

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 10th January

Preparation

As we prepare to worship God let us keep silence for a moment, calm our minds and focus on God's unfailing presence with us all.

Call to Worship

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
for his love endures for ever.

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

Lord, your Church on earth is seeking (410)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrYUghRqKOU>

Lord, your Church on earth is seeking
your renewal from above;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of your love.
We would heed your great commission:
sending us to every place –
preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.

Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within:
light for darkness; joy for sorrow;
love for hatred; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.

In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell,
let us show the Saviour's pity,
let us of his mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
let us serve, and seek to bring
all the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King.

Hugh Sherlock (1905-1998)

Prayers of Approach and Confession

God our source and guide and goal:
you have made us in your image
and set us in a world full of beauty;
you dwell in light unapproachable,
yet you have come to be among us,
full of grace and truth;
you are the power from on high,
coming in wind and flame to work your
wonders in our midst.

Gracious God, awaken us from sleep
that we may worship you in spirit and in
truth.

Silence

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of
God.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive
ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and
just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us
from every wrong.

Therefore, let us confess our sins and seek
God's forgiveness:

Almighty God, we confess before you
our own sin, the sin of the Church
and the sin of the world, in which we share.
We have not loved you with our whole being;
we have not loved our neighbour as
ourselves.

In your mercy,
forgive us when we turn from you;
release us from the burdens of our past,
and remake us in your image and likeness
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

In Christ, God was reconciling the world to
himself.

Through him our sins are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

The Lord also says:
If any want to become my followers,
let them deny themselves
and take up their cross and follow me.

Read Genesis 1.1-5

Read Mark 1.4-11

Reflection

What would you do with a clean slate? If you could roll back time and start over, what would you do with the time allotted to you?

It's a tempting question to ruminate on, one filled with 'what ifs' and 'maybes'. Would you make the same life choices and follow the same path through this mortal coil, or would you do things differently?

Our lives are replete with choices and chances and happenings that befall us, of which it's only natural for us to reflect back on and to think how different things might have been if we could only have our time again.

It's usually the bad stuff; the regrets, the painful memories, the guilt that we still bear for past mistakes, that is the greatest cause of such introspection, and that deep longing to turn back the clock.

The term a 'clean slate' has its origins in times when classrooms were filled with small slates that students wrote in chalk on. One could purge all evidence of a mistake, perhaps to a thorny algebra problem, by wiping the slate clean and starting over again. Turning over a new leaf, or a new page has the same connotation, the chance for a fresh start, a new beginning freed from the constraints of past errors and seemingly wrong turns.

Of course, no matter how tempting it can be to dwell on the past, we know that there is nothing we can do to change it.

The great Congregational hymn-writer, Isaac Watts, penned the words '*time, like an ever-rolling stream*' as part of one of his most famous hymns, '*Our God, our help in ages*

past'. Reflecting on Psalm 90, this was his way of understanding the great continuum that we are part of and that, like it or not, the water which rolls down a stream is ever-changing, never to be recaptured in the same place again. His response to this, so the hymn goes, was that as well as seeing God as our help in ages past, we are also to consider God as our hope for years to come.

If you think about it there is a beautiful sense of synergy to this realisation, that the past which we cannot, by definition, change becomes a locus for seeking God's help in dealing with the course of the stream still before us.

The one time of the year when I find this synergy is reflected so very keenly is at the start of a New Year. As the final moments of one year pass away, our thoughts naturally scan our experiences of the days it has either gifted or cursed us with. Yet, as the New Year is birthed, thoughts change to the newness that has now been offered to us, the chances now before us, the possibilities that yet may delight us and the reassurance that hope can still be kindled in our hearts.

Our reading from Genesis 1 is the embodiment of that newness, that freshness, that hope and purpose.

'In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.'

It is the ultimate new dawn, the moment of change, of new possibility.

When I think about how I can envisage that future hope within God's presence, I find the word '*calling*' is a helpful focus on how we can discern how God is *calling* us to lead

transformed lives through Christ. Not calling in the sense of it being pre-ordained and destined, or even in the sense of what we're being called to do, but rather, what we're being called to be. How, in the very essence of our being we are reflecting that resurrection hope in our lives and to the world. This is less about *'what we do'*, and more about *'who we are'*.

When Jesus was baptised in the Jordan by John, God's response wasn't some kind of heavenly manifesto or job description defining what Jesus should or would do, but was an acknowledgment of who Jesus was, an acknowledgment of his identity, of all that could be achieved through Jesus being who he was.

'And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

What would be our response to that sense of calling, how would we respond if we heard God saying to each and every one of us: *'You are my child, my Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'*

If our faith is about being *'called'* into a life of new possibilities and, if our perspective is supposed to be shaped by God's hope and pleasure in us, then what does that look like to us at the dawn of a new year? What does turning over a new spiritual leaf in 2021 mean for us?

May God's epiphany to us show us the need to reveal God's light to all, and may we, despite all the odds, believe in hope and bear witness to the creative possibilities of God's love at work in the world. Amen

Prayers of Concern

Loving God,
in all the changes and chances of our lives,
all the many uncertainties we face,
we thank you that you are a God we can
depend on,
always good,
always loving,
always merciful and always faithful.

We thank you for the assurance
that, whatever we may be confronted with,
your love will go on reaching out,
your hand go on supporting,
and your purpose go on being fulfilled.

Loving God,
hear our prayers for all those in our world
who seek to further your will here on earth –
those who work for peace,
who campaign for justice,
who strive to relieve poverty,
who fight for the hungry –
all those who struggle for the oppressed and
exploited,
the under-privileged and all denied their
proper rights.
Prosper their efforts and grant them
inspiration so that they may challenge people
everywhere to give of themselves in the
service of others.

Loving God,
we bring before you the sick and suffering of
our world,
all those wrestling with illness in body, mind
or spirit.

We pray for those afflicted in body –
enduring physical pain,
overwhelmed by disabling disease,
waiting for an operation or further treatment
and fearful of what the future may hold.

We pray for those afflicted in spirit –
those who feel their lives to be empty,
those whose confidence has broken down,

those unable to cope with the pressures of life,
the lonely, and all who are bereaved.

In a moment of quiet, we bring before you particular people and situations on our hearts today, and the needs and concerns of our own lives ...

Living God,
speak to each of them, as to us, in your still small voice of calm,
grant us all your peace which passes all understanding,
that quiet confidence which only you can bring,
and so may our burdens be lifted
and our souls refreshed.
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

I, the Lord of sea and sky (StF 663)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk>

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,

give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord ...

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life for them.
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord ...

Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)

Dismissal & Blessing

May God who travels with us along the way
of faith,
bless us on our way.
May God who thirsts for truth and justice,
bless us with an insatiable thirst for the truth.
May God who longs for us
to enjoy life in all its fullness,
bless us with a child-like delight in life in all its
wonder.

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,
be our way, our truth, our life
now, and always. Amen

Service prepared by the Revd Tim Searle

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