We ask these prayers
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

So thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and these gifts here offered to you.
Take us, mould us, inspire and lift us by your grace, we pray,
That these gifts, and our whole lives, might be used for your Kingdom here on earth.
In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

699 STF – God of justice, Saviour to all OR

713 STF – Show me how to stand for justice

Blessing

The Spirit of God is all around you, all the time.
The Spirit of God is flowing through all creation, beyond these walls of worship and
throughout the whole world.
The Spirit of God is inviting you to join in with the work of justice, joy and peace.
In Jesus' name, may you step out in faith today.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker