

Call to Worship

The steadfast love of the Lord is established for ever. His faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

The Lord invites us and welcomes us. Let us worship the Lord.

Loving God, we gather in response to your invitation; we gather together, welcomed by you.

May the warmth of your welcome inspire and enhance the worship we offer to you.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn StF 440 Amazing grace

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.

God's grace has taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;

God's grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures;

He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.

And when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal life shall cease,

I shall possess, within the veil, a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

Prayers of adoration & thanks

My heart is ready, O God; I will sing your praise. Your steadfast love is higher than the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. (offer your prayers of thanksgiving).....Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory shine over all the earth. Amen.

Lord's Prayer.....

Readings: Jeremiah 28: 5-9, Matthew 10: 40-42

Both readings are concerned with ways in which people who bring the message of God are received by others; not always positively but both readings look forward to times when God will fulfil the lives of all in God's kingdom



How do you feel when someone knocks on your door and you're not sure who it is?

What is the best welcome you have ever received in someone's home?

What do you do to welcome newcomers to church?

Hymn StF 409 Let us build a house

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

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 a symbol of God's grace
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
All are welcome, all are welcome, All are welcome in this place.

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
All are welcome, all are welcome, All are welcome in this place

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:
All are welcome, all are welcome, All are welcome in this place

Let us 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:
All are welcome, all are welcome, All are welcome in this place

Reflection

The Gospel reading comes at the end of a block of Jesus teaching in Matthew's gospel about mission. Jesus is just about to send his Apostles (sent ones) out to proclaim the gospel in word and action. They must have wondered how they would be received....

Matthew's gospel emphasises importance of welcome, even in a society where hospitality to the stranger was very much part of the culture. If the disciples were welcomed, it meant that the people were open to hearing about what they had to say, giving them the opportunity to talk about Jesus and his teaching, healing, and the ways in which lives could be transformed, as the disciples' lives had been. For anyone who has initiated conversations about faith, Jesus, or spiritual things...it can be a nerve wracking thinghow is what I say going to be received?? In my few experiences of evangelism on the streets, some people want to engage, share views, ask questions, whilst others are not interested so you move on with a blessing on your lips. What's important is being prepared to have faith conversations when and where the opportunity arises.....may not be on the streets but perhaps more likely amongst friends and family as different situations arise.

Of course, prayer is essential, asking for an opportunity to share but also having the words to say....Jesus prayed for those he was sending out into the mission field.

Jesus was always open to those seeking something more in life...he was open and welcoming, prepared to engage in conversation with all kinds, especially those on the fringes of society.

He associated with rich and poor but he always has a preference towards those who are weak and vulnerable, marginalised or friendless for whatever reason.

He always had a special welcome for them, speaking of peace, inclusion, God's abundant provision and love.

The same encouragement that Matthew gave in his gospel, to the disciples of his day, is also for the disciples of our times.....you and me. There is reward for doing what God has called us to do.

Sometimes it might feel that the rewards are few, both then and now!! So what are they?

This passage teaches that when we welcome another person, we also welcome Jesus....the presence of God in each of us.....

In biblical times, family and kin relationships were foundational to society. One person was seen as a representative of the whole family so when one was welcomed by another family, it meant that the welcome extended to everyone in that family.

Matthew expands this to say that welcoming one apostle, sent out in Jesus' name, made in God's image, extended the welcome to the whole of God, Son & Father.

Think about that...as we welcome one person, we welcome God, Father, Son & Spirit. What a privilege! That alone gives us reason for making it the best welcome possible!

In the illustration of the simple and humble act of giving just a drink of water, Matthew also points forward to Ch 25 in his gospel....to the time of the Jewish 'age to come', the time of judgement when God himself would come to rule on earth and judge peoples' actions....the sheep and goats story.

The reward for those who had paid attention to the needs of the vulnerable, the least, the last and the lost, is life with God. A rapturous welcome into God's presence, for in serving the most vulnerable, they serve Jesus himself.

So as we go forward, may our welcome to others, even in these difficult times, reflect the welcome that Jesus offers to all, for in doing so we welcome Jesus himself among us. Amen

Prayer of confession

We are sorry, dear Lord, for the times we judge others and find them wanting.

We are sorry that we turn away from your children in their need.

We are sorry that we think we are too busy.

We are sorry for the times our welcome has been lukewarm.

Forgive us, and help us to remember the warmth of your welcome, and to be inspired to share that warmth with all people. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Generous God, Jesus said that whoever welcomed him, welcomes you:

We pray for those on the fringes of society; for those who feel rejected;
for those who are overlooked; for those whom others avoid.

May they know they are welcome in your kingdom.

May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for those who are lonely and frightened about the future

May they know they are welcome in your kingdom.

May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for those in prison; especially those kept in isolation.

May they know they are welcome in your kingdom.

May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for children and young people who have returned to schools, colleges and universities; for their families and those with responsibility for their education.

May they know they are welcome in your kingdom.

May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for health and social care professionals who are concerned about how the pandemic will affect people over the coming months. Strengthen and resource them with your compassion.

May they know they are welcome in your kingdom.

May they know the welcome of your love.

We pray for those whose future is bleak because of business collapse or unemployment due to the pandemic. For those for whom business uncertainty undermines security for them and their families.

May they know they are welcome in your kingdom.

May they know the welcome of your love.

Loving God, as you welcome us, may we welcome others with warmth and steadfast love. **Amen.**

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Hymn StF 411 May the God of hope go with us every day

May the God of hope go with us every day, filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.

May the God of justice speed us on our way, bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;

Working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.

God will be our Shepherd as we go our way and will not forsake us when we go astray.

Even though the load of life is hard to bear, we must not forget that God is always there

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;

Working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Blessing

Go in the name of Jesus, to follow the way of Jesus, to love with the love of Jesus,
and to be sustained by the peace of Jesus. **Amen.**