



Call to worship

We are called into this place, at this time,
to worship: God who loves us;
Christ who teaches us,
and the Holy Spirit who enables us.
Let's be ready to respond
to the generosity of God.

Hymn - STF 455 All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

3 God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

4 Daily doth th' Almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

5 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Prayers of Adoration

God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you have given us far more than we ever could have imagined.
We trace the history of your people through the Scriptures,
learning from the devotion of prophets, priests and kings;
disciples, apostles and followers,
and readers, writers and companions on the way.
You help us see our purpose in your creation:
to love and care for the earth that feeds us,
to cherish the gifts we have and to love those we live alongside.
With joy and with gladness we worship you.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, the world around us is in a sorry state.

We see the effects of climate change affecting the poor the most.

Forgive us for our misuse of the earth's resource.

Lord, **forgive.**

We see people in some parts of the world crying out in hunger.

Forgive us for so much unequal sharing and wasting so much.

Lord, **forgive.**

We see wars and conflicts around the world destroying lives and futures.

Forgive us for not speaking out for peace.

Lord, **forgive.**

We see the strong and powerful bullying the powerless.

Forgive us for not standing up to those who misuse their authority.

Lord, **forgive.**

Amen.

God forgives us and understands our regrets and our hopes.

Let us go in peace and love to serve our generous God.

Amen.

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
and 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.

Hymn - STF 424 God forgave my sin

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his love as he told me to.

*He said: 'Freely, freely you have received;
freely, freely give.*

*Go in my name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'*

All power is given in Jesus' name,
in earth and heaven in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share his power as he told me to.

He said: 'Freely, freely.....

Bible reading – Genesis 45 v 3 – 11, 15

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. ⁷But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.^[a]

⁸"So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what

your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. ¹⁰ You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

Hymn - STF 519 Fath I place into your hands

Father, I place into Your hands,
The things I cannot do.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that I've been through.
Father, I place into Your hands
The way that I should go,
For I know I always can trust You.

Father, we love to see Your face,
We love to hear Your voice.
Father, we love to sing Your praise
And in Your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with You
And in Your presence rest,
For we know we always can trust You.

Father, I place into Your hands
My friends and family.
Father, I place into Your hands
The things that trouble me.
Father, I place into Your hands
The person I would be,
For I know I always can trust You.

Father, I want to be with You
And do the things You do.
Father, I want to speak the words
That You are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
That You will draw to You,
For I know that I am one with You.

Bible reading – Luke 6 v 27-38

27 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Message

A news report this week focussed on people generally living longer. There was once a reporter who was interviewing an old man on his 100th birthday. "What are you most proud of?" he asked. "Well," said the man, "I don't have an enemy in the world." "What a beautiful thought! How inspirational!" said the reporter. "Yep," added the man, I've "outlived every last one of them."

At this particular time in his ministry, Jesus, was chatting to his disciples. "Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man."

Their life as disciples would not be easy. They would be rejected and despised. So, Jesus follows these words with a message about “loving their enemies.” Their response to persecution was to be different than society’s norm. At the time, revenge was the common response when someone hurt you, abused you, or did anything to you that was unjust. It was “an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth” mentality that existed in the lives of people.

Jesus was presenting a new standard, a non-violent, positive approach to any form of hostility. “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt.”

Who among us is able to live up to such an impossible standard? It’s not easy. Dare I say that the order of our day is no different than in Jesus’ day. Payback (often) is still the norm.

I wonder how people in America feel about the decisions of Donald Trump in recent weeks. There are obviously some in favour, or he wouldn’t have been voted in as President, but the way that I see it is that he is upsetting people both in his country and beyond and causing global chaos. How should people show love in these difficult times?

We have a real challenge ahead of us. Making amends with people of opposing views takes patience and compromise. Yet, this is precisely what Jesus wanted his followers to do. In fact, he even took it a step further. “Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

I have recently been reconciled with a friend who fell out with my late husband over an issue about Brexit which is now some time ago, and he hasn’t spoken to me since, but only last week we have been in touch again. Forgiving our friends who have different points of view to us isn’t always easy for the opposition but loving our enemies is a much more daunting task.

Jesus was advocating a behaviour that is totally opposite from revenge. “I say to you, turn the other cheek,” and “give them your shirt as well as your coat.”

To love our enemies prevents us from acting out of our own self-interest. It means that forgiveness is at the very core of our faith. It means that to do harm to others in any way is totally out of the question. It means that we live by a higher standard, one that leads us to a new and different world which transcends the one in which we live.

To follow this principle seems humanly impossible. When we look at what has been happening in Israel and Palestine what we have seen is definitely behaviour that mirrors the idea of an eye for an eye. Unfortunately, there is a never-ending tragic cycle of violence that does nothing but escalate and cause further bloodshed. We continue to pray for a peace that passes all understanding in that situation.

Jesus calls us to break the cycle by taking a road that does not seek revenge. Someone has to take the first step and model a behaviour that sets the stage for peace and harmony. Genuine people of faith use restraint and love their enemies.

The story of Joseph is a well known one. His brothers are jealous of the attention that he is getting from his father who gives him a coloured coat.. He is sold as a slave to Egypt where he faced some difficult challenges. He became his master Potiphar’s favourite and faced the jealousy of Potiphar’s wife who falsely accuses him of attempted rape resulting in him ending up in prison. Later, Joseph’s interpretation of dreams leads to him becoming a part of Pharaoh’s court where he interprets Pharaoh’s dreams.

Later, he becomes a leader and ruler of the land. This is a story all about forgiveness as Joseph forgives his brothers for the terrible way that they treated him.

How easy would it have been for Joseph to have brought a punishment upon his brothers in his position as leader? It wouldn't be a far stretch to call his brothers enemies given what they did to him, but he chose to forgive and love them.

There's been an issue this week in the news about lights being too bright on the roads and drivers being blinded by them. The following story is from a sermon by Martin Luther King. "My brother and I were driving one evening to Chattanooga, Tennessee, from Atlanta. He was driving the car. And for some reason the drivers were very discourteous that night. They didn't dim their lights; hardly any driver that passed by dimmed his lights. And I remember very vividly, my brother A. D. looked over and in a tone of anger said: 'I know what I'm going to do. The next car that comes along here and refuses to dim the lights, I'm going to fail to dim mine and put them on at full power.' And I looked at him right quick and said: 'Oh no, don't do that. There'd be too much light on this highway, and it will end up in mutual destruction for all. Somebody's got to have some sense on this highway.' Somebody must have sense enough to dim the lights, and that is the trouble, isn't it? As all of the civilisations of the world move up the highway of history, so many have looked at other civilisations who have refused to dim the lights, and they decided to refuse to dim theirs too.

Somewhere somebody must have some sense. People must see that force produces force, hate produces hate, toughness produces toughness. And it is all a descending spiral, ultimately ending in destruction for everyone. Somebody must have the sense to cut off the chain of hate and the chain of evil in the universe. And you do that by love."

As Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the most high." To be children of the most high is to be people who live by a higher standard. They are people who ascribe to a non-violent lifestyle. They are people who are willing to turn the other cheek. They are people who break the cycle of violence by dimming their lights. May we that be on that journey even if we don't feel we've quite got there.

Hymn - STF 242 A new commandment

A new commandment

I give unto you

That you love one another

As I have loved you

That you love one another

As I have loved you

By this the world will know that you are My disciples

If you have loved one for another

By this the world will know that you are My disciples

If you have loved one for another

By this the world will know that you are My disciples

If you have loved one for another

By this the world will know that you are My disciples

If you have loved one for another

Prayers of intercession

Living God, we ask for a generous spirit to pray for our world with passion, with persistence and with your heart of love.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, receive our prayer.

We pray for a generous spirit for the leaders of the world, that their decisions would be shaped by wisdom, justice and courage.

We pray for those whose are hugely impacted by these decisions;

those who feel helpless, those who feel afraid, angry or betrayed;

those who are affected financially and those whose lives are endangered.

We remember especially the people of Ukraine and Russia, of Israel and Palestine,

and we pray for those people suffering in places of extreme violence, especially those in DR Congo.

Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, receive our prayer.

We pray for a generous spirit for the faith leaders of the world,
for integrity, prayerfulness and action,
and particularly for those who guide and shape our worship
and life together in this place.

We pray for a passion to serve, a willingness to listen, a commitment to change
and a dependence on you to live as your kingdom people.

Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, receive our prayer.

We pray for a generous spirit for those in the media:

journalists, film makers and influencers,

that their headlines, stories and images would be truthful, challenging but fair.

We pray for those whose lives have been ruined by the press, but give thanks
and also pray for those who risk their lives to bring hidden suffering
and injustices to the eyes of the world.

We pray for those killed in war zones and those silenced by imprisonment.

Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, receive our prayer.

And we pray for all those in need of receiving your generous spirit
of hope, healing and love:

those under great stress at work, at home;

those surviving on minimal resources;

those battling trauma and anxiety;

those we know and name now....

and those with no-one to name them in prayer.

Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, receive our prayer.

Amen.

Hymn - STF 713 Show me how to stand for justice

Show me how to stand for justice:

how to work for what is right,

how to challenge false assumptions,

how to walk within the light.

May I learn to share more freely

in a world so full of greed,

showing your immense compassion

by the life I choose to lead.

2. Teach my heart to treasure mercy,
whether given or received –
for my need has not diminished
since the day I first believed:
let me seek no satisfaction
boasting of what I have done,
but rejoice that I am pardoned
and accepted in your Son.

3. Gladly I embrace a lifestyle
modelled on your living word,
in humility submitting
to the truth which I have heard.
Make me conscious of your presence
every day, in all I do:
by your Spirit's gracious prompting
may I learn to walk with you.

Closing prayer

Help me to be forgiving

when others are unfair or unkind or unfriendly.

Help me to show a generosity of spirit

in the way I respond to others,

for that is how you treat me.

Amen.

All Prayers from Roots on the Web [Epiphany 7](#)