

Dorset South & West Circuit written service 8th January 2023

Prepared by Rev Ruth Lownsbrough and Richard Lownsbrough

Welcome to this act of worship. Know that although you may be on your own, you are part of God's church, worshipping God together with others at this time.

Call to Worship Psalm 29: 2, 10-11

Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendour.
The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king for ever.
May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace.

Hymn StF 415 The church of Christ in every age

1 The church of Christ in every age,
beset by change but Spirit led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead.

2 Across the world, across the street,
the victims of injustice cry
for shelter and for bread to eat,
and never live until they die.

3 Then let the servant church arise,
a caring church that longs to be
a partner in Christ's sacrifice,
and clothed in Christ's humanity.

4 For Christ alone, whose blood was shed,
can cure the fever in our blood,
and teach us how to share our bread
and feed the starving multitude.

5 We have no mission but to serve
in full obedience to our Lord:
to care for all, without reserve,
and spread Christ's liberating word.

Fred Pratt-Green

Prayers

Approach - Father of all, who created the heavens and the earth, thank you that we are your beloved.
Your Holy Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove.
May your Spirit meet us where we are today.
May your Spirit breathe new life into us today.
May you hold us with your righteous right hand. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Adoration - Almighty God, good Father to us all, creator and redeemer, we worship you today.
Beloved Jesus, who came and lived among us, who showed us how to live, we worship you today.
Holy Spirit, giver and sustainer of life, who guides us day by day in wisdom and truth,
we worship you today. Amen.

Confession & assurance of forgiveness – Dear Lord Jesus, even though you did no wrong
and did not need to be forgiven, you chose to be baptized; you chose to be like us.
We are sorry when we make wrong choices.
We are sorry when we don't have the right attitude.
We are sorry when we choose to go our own way, rather than following your perfect example.
We are sorry; please forgive us. Help us to show humility and obedience as you did.
Help us to become more like you. Amen.

Beloved Jesus, who loves us so much, thank you that, by your blood, we are forgiven
and restored to new life in you. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer - Our father in heaven, hallowed be your Name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Readings

Isaiah 42: 1-9 The Servant, a Light to the Nations

42 Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

² He will not cry out or lift up his voice
or make it heard in the street;

³ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth,
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

⁵ Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them
out, who spread out the earth and what comes
from it,

who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶ I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness;
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,^[a]
a light to the nations,

⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,

to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

⁸ I am the Lord; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.

⁹ See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

Matthew 3: 13-17 The Baptism of Jesus

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

Reflection written by Richard Lownsborough

Every morning during Advent I lit a candle to remind myself that: 'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.' Words John uses in his description of Jesus at the beginning of his record of the good news of Jesus. These words are echoed in Isaiah's prophecy about the Servant of God who would be 'a light to the nations' and who would 'bring out from prison those who sit in darkness!'

We live in dark times – so how reassuring are these words of hope!

At the beginning of each new year, I like to remind myself that, however gloomy things may seem, God is in control, he is in charge, he has a plan.

However you're feeling, whatever you're going through, however dark things seem to you right now, take heart! Jesus is for you! A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not quench!

Trust him, believe in him and walk with him! He is the light of the world! Whoever follows him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

Baptism is a sign of new life. It is: symbolic washing; dying and rising; turning from sin and turning to God; dedication and recommitment; a fresh start. Baptism doesn't signify the end of our troubles but a commitment to see them through; we see things in a new light: the stain of our sins is washed clean by the blood of Christ and, thanks to him, we will rise again in glory!

The baptism of Jesus was a public declaration by him of the start of his ministry. In being baptised, Jesus showed his allegiance to us – that he is one with us, that he was prepared to live and die for us! At his baptism we see Isaiah's prophecy being fulfilled: the Spirit of God descended on Jesus and God spoke from heaven saying: 'This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.'

Jesus' baptism heralded a new era, the dawn of a new age – the arrival and commencement of the Kingdom of God.

Baptism is a new beginning! For Jesus it was the beginning of his ministry of salvation.

Life is all about new beginnings. We are born. We grow and develop. We mature. We have new experiences. What new beginnings have you had in your life? A new house? A new job? A new car? A new relationship? A new family member? Last month my daughter Rachel was married – a new beginning for her and her husband, Matt! Twenty years ago, I heard God call me to be a 'fisher of men' - a new stage in my walk with God! Every day we face new challenges, new opportunities. Each day brings new choices and new chances to let the light of Christ shine in the darkness.

As you go into the year ahead, remember what God has done and see what God is doing!

"Former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare," says the Lord.

Fear not! Do not be anxious. Let not your heart be troubled. In Jesus all of God's promises are fulfilled. In Jesus our hope is secure!

Thanks be to God.

Amen

Thanksgiving *(you may wish to light a candle prior to saying the following)*

Lord, you are my light and salvation,

Your presence calms and reassures me,

You accept me as I am and cleanse me from all my sin.

Thank you, Lord, for the forgiveness and new life I have in you.

Lord, I rejoice in you and your saving power - you are my light and my salvation.

Hymn Singing the Faith 351

1 In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

2 In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fulness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones he came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

3 There in the ground his body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am his and he is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4 No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from his hand;
Till he returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Intercessions

Lord of light and love,
we ask your blessing on the Church throughout the world.
We pray for all who are struggling against dark forces of evil ...

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of light and love,
we pray for peace and harmony in our world.
We remember before you all who are suffering because of war, conflict, oppression, injustice ...
Please bless all who work to relieve suffering and to bring about your Kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of light and love,
we pray for all who are lonely or afraid
and all whose lives are darkened by illness or tragedy ...
We uphold before you all who are terminally ill
and all who can no longer look after themselves ...
Please bless all those who look after them.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of light and love, we pray for ourselves,
Lead us:
from darkness into your glorious light,
from death into fulness of life with you,
from despair into fulness of joy in you.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen

Blessing

The love of God flowing free – the love of God flow out from me;
The peace of God flowing free – the peace of God flow out from me;
The life of God flowing free – the life of God flow out from me.