



CHRISTMAS 1A

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

First Sunday After Christmas - Year A

28th December 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

28 STF – Jesus calls us here to meet him OR

218 STF – Unto us a boy is born!

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

178 STF – Long ago, prophets knew Christ would come OR

519 STF – Father, I place into your hands

Readings: Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

Hymn:

39 STF – Angel voices ever singing OR

83 STF – Praise my soul, the King of heaven

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

334 STF – Praise to the holiest in the height OR

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky OR

782 STF – Thuma mina (Send me, Lord)

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

The living Lord is here, in our midst.
And we are awake to the possibility of God's presence amongst us.
Come, by your Spirit, we pray,
And open our hearts and minds to your grace.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

28 STF – Jesus calls us here to meet him OR

218 STF – Unto us a boy is born!

Opening Prayers

These prayers are entitled: Entering into a new season with you.

Let us pray.

Lord, as we draw close to a New Year and a new season,
We reflect on all the things we are grateful for and in this, let us see you at the centre.

In awe we stand of the mercy and steadfast love you show to us through your teachings and ways on heaven and on earth.

As you gave your own son Jesus to earth, we see how immense your love is for us.

It shows how deeply you care for all kind throughout the generations.

You do not abandon us.

You see our distress and feel our heartache.

You stay with us in all walks of life.

You are not a distant God, and for this we are eternally grateful.

You are with us from our first cry to our very last breath.

Sharing in our joys and pain in this life.

We see the love you give to creation.

That draws us closer to you.

You share our every emotion and feeling through your son Jesus.

Breaker of chains, destroying the power of death and setting us free from fear.

In all the suffering Jesus faced on his own and with us, it showed the unwavering guiding protection in you.

We call upon creation to see these qualities in you and praise you O Lord.

From the heights of heaven to the depths of earth.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Let us go into this New Year of life more like you.

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

To live in compassion and love others in light of the truth you showed us.

We worship you now and always.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

The psalm reading today talks of everything in the world praising God! It's an amazing list of things that God has created and how their very being is a wonderful cry of thanks and praise!

Praise him, sun and moon;

praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens,

and you waters above the heavens!...

Praise the Lord from the earth,

you sea monsters and all deeps,

fire and hail, snow and frost,

stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars!

Wild animals and all cattle,

creeping things and flying birds!

Can we imagine a whole world of living things that are praising and glorifying God? What types of creatures or living beings might that include? Talk for a moment with the person next to you, naming different things. Some ideas to get you started...bats! Acorns! Dragonflies! Sunflowers! Elephants! What else can you think of? *(Take some suggestions after giving people a moment or two to share in their pairs).*

We are also giving thanks and praising God because Jesus, the Messiah, has been born.

We're celebrating the arrival of God's son because it is incredible news to know God is with us here on earth.

God isn't distant and faraway but right beside us, each day of our lives. So, what would a cry or shout of praise look like for us as human beings? What would we want to say in response to God sending his only son to love, know and save us? Have another moment to talk to the person next to you about your shout of praise and thanksgiving. *(Give everyone a minute or two to discuss this.)*

² Opening prayers written by Alice Arbon-Maher

Why don't we all share these words of praise from our hearts now – giving God glory as we say them aloud. On the count of three say or shout your praise to God...1.....2.....3

(Enjoy the cacophony of voices and words! Sections of the congregation could share this rather than all at once. Alternatively these could be written or drawn to create a 'banner of praise' on paper).

Amen.³

Hymn:

178 STF – Long ago, prophets knew Christ would come OR

519 STF – Father, I place into your hands

Readings: Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

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Reflections on the readings

Matthew 2:13–23 tells one of the darker stories of Christmas. We've just had angels and shepherds, gifts from wise men, and then, suddenly, the mood changes. Joseph is shaken awake in the night by a dream. "Get up," the angel says, "take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt." What follows is fear, violence, and loss. A family on the run. Mothers grieving. It's a stark reminder that God's story of salvation unfolds right in the middle of the world's brutality.

One of the joys of the Christmas season in my household is sitting down together to watch Christmas films. There's one I always suggest, though the rest of my family don't share my enthusiasm. It's *A Wonderful Life*. They say it's old and boring. I think it's brilliant!

Many of you will know George Bailey's despairing line: "I suppose it would have been better if I'd never been born." He looks at the brokenness around him and feels trapped, powerless, blind to the difference his life has made. It takes an angel, Clarence, (who is a little more bumbling than Joseph's dream messenger!), to open his eyes. George realises his life has been woven into others in ways he never noticed. The darkness was real, but so was the difference love had made.

Herod's world was also full of darkness, suspicion, fear, and violence. He lashed out at the most vulnerable to protect his throne. And yet God's answer was not another ruler, not more power, but a child. A fragile family forced to flee, joining the long line of refugees who, across history, have had to pack up their lives in a moment and run for safety.

And here's the heart of it: God doesn't stay at a safe distance. Jesus begins his life as a refugee. He knows what it is to be vulnerable, hunted, without a home. That too is part of the Christmas story. When we see those fleeing war zones, crossing seas in flimsy boats, or

³ All Age Talk written by Gail Adcock

knocking on the door of a strange land with nothing but hope, we glimpse something that connects right back to Bethlehem and Egypt.

Like George Bailey, we sometimes wonder if our small choices matter. The wonderful truth of God's story is that they do. Every act of welcome, every gesture of kindness, every prayer for peace, these small things are woven into something far greater than we can see. Egypt became a place of safety because one man obeyed a dream. Nazareth became a home because one family trusted God's leading.

So maybe the message for today is this: the light still shines, even in the shadows. God is with the vulnerable, the overlooked, the ones on the run. And we are called to be part of that story, to open our lives in ways that let God's love flow through us.

Why not have a conversation now, in groups of 3 and 4, about what that might look like for you, your family, and this community?

Some prompts that might help people if they are struggling to start the conversation:

- *Who are the people in our community who get overlooked or excluded?*
- *What changes have we seen in this town / village / city in recent years and do we need to adjust how we respond to that, as a church and as people?*
- *How 'welcome' do you think an 'outsider' would be in our church? What could we do differently to change that?*

When we do this work, we and others, may discover that, with God, it truly is a wonderful life. Amen.⁴

Hymn:

334 STF – Praise to the holiest in the height OR

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

Prayers of intercession

When Joseph was warned in a dream, he trusted and obeyed.

We pray for the Church,
that we may listen for your voice,
and follow the paths you set before us.

Guide us, Lord, in your mercy.

When Mary carried the child into exile, she bore both hope and fear.

We pray for families in danger,
for mothers who protect,
for fathers who provide,
for children who long for safety.

Guard them, Lord, in your mercy.

When Herod sought the life of the Child, cruelty walked the earth.

We pray for all who suffer from violence,
for lands torn by war,

⁴ Reflection written by Graeme Dutton

for people under unjust rulers,
for the innocent who perish.

Rescue them, Lord, in your mercy.

When the Holy Family became refugees in Egypt, strangers gave them shelter.
We pray for those without home or country,
for the displaced and the forgotten,
for all who offer welcome and hospitality.

Shelter them, Lord, in your mercy.

When they returned at last to Nazareth, they found rest in your providence.
We pray for peace in our communities,
for rest from fear and toil,
for trust in your guiding hand.

Bless us, Lord, in your mercy.

Holy Three-in-One,
Companion of pilgrims,
Protector of the weak,
and Light in the dark,
Keep us and all your children in your care, this day and always.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

In this season of giving, O God,
Help us to be truly thankful:
Thankful to you, the first gift, the initiator of all grace,
And to each other.
Help us to use our resources to make this world a better place,
A better reflection of your love.
Amen.⁶

Hymn:

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky OR
782 STF – Thuma mina (Send me, Lord)

Blessing

May the Spirit of Christmas be awake in you this week.
May you find places to see God at work,
May you embody the generosity of the season,
And the grace of the Christ-child, in our midst.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Graeme Dutton

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker