

**Call to worship** (based on Isaiah 49:1-7)

Listen up, everyone!  
God has given us work to do.  
God has called each of us  
before we were even born.  
It was God who named us.  
It is God who claims us.  
The light of God's love shines in us.  
Let's shine God's love into all the world!

**Hymn** Christ be our light Red folder 65

Longing for light, we wait in darkness  
Longing for truth, we turn to You.  
Make us Your own, Your holy people  
Light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in our hearts.*  
*Shine through the darkness.*  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in Your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled  
Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has pow'r to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us Your bread, broken for others  
Shared until all are fed.

Many the gifts, many the people,  
Many the heart that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another  
Making your kingdom come.

Bernadette Farrell

**Gifts**

On my own what I have to give doesn't amount to much  
in the light of all you have given to me  
and in the face of so much need.  
Put together as a congregation, what we offer you here in love  
becomes more, not simply added together,  
but somehow multiplied in its usefulness.  
We ask you to bless our gifts  
and with the addition of your blessing and grace,  
there is enough for all, and enough for your mission in this place. Amen

**Opening Prayer** URC Prayer Handbook, p8

**Hymn** Source and Sovereign tune *Aberystwyth* at R&S 332

Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud,  
Fortress, Fountain,  
Shelter, Light, Judge,  
Defender, Mercy, Might,  
Life whose life all life all endowed:

*May the church at prayer recall  
that no single holy name  
but the truth and feeds  
them all is the God whom we proclaim.*

Word and Wisdom, Root and Vine,  
Shepherd, Saviour, Servant,  
Lamb, Well and Water, Bread and Wine,  
Way who leads us to the I AM:

Storm and Stillness, Breath  
and Dove, Thunder, Tempest,  
Whirlwind, Fire, Comfort, Counsellor,  
Presence Love, Energies that never Tire.

Thomas H. Troeger

**Bible readings:**      **Isaiah 49:1-7**  
                                 **John 1:29-42**

What's in a name? Quite a lot actually. Today we have heard from the prophet Isaiah how 'the Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me.' The 'I' here is the servant figure in Isaiah, sometimes linked to Jesus, as the coming servant of God, but in these verses referring to Israel, the Jewish people as a whole, as the servant of God. The servant is a light to all nations, so that God's salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. In John's Gospel we hear how Jesus renamed Simon when he became his disciple – 'You are to be called Cephas' translated as Peter, which means the rock and later we hear how Jesus says Peter is the rock on which the church will be built. Names in the Bible mean something and often confer characteristics on the person with that name. For example the name Jeremiah means appointed by God, and Jeremiah was appointed as a prophet by God. We heard during the Christmas season how an angel appeared to Joseph and told him to name the child Jesus, 'for he will save people from their sins.' – literally, the name means Lord God is salvation. He is also to be called Emmanuel – 'God is with us'. Jesus is known as the Messiah, the anointed one, the one chosen by God.

We didn't hear today's lectionary reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, but Paul's name was also changed from Saul to Paul after his Damascus Road experience. I've never actually looked it up before, but Paul means small or humble, the least of, and Paul describes himself often as a servant of God. Saul, his original Hebrew name, means prayed for and Saul was the first king of Israel. So, Paul the apostle was brought down from kingly associations to being humble. In the reading from Corinthian's Paul says to them, as he often does, 'I appeal to you, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And we still invoke the name of Christ – we often end our prayers by saying, in Jesus' name we pray.

Names are important. Parents have a responsibility when they name their children to think carefully about it, and hopefully to choose a name which will not cause the child to be bullied or ridiculed.

And we know, sadly, that names can be used to attack and ridicule people, either their actual name, or nicknames, or insults which are often some play on a person's ethnicity, sexuality, disability or educational level. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words shall never hurt me – we know that isn't true. Words can hurt a great deal. Apparently, this children's' rhyme was used as a defence against name-calling and verbal bullying, intended to increase resiliency, avoid physical retaliation and to help children remain calm in the face of bullies calling them names.

What do our names mean? Do people know? Were they given a name for a particular reason?

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In my father's family, it was the tradition that children were named after uncles and aunts. So, my dad being the youngest, was given as his second name the name of the youngest uncle. My dad gave all of us two names, one from the Old Testament and one from the New. He also tried to give each of us a version of our mum's name Mary. So, my eldest sister's second name is Mary, the next sister is Miriam also a version of Mary, but he couldn't come up with a Mary variation by the time he got to me, so I got Elisabeth, which coincidentally, or not, was his grandmother's name. In England and other northern countries, children often used to be given their parent's name, especially in Iceland, which is how you end up with names like Magnus Magnusson. And many surnames are derived from occupations – Smith, Carter, Cooper and so on. Young comes from Younger, as sons were often called John the Younger, for example, the son of John. Though of course that could also give you Johnson. Well, I won't go much further down that road as I'm no expert on the origin of Christian names or surnames.

A Christian name is sometimes referred to as a baptismal name. Technically, it is a religious personal name given on the occasion of a Christian baptism, although it is now most commonly assigned by parents at birth, and people have lost any knowledge of it having a religious meaning. In English-speaking cultures, a person's Christian name is usually their first name and is typically the name by which the person likes to be known. In Buddhism, when people become a nun or monk, they are given a new Buddhist name, which always has a meaning. And Popes are given a name, other than their birth name when they become Pope. They choose this name, and it is often for a previous Pope or other person they admire. The current Pope is said to have chosen his name in honour of St Francis of Assisi because he was a lover of the poor.

For the last few years, I have taken part in something called the January Challenge. Every day during January you are sent a creative challenge to try. You may remember I usually included an idea from the Weekly Challenge from the same organisation in the News and Chat. The first year I did it, I religiously did the challenge every day, even if it was really challenging and it was good to try things I wouldn't have otherwise tried. Now that I have less free time, I tend to only do a handful and only if they grab me, and I can think fairly quickly how I could do it. This week, one of the challenges came from a deaf artist. The challenge was to create a Sign Name. These are names often used within the deaf community. Sign Names are unique and personal, a way to identify someone without finger spelling out their name using British Sign Language. These sign names can often reflect the person's character, their appearance, or personality. It may be a play on your actual name, like a moustache for someone called Natasha, or could reflect a hobby or passion you

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have. It has to be unique to you. If you know someone deaf, you were invited to ask them to help you come up with a Sign Name. Apparently, you cannot officially give yourself a sign name until you meet someone from the deaf community and they agree that it should be your unique name. Once you officially have your sign name, it is like a rite of passage, showing your inclusion and showing you as an ally to the deaf community.

Our names too are a rite of passage. We are baptised into the body of Christ and given our names, just as Simon became Peter when he became a disciple, just as Saul became Paul when he saw the light. We are called to be a light to the nations. We are called to be Christians, called by the name of our Lord. We are called, as Paul called the Corinthians saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps during this week, you may want to reflect on your name – why were you given it? Who gave it to you? Do you think of it as your baptismal name? And do you think it suits you? Do you live up to its meaning? Or does it mean something you don't like, and you'd rather change it? But whatever your Christian name may be, remember that your true name is Christian – called to follow Christ, called to be light in the world.

**Hymn** I come with joy R&S 447 omit v4

I come with joy to meet my Lord,  
forgiven, loved, and free;  
in awe and wonder to recall  
his life laid down for me.

As Christ breaks bread and bids us share,  
each proud division ends;  
the love that made us, makes us one,  
and strangers now are friends.

I come with Christians far and near  
to find, as all are fed,  
the new community of love  
in Christ's communion bread.

Together met, together bound,  
we'll go our different ways;  
and as his people in the world,  
we'll live and speak his praise.

Brian Wren

### **Lord's Supper**

We remember, as we come to this table, the gift of the life and death of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ. Come, not because you must, but because you may.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.

You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.

You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people throughout the generations, and the gathered wisdom of many years.

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You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up  
in difficult times where there was little peace.  
He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.  
He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.  
He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.  
For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.  
And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.  
You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us,  
to remind us of Jesus Christ and to make us one in him.  
For all these gifts we thank you, and join with all your people  
on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord God, send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,  
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,  
and we may be ready to live for you  
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

### **Sharing of bread and wine**

Most gracious God, we thank you for what you have given us.  
You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.  
Now we give ourselves to you, and ask that our daily living  
may be part of the life of your kingdom,  
and that our love may be your love  
reaching out into the life of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Prayers of intercession** (after intro. Inspired by John 1:38, by Susan Durber)

Holy One, who called us and named us even before we were born, who calls us to be a light to the nations, hear our prayers for ourselves and our world.

When the first disciples asked where you were going, you said to them, come and see:  
Open our eyes, Lord Jesus,  
to the world around us.  
Show us what we should see  
but from which we hide our eyes.  
Show us how people live in this world  
and the reality of their days.  
Give us courage to do what you ask and to  
'Come and see'.

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Open our eyes, Lord Jesus,  
to the shape of your Kingdom.  
Show us what life could be like  
if only we could see in wisdom.  
Show us what we could do  
to change things forever with you.  
Give us courage to have a vision and to  
'Come and see'.

Open our eyes, Lord Jesus,  
to the people all around us.  
Show us what we should see,  
but what we fail to notice.  
Show us what people are saying to us  
and what they long for.  
Give us courage to be where you are and to  
'Come and see'.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn** Will you come and follow me R&S 558

Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?

Will you leave your self behind  
if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare,  
will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

John Bell & Graham Maule

### **Blessing** (inspired by Isaiah 49:1-7)

As we leave this place, remember:  
God, who chose you before your birth,  
who calls you and knows you by name,  
now sends you out into the world—  
to bring light to those in darkness,  
comfort to those who grieve,  
hope to those who despair.  
And may the blessing of God,  
the love of Jesus Christ,  
and the presence of the Holy Spirit  
be among you and within you  
as you seek to do God's will. Amen

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