

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 21B

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

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Ordinary 21 - Year B
25th August 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens, adore him OR

31 STF – May the glory of the Lord fill his temple

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

157 STF – God has spoken—by his prophets OR

66 STF – The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

Readings: 1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69

Hymn:

486 STF – Who would true valour see OR

395 STF – Spirit of the living God

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

322 STF – How sweet the name of Jesus sounds OR

397 STF – The Spirit lives to set us free, walk, walk in the light

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell OR

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky

Blessing

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Call to worship

God of this moment,
God of this place,
God of all time and space,
Come amongst us and speak to us this day,
As we worship and praise you,
As we listen and reflect, in Jesus' name

Amen.¹

Hymn:

86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens, adore him OR

31 STF – May the glory of the Lord fill his temple

Opening Prayers

There's a song of praise
that wants always to spill from my lips
and from my heart,

Creator God.

A song started long ago,
when creation began.

A song of praise that's written into the fabric of the universe
and reverberates in my very soul.

My soul, that knows it cannot breathe its deepest without you.

In your goodness and care, all creation can know its place,
and I can know my full worth.

You bless me and keep me in ways
I can hardly begin to believe.

All my being longs to be in your presence, ever closer to you, even for a moment.

You are all love, all life,
and I long to follow your ways.

Yet.

Sometimes I forget to look
beyond my own devotion
to noticing others and serving them.

Sometimes I speak without thought
and hurt others.

Sometimes I am slow to act in
the ways of kindness and love you have called me to.

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

Forgive me, God,
for while I cannot be wholly myself without you,
I have not wholly shaped my days
in the pattern of your love,
and have forgotten to listen to you.

Amen.

To whom shall I go?
Who will hear my brokenness and love me still?

I will go to Him,
Jesus,
the Holy One of God
the one who has the words of eternal life,
and in Him I find refuge and forgiveness.

These are His words:
“Your sins are forgiven.”

I will come to Him,
and stand,
ready to sing the song of praise, forgiven.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Right now, we're in the middle of a great season of migration. We have students finishing their summer and returning to university towns or preparing for Welcomers week, we have people finishing high school or finishing summer jobs and looking forward to what comes next, and even families and friends getting ready to come back from holidays or family breaks, be it for a few days or a bit longer!

In all these things, there is a moment where everyone returns home before what comes next. For you all here, no matter if you are away for a night, a week or longer, what is the thing that you love about returning home?

(Open the floor to thoughts from the congregation)

For all that we've shared, returning home is comfort and offers us a perspective, a chance to pause, reflect, and then move forward.

What does home mean to you, and how can you be 'home' to others? Can you be a safe space? A place of sanctuary?

² Opening prayers written by Becki Stennett

Jesus left his home town to focus on his ministry, but he knew about grounding his ministry in people who made him feel safe and could follow his teaching, and be with him in his toughest times. Do you have that kind of community around you?

Let us pray.

God of Grace, be with us as we go about our days. Walk with us and steer us away from cutting others down, and may we be the pastoral and uplifting presence in our community.

Amen.³

Hymn:

157 STF – God has spoken—by his prophets OR

66 STF – The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

Readings: 1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69

Hymn:

486 STF – Who would true valour see OR

395 STF – Spirit of the living God

Reflections on the readings

Footfalls echo in the memory

Down the passage we did not take

Towards the door we never opened

Into the rose-garden.

(From 'Burnt Norton' in the Four Quartets by T.S. Eliot)

It has been said many times I'm sure that a person will find time for what they're most passionate about. I remember it being said to me on one occasion at college, and feeling deeply frustrated by it! Frustrated, probably because I felt that the person saying these words didn't really understand just how busy my weeks could be, and how many different people and activities require my attention!

Of course, I want it to be true, that I would find time for the things I'm passionate about, and plenty of it too. And I know that when I find the time for the things that matter most to me, it's transformational in my week and more. But I can't help but think that, when I look at my diary, perhaps it wouldn't be clear to a stranger observing how I spend my time what is most important to me.

Does that matter?

Well, I think it does.

The words above, taken from TS Eliot's poem 'Burnt Norton', part of the Four Quartets series, are quite hauntingly beautiful. In the series, Eliot is trying to wrestle with time, the Divine, the wide universe. The series comes together after 6 years, three of the poems being written to the backdrop of the bombs of World War 2 dropping, a time when the world is thrown into sharp relief, and taking stock becomes a more urgent activity.

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Annan-Hood

Eliot writes of the sound of footsteps echoing around in the memory, as one wonders about, and perhaps regrets, the things that *might have been* if we'd taken different paths, made different choices, or spent our time differently in the days we have spent so far. The words carry with them a poignancy, and more than a hint of regret.

In the readings from the Bible for today, from the Gospel of John and 1 Kings, there are glimpses of how people have spent their time, made decisions about what is important, and perhaps these readings can help us to reflect on the way we use the precious gift of time today.

Let's head to 1 Kings first of all. Solomon, in all his splendour, has spent 7 years building a temple for God. The ark of the covenant has been brought in, and a mysterious cloud has filled the temple which Solomon explains is the presence of God. Solomon then prays the prayer of dedication given in our lectionary reading today. An amazing undertaking, the building of the temple was an extraordinary way for Solomon and the people to demonstrate how holy God is, and how committed they are to worshipping God. A wonderful use of time!

But let's not forget Solomon also spends 13 years building a palace for himself...

Despite being highly renowned as wise, and dedicated to glorifying God, Solomon eventually learns to love wealth and the trappings of his own statues, and he turns away from God.

Does that path he takes start to reveal itself when we see the time taken on building for his own glory as well as God's?

In the Gospel of John, we learn that there are some people who followed Jesus who took the decision to stop following, when it is made clear that the path ahead is narrow and not easy. Some decide that they cannot give their time and energy to following Jesus at that point.

Jesus looks at his closest 12, and asks them 'do you also want to go away?'

Simon Peter speaks for the group, in what I imagine to be hushed tones: 'Lord, to whom could we go?' Picking up on Jesus' habit of answering a question with a question, Simon Peter hits the nail on the head: where on earth could they go, what on earth could they do instead, when they know that Jesus is the Holy One of God, the one with the words of eternal life?

No, the path is not easy, it promises many challenges. But, knowing the truth of who Christ is, how could we go anywhere else?

It's time to think about how we use our time well for the things we are passionate about. Can we be sure that, if a stranger were to look at our diaries, it would be clear that we are passionate about following Jesus, and knowing and sharing the love of God?

If not, maybe it's time for a shake-up, so we don't find ourselves looking back, the sounds of footsteps that might have taken us closer to God echoing in our memories as we regret not taking the path towards devotion and sharing God's goodness with others.

Some questions

- Are there moments in the week ahead when you have time for personal devotion, fellowship with others, and other activities that bring you closer to God?
- Are there lots of church meetings in your diary this week? Do these bring you closer to God, or are they lots about the church and not much about faith?

- How could you make changes in your diary to increase your time with God, increase your time learning about Jesus and studying the Bible, increase your time for prayer and holy conversation?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

322 STF – How sweet the name of Jesus sounds OR

397 STF – The Spirit lives to set us free, walk, walk in the light

Prayers of intercession

God of compassion,
I bring before you prayers for those things that matter to me,
and, as I pray, I ask that you would reveal those things
that matter most to you,
that they may become important to me too.

I pray for the world you created, the beautiful planet and all its diversity.

You made it all and said 'that's good', but it has been so damaged by human activity.
Reveal to me new ways to tend to your creation,
to challenge those who do such great damage,
and to restore the earth's beauty.

I pray for the people of the world, in all our beauty and diversity.
You have shown that your primary concern is always for those who are most vulnerable.

Reveal to me today the people you call me to care for,
the ways I can raise my voice for those who are silenced,
and how I can use my time to show Christ-like love to those around me.

I pray for those I know, in all their beauty and diversity.

For those I love and like to spend time with,
and for those I know but find hard to get along with.

Reveal to me today how to use my time and gifts
to be a peaceful and compassionate presence
to all those I meet, and give me eyes to see
even those people I find difficult
as you see them.

I pray for myself, for my life, in all its beauty and diversity.

I offer myself, my time, my thoughts, my energy,
to you, Holy God.

Reveal to me again today your love for me,
and help me to find time for you and your people this week.

These prayers I pray in the name of Jesus,
the Holy One,
the one with the words of Eternal Life. Amen.⁵

⁴ Reflection written by Becki Stennett

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Becki Stennett

We will now take up the offering.

Thank you Lord, for this day, for this moment,
And for bringing us here for an opportunity to worship you.
Help us to make use of all you have given us, including these gifts of money,
To help to transform your world, in Jesus' name,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell OR

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky

Blessing

Let us build a house where love can dwell, here in this church, in our own homes, in our towns, villages and communities. Let love thrive and grow here, and let it begin with me, and you, and you, and you.

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker