



SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT A

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

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **theworshipcloud.com**

Sunday Before Advent - Year A
22nd November 2026



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign OR

43 STF – Come, let us praise the Lord

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

317 STF – At the name of Jesus OR

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the King

Readings: Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24; Psalm 95: 1-7a; Ephesians 1: 15-23; Matthew 25: 31-46

Hymn:

335 STF – Rejoice, the Lord is King! OR

732 STF – Day of judgment! Day of wonder!

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

693 STF – Beauty for brokenness OR

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

713 STF – Show me how to stand for justice OR

347 STF – Crown him with many crowns

Blessing

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Call to worship

Let us prepare ourselves,
For the encounter,
For worship,
For the Spirit to come amongst us.

Come, Lord Jesus, we pray.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign OR

43 STF – Come, let us praise the Lord

Opening Prayers

These prayers are designed to be said by a leader and the whole congregation. If it's not possible to print or project the words for everyone, then it might be easier for them to be said by two voices, with one playing the role of 'leader' and the other of 'all'.

Leader: Loving God,

We arrive today ready to give thanks: to join in with the music of all you have created and the rhythms of those heavenly drums.

All: Help us to sing a song of thanks.

Leader: Some of us carry lament and songs of sorrow with us this day:
minor chords and lonely melodies still unheard by those around us.

All: Help us to let your song of hope lie like a blanket around our heavy hearts.

Leader: Seeking acceptance of joy, we open ourselves up to the possibilities of joining the chorus with all those around us - allowing our own unique notes to join your heavenly harmonies.

All: We join the heavenly chorus this day.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Throughout November, the All Age talks for The Vine have been prepared by our friends at All We Can, the Methodist Church's international development agency. Each week, we are

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

highlighting one of All We Can's 'Extraordinary Gifts', which are a great way to do your Christmas shopping! Why not buy a gift that transforms life for someone in one of the countries where All We Can's partners are working this Christmas – find out more and order a catalogue for your church online at allwecan.org.uk/extraordinary-gifts

Today, we are focusing on Precious Water (*you might like to display a picture of this gift from the All We Can website, or invite people to turn to the relevant page in the gifts catalogue*).

What do you need for life? [*Invite people to list these – you might like to prompt them to think of Maslov's hierarchy, or into thinking about physical, mental and spiritual health, etc.*]

One of the key things on this list is water, and in particular, clean water. It is estimated that around 1 in 4 people, or 2.1 billion people worldwide, don't have access to clean drinking water. [*You might like to work out how many people that would be in your church congregation, if they were the world average – e.g. how many is ¼ of your congregation*]. They are often using unclean water and that spreads diseases, causes issues with nutrition and leads to people getting very sick and even dying.

Many of All We Can's partners are working to provide clean water to the people in the communities they serve, including in Sierra Leone, where this work has also involved teaching children and families about the importance of drinking clean water. That means more young people have been in school as they haven't been getting sick as much and missing out on their education.

As one of the teacher's, William, has said: 'The impacts on the school community and the town community is so great... The parents are attesting that the children are really sensitising them about hygiene'.

Next time you have a drink, perhaps you can pray for all those who don't have clean water, and think about how you can help make a difference.

Amen.³

Hymn:

317 STF – At the name of Jesus OR

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the King

Readings: Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24; Psalm 95: 1-7a; Ephesians 1: 15-23; Matthew 25: 31-46

Hymn:

335 STF – Rejoice, the Lord is King! OR

732 STF – Day of judgment! Day of wonder!

³ All Age Talk written by All We Can

Reflections on the readings

The temptation in the story of the sheep and the goats is to try to work out who's a sheep and who's a goat, or maybe more crucially where am I going to show up in the great ungulate divide. But maybe in trying to discern our sheepishness or goatiness we miss the point. God is the judge, not us, not others. God is God so we don't have to be!

But we do spend a lot of time missing the point. We wonder why Christians do bad things and non-Christians live self-sacrificially. We scrutinise the motives of those in public life, questioning their intentions. We justify our own worthiness in relation to others seeming unworthiness. We love to analyse, assess and judge what we see. So let me tell you a story about an elephant.

I was in India with a group of young people who really wanted to see an elephant. We were staying in a city at the time which meant elephant location was tricky but an elephant was duly located - he was called Raja and although he seemed rather depressed he knelt down for us. So, using his tail for balance I was able to climb onto his back and sit just behind his ears.

When Raja stood up again there was a great view of the city street, rickshaws, pedestrians, jeeps, decorated lorries, children, melon sellers, bicycles and seemingly hundreds of motorbikes all swerving this way and that and hooting their horns. To my white western eyes it was chaos and I began to plan how it could all be sorted out in a much more orderly way - maybe a pavement was needed, certainly a few sets of traffic lights would help, and maybe some rules about motorcycle etiquette - very quickly, in my own colonial mind I had this sorted - until I remembered that one reason all this swerving and hooting was going on was that I was going slowly up a major highway sitting on an elephant. It reminded me that in our judgment of others we mustn't forget the elephants on whose backs we sit!

Back to sheep and goats.

In the story, sheep are rather surprised to be sheep and goats rather gruff at being goats. And this because they had just been doing what they had been doing and not thinking about sheepiness or goatiness. But they are judged by what they have or haven't done, not simply to get sheep points but rather because amongst all those people they've encountered along the way, God has been present. In all those seemingly insignificant and unimportant engagements with the world, the king of kings has been there, in person. Instead of asking 'Am I a sheep or a goat?' they were called - in the words of the letter to the Ephesians - to see with the 'eyes of the heart'.

We currently live in quite a grumpy society. Things are not as they should be, not as they were, not as we would like them to be. Politicians get it wrong, councils get it wrong, drivers get it wrong even dogs get it wrong! The news is all about getting things wrong and the consequences for countries, children and the environment. How do we keep alive the hope that is in us and see with the eyes of the heart?

The story of the sheep and goats is ultimately a story about God's presence in the world amongst the most vulnerable, the hungry, thirsty, naked, lost. This is where the king dwells and whatever we do for one of these people we are actually doing for him. This is our responsibility but also our joy and ultimately our salvation.

Questions for reflection or conversation in small groups:

- What does it mean 'to see with the eyes of the heart' when we hear so much rhetoric about refugees?
- What does it mean to 'see the king of kings in the poorest and neediest?'

- How can we stop judging others, and ourselves, and start looking outwards with kindness and integrity?
- What elephants do we sit on?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

693 STF – Beauty for brokenness OR

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound

Prayers of intercession

Loving, merciful and gracious God,

Open the eyes of our hearts to this beautiful, fragile and vulnerable world.

In the stillness, hold in your mind all those places, landscapes and communities in our world that you would like to bring to God in prayer.

Pause.

Help us to recognise your presence in the faces of those who are fearful, hungry, confused or lost.

Save us from judging others, from judging ourselves or forgetting that you are the only judge.

In the stillness, hold in your mind all those known to you who need prayer today.

Awaken the hope that is in us, so that we can live with love and compassion and discover you amongst us each day.

In the stillness, hold in your mind this church community and the local churches, as we seek to serve those around us. Pray for us to know about your love and share it.

In Jesus name, we pray

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of all grace,

God who is gift, and from whom we have received so much,

Today we turn to you in thankfulness.

Make yourself known to us, O God, in your blessing of these gifts, that they might be used to further your hopes for this world, that they may become means of grace for us and for others,

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁶

⁴ Reflection written by Barbara Glasson

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Barbara Glasson

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

713 STF – Show me how to stand for justice OR

347 STF – Crown him with many crowns

Blessing

Go out from here and stand for justice, stand for unity, stand for inclusion.

Go out from here, filled not with judgement, but with grace, not with selfishness, but with mercy, not with jealousy, but with unity.

Go out from here, and may the Spirit of God go with each and every one of you, in Jesus' name

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker