

We gather to worship God and we take time to still ourselves and to feel his presence. We light a candle as we are reminded that Christ is the light of the world.

THE PEACE

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to the apostles: 'I leave you peace, my peace I give to you.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you
And also with you.

CALL TO WORSHIP

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

HYMN StF 51 Great is thy faithfulness

[Great is Thy Faithfulness - YouTube](#)

1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee ;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not ;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be :

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!

*Morning by morning new mercies I see ;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

2 Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love :

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide ;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside !

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866-1960)

PRAYERS

Prayer of Approach and Confession

Heavenly Father, you call us like a good parent to you to guide and protect us, to nourish and lead us.

Brother Jesus, you call us like a caring elder brother to serve us and help us, to cheer us and invite us.

Healing Spirit, you call us and move us ever closer into fellowship with you and each other.

Yet like unruly children we strain at your guidance, we try to break away and do it ourselves. We feel our strength and imagine to be all powerful. We rejoice in our life and imagine ourselves to be immortal. We know our talents and want to be independent rather than depend on you. Before we know it we are in the grip of other powers, leading us away from your loving ways into the slavery of selfish greed, adoring false gods of youth-fulness, materialism and power.

Lord, forgive us and free us. Open our eyes how your wisdom knows true leadership to be service. Open our hearts that we may learn that neither race or tribe, culture or religion are barriers to separate us but that we are all one family in your love.

So open our hearts and minds to learn again to live your love as we celebrate and worship you here together.

Words of Assurance

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and will forgive us.

God provides freely, in the bread of heaven, all the mercy we need for life everlasting. The good news is forgiveness in the name of Christ Jesus. **Amen**

READING Psalm 130 A song of ascents.

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

² Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

⁶ I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

⁷ Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

READING Mark 3 : 20 - 35

Jesus accused by his family and by teachers of the law

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'

²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.'

²³ So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: 'How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.'

³⁰ He said this because they were saying, 'He has an impure spirit.'

³¹ Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting round him, and they told him, 'Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.'

³³ 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked.

³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle round him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.'

REFLECTION

Mark 3 : 24-25 "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand"

Jesus says that a kingdom which is divided cannot stand. Well, it doesn't require much reflection to see the truth in this. We see countries where there is internal conflict torn asunder – we have recently been praying for peace in Israel and the delicate situation that exists there. We see breakups in families where there is conflict.

And the problem affects us on a personal level – each of us is a divided kingdom. We are divided within ourselves, we are pulled in opposite directions; there is a war going on inside us, a war between light and darkness, good and evil.

Brian Keenan, who was held hostage in Lebanon in the 1980's said, "whilst in captivity I

was forced to confront the man I thought I was, and discovered that I was many people" – I think if we are honest with ourselves we can all relate to that.

We have to face this inner division and come to terms with it. Within each of us is division, fragility, darkness and evil. To cope with it, to manage this, we need to engage in a process of growth towards wholeness and unity. It is by the grace of God that the divided self can be made whole. Those who are unified have great strength, those who have peace within them radiate it to others; but those who don't, project onto others the conflict going on within them.

It is sin that divides us, that pulls us apart – part of us is pulling with God and the other part is pulling against God. Sin is not something that we can throw off once and for all, it is something that we learn to live with. What is important is our struggles for goodness and when we do that we are on the side of Christ. We learn what forgiveness is all about and we learn to share that forgiveness, but again there is a caveat – we cannot sin against the Holy Spirit, when we do that, we are denying Christ. Yes we will have doubts, that allows opening for God, but total denial is what Jesus says is the work of the devil.

And sin will divide us from one another, because essentially sin is a refusal to love. It means we are always putting our own needs before those of our neighbour. Adam and Eve in their disobedience brought a rift between them and God and also between the two of them.

Often friends, family, other groups, church leaders etc. try to tell us the right way to do things, they mean well and yet fail to see the divine rule present in Jesus. This is what was happening in our gospel reading, the teachers of the law and Jesus' own family did not understand. When we remember to put God at the centre of what we are doing we can overcome sin

Christ restores us to God's friendship and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to reach out to our neighbour in forgiveness and reconciliation. And so divisions are overcome, the kingdom of God is seen to have come among us.

We live in a precarious world, let us serve God by reaching out in love and not division.

HYMN StF 409 Let us build a house
[Let Us Build a House Where Love Can Dwell \(Singing the Faith 409 / StF 409\) - YouTube](#)

- 1 Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace ;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions :
*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*
- 2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace ;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus :
- 3 Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat :
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space ;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us :
- 4 Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face ;
let us bring an end to fear and danger :
- 5 Let us a build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter :

Marty Haugen (b.1950)

PRAYERS

Lord Jesus, crowds flocked to see you.
As we kneel before your presence, draw us
together to become your body, the Church.
Give us thankful hearts with which to praise
you.

We will wait for the Lord
Our hope is in your Word.

Lord Jesus, some questioned your sanity and
motives.
Stand alongside leaders and elected
representatives as they grapple with the pace
of change and shifting social landscapes

especially as we come out of lockdown.
Hold before us a vision of your Kingdom to
guide us through the mist of uncertainty.

We will wait for the Lord
Our hope is in your Word.

Lord Jesus, you said that a closed heart shuts
out your forgiveness.
Confront our stubbornness with your grace and
truth, help us to love one another in our
differences.
In humility and peace bring us to delight in you.

We will wait for the Lord
Our hope is in your Word.

Lord Jesus, you call servants of your will not
just friends but members of your family.
Look in compassion on your brothers and
sisters in their need
*In the stillness we bring to the Lord those
people and situations on our hearts.....*
We place our trust in your mercy.

We will wait for the Lord
Our hope is in your Word.

Lord Jesus, you prepare for your family an
eternal weight of glory.
Bring into your eternal presence all who have
died trusting in you
Raise us to live with you for ever.

We will wait for the Lord
Our hope is in your Word.
Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:
Our Father who art in heaven

BLESSING OF OUR GIFTS

Gracious God,
it is in giving that we receive,
in denying ourselves that we discover true
riches.

So we bring now these gifts,
seeking no reward except to know you better
and to serve you more faithfully, for in that is
fullness of life.

Receive our praise for that priceless gift,
in Jesus' name.

Amen

HYMN STF 544 As the deer
[As the deer pants for the water English Christian worship song - YouTube](#)

- 1 As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.
*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire
and I long to worship you.*
- 2 You're my friend and you are my brother,
even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.
- 3 I want you more than gold or silver,
only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.

Martin J. Nystrom (b.1956)

A METHODIST LOVEFEAST

We come to share in this Love Feast as we recall the many meals Jesus shared with his disciples during his ministry.

Jesus said "People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God." The first shall be last and the last shall be first, but we are invited.
Heavenly Father as we share in this feast we praise You for Your provision for us. You have been generous to us, you have heard our cry, you have provided food for all.

Father of earth and heaven,
your hungry children feed,
your grace be to our spirits given,
that true immortal bread.
Grant us and all our race
in Jesus Christ to prove
the sweetness of your pardoning grace,
the manna of your love.
(Written by John and Charles Wesley for a love feast)

*Please take the cake/ bread
or biscuit as we eat together*



We remember the fellowship
enjoyed within the body of Christ

We drink the water



Silence as we recall God's grace and
goodness

Let us pray.
**God of our salvation,
we thank you that we share again with the
risen Christ
and with all who love him in earth and
heaven.
We pray that, strengthened by his grace,
we may serve you faithfully all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

HYMNStF 691 What shall our greeting be
[Stf691 HP806 What shall our greeting be MOSCOW With BSL - YouTube](#)

- 1 What shall our greeting be :
sign of our unity ?
'Jesus is Lord !'
May we no more defend
barriers he died to end :
give me your hand, my friend —
one Church, one Lord !
- 2 What is our mission here ?
He makes his purpose clear :
one world, one Lord !
Spirit of truth, descend ;
all our confusions end :
give me your hand, my friend —
'Jesus is Lord !'
- 3 He comes to save us now :
to serve him is to know
life's true reward.
May he our lives amend,
all our betrayals end :
give me your hand, my friend —
'Jesus is Lord !' Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

BLESSING

Go now
and dare to be God's colourful community
in a world that prefers grey.

Dare to stand out
in a world that prefers conformity.

Dare to live
in a world that seeks death.

Dare to be God's
in a world that thinks it is its own.

THE GRACE

We say together...
**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all ever more. Amen.**

Some prayers adapted from
re:Worship
Intercessions for Year A, B and C – Ian Black
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