

**Winchester Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit  
Service at Home Sheet 16<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

**Hope in November**

Prepared by Pat Fry and Lisa Ball

When Lisa and I read through the set lessons for today, at first we struggled. For many of us November is a difficult month, a month we especially need hope. I liked the Old Testament reading from Isaiah, and it struck me that it led naturally to a favourite passage from Revelation; in each the writer expresses hope for God's coming kingdom. But as I explored further, I found I wasn't writing a standard one hour service, but more a series of three reflections to ponder at different times during the week.

**Section 1 November**

I remember learning two poems about November years ago, at school.

Thomas Hood wrote a very negative description of the eleventh month, each line beginning with the word no, and ending: "No fruit, no flowers, no leaves, no birds, November."

Walter de la Mare wrote:

The wind is where the rose was,  
cold rain where the sweet grass was,  
and clouds like sheep  
stream o'er the steep  
grey skies where the lark was."

Unless you have particular family celebrations in November, it would be very easy to sink into a depressed mood.

We need to heed Paul's advice to the Philippians 4:8: "Fill your minds with things that are good and deserve praise; things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honourable."

So take time to ponder a happy memory, Maybe time with family or friends, a beautiful place, a piece of music you love... and give thanks to God for all it means to you. Spend time with a good memory and give thanks.

Now come back to the present and think of something that has brightened your day during the past week. Seemingly small, almost insignificant things can make a huge difference. Give thanks for something that has brightened your week - a conversation, a phone call, a TV programme, music... And give thanks to God, the giver of every good gift.

Our next hymn reminds us that God is present throughout our ordinary everyday lives.

**Hymn StF526 Lord of all hopefulness**

<https://youtu.be/PNILEI8rkSA>

- 1 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,  
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.
- 2 Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
- 3 Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,  
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.
- 4 Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,  
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Jan Struther (Joyce Placzek) (1901-1953)

**Section 2 Visions of hope in the Bible**

**Read Isaiah 65: 17-25**

### Reflection

This is a vision of hope in very dark times. The city of Jerusalem had been destroyed in war, most of its people exiled to Babylon.

They held on to a dream of returning and rebuilding their city as a place of safety and security, and this vision sustained them. Fig trees grow slowly; people could only eat the fruits of their own fig trees if they had lived safely in the same place for many years, so it's a picture of long term security, where all needs can be met.

The reality, when they did return, was far less happy, and as we know, Jerusalem would be destroyed yet again. Many of the prophets saw the new Jerusalem as a wonderful place where all would be welcomed and encouraged to worship the same God, obey his commands and be enabled to live in peace

Tragically, bitter history has led some to turn this vision into a narrow militant Zionism that has no thought for the human rights of others, in spite of all the prophets say about proper care for all people. So, we come to a prayer for peace.

### Prayer for Peace

Gracious God , we see the horror of war on our television news, and we long for a peaceful world, where everyone can enjoy living in safety as Isaiah pictured.

We lift to you now our concern for all who live in fear, and for all whose pain has turned to the bitterness that so easily leads to acts of violence.

We pray for your blessing on all who work to relieve suffering and to build peace.

We long for the coming of your kingdom of peace and joy.

As Jesus taught us we pray:

Our Father who art in heaven...

The early Christians saw Isaiah's prophecy in a new way, in the light of Jesus teaching that God's love is for all people of every nationality.

Writing in difficult times, when many Christians were facing persecution, the writer of Revelation pictures the most perfect city he can imagine, as God's home, where all are welcome, and only evil is excluded. Such a vision has sustained many Christian people then and down the ages since.

### Read : Revelation 21: 1-4, 22-26

We probably all have different pictures in our minds when we think of God's kingdom; you may find this picture of a bejewelled city strange, as I do. The way we each visualise it will depend on our experiences.

It's the essentials that inspire the imagery that matter: awesome, wondrous, filled with life, light and love in the presence of God, inclusive, yet secure from all evil, completely beyond our power to fully grasp.

Our next hymn was new in Singing the Faith; it expresses a wonderful vision of the Kingdom of God.

### Hymn StF738 There is a new heaven, there is a new earth ( not available on youtube)

There is a new heaven, there is a new earth,  
There is a new city that God brings to birth.  
It live in the mind of our Saviour this day, where  
tears, pain and sadness are all wiped away.

*Come people of God, your courage renew, For  
God reigns already, creates life anew,  
Be faithful and bold to welcome God's day  
that tears, pain and sadness may vanish away.*

The homeless and hungry will sing a new song,  
for leisure and labour to all shall belong,  
distinctions, divisions which hurt and destroy  
will all disappear, leaving love, hope and joy.  
*Come people of God.....*

The river life-giving shall stream from God's  
throne  
with healing, forgiving; war shall not be known.  
The nations shall gather to live in God's light.  
United for ever in joy and delight.

*Come people of God....*

*Ruth Duck born 1947*

### **Section3 What about me here and now?**

Having battled with depression I know there are times when such remote visions don't meet our need. We can only focus on what is immediately around.

At a Circuit quiet day, I wrote a long poem about experiencing God like the sea. Here's one verse: there are times when it feels that God is as remote as the sea at low tide in Morecombe Bay.

God, how we lose sight of you  
Distant beyond our knowing.  
As the sea at lowest tide,  
is far out of reach;  
yet we know the tide will turn  
come swiftly up the beach,  
trust we will know God near again.

Here's another poem on the same theme, one of Lisa's favourites:

The sun is there...  
The sun IS there  
but the clouds are in the way.  
Clouds that sadness makes  
out of fragments of your broken life,  
the shattered memories of better days,  
when pain and suffering were strangers to you  
and tears were simply rainy weather.  
But still the sun IS there.  
The warmth still glowing in your family's love,  
the constancy of friends,  
the unexpected kindnesses  
in good times and bad.  
The sun IS there.

*By Sheila Gray*

In India, the lotus flower is a symbol of hope, as symbol of divine presence in the darkest days. That's because the lotus flower flourishes in dirty stagnant water. So the church of South India cross combines the cross with the lotus flower.

There may be times when prayer feels as if you are speaking to emptiness, or a brick wall.

Then, for some of us, though not all, the routine of once a day saying a familiar loved prayer can be helpful. The old chorus Count your blessings is good advice, to do so can help us when we feel low.

One problem is that sometimes a method that has been really helpful at one point in our lives, no longer helps; and something one person finds helpful may be no help to another; it's not that one is right and one is wrong, simply that we are all unique individuals. So we need not despair if one person's advice does not meet our particular need.

#### **Lisa's personal reflection on this theme**

"At present I am attending pain management sessions, and I feel hopeful as well as realistic about the improvements these sessions will help me to bring about in my life. Many of us experience times when it is difficult to maintain hope.

As we recall stories from the Gospels, we remember there were many times when Jesus gave life-transforming hope to people whose circumstances had seemed devoid of hope.

Lord Jesus tells us to love others as we love ourselves. How would you offer hope to another person?

Perhaps you would remind them that they had already survived many difficulties and could take encouragement from realising they are stronger than they feel at present. Can you tell yourself this too?

In the back of my daily readings, I keep some prayer cards. A favourite is the well-known serenity prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

It is often fear that blocks out hope, so I would like to share with you a prayer written by David Adam, who writes very clear straight-

forward prayers based on the Northumbrian Celtic tradition:

Do not be afraid

God's power to your weakness.  
God's light to your darkness.  
God's love to your loneliness.  
God's care to your troubles.  
God's peace to your distress.  
God's eternity fills your life. Amen

Prayer for others going through dark times

Earlier we gave thanks for small things that encouraged us. The famous second Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, wrote:

"The smallest flower above the tree line can spur us on to the top of the mountain."

A beautiful picture to express a truth we know well:  
Small things, kind words, thoughtful actions, a smile, can be transformative. So we are called to play a part in encouraging others, in our own small ways. Sometimes the only thing we can do is pray. Never underrate the importance of such prayer.

So now hold before God someone you know going through a tough time; visualise them surrounded by the light of God's love, and pray they may know the peace of God in whatever their situation is.

And pray that you will be shown if there is anything you can do to give encouragement

We end our prayer time with a lovely blessing from last weeks' thought for the day from the Iona Community's Wild Goose publications:

"May we discover the road we didn't choose, didn't want to travel, leads unerringly towards the light."

(Francis Copley a Book of Blessings).

Hymn StF455 All my hope on God is founded  
<https://youtu.be/W2oYTtyBSxk>

- 1 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 our trust;  
what with care and toil we fashion,  
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 the 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.

Robert Bridges 1844-1930

Blessing

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen