

Christ Church, 20 August 2023

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 126)

Let us begin this day by rejoicing!
God, the Holy One has done such wonderful things for us.
Let us be glad!
The day before us is uncertain.
We know not what we will find on our way.
Wherever we go, we go as people of the living God,
And we go out to touch the lives of all with God's blessing.
Let us begin this day with rejoicing!
and return to our homes with gladness!

Hymn All things bright and beautiful

*All things bright and beautiful
all creatures great and small
all things wise and wonderful
the God that made them all*

Each little flower that opens
Each little bird that sings
He made their glowing colours
He made their tiny wings

All things bright and beautiful

The purple headed mountains
The river running by
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky

All things bright and beautiful

The cold wind in the winter
The pleasant summer sun
The ripe fruits in the garden
He made them every one

All things bright and beautiful

He gave us eyes to see them
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty
Who has made all things well

All things bright and beautiful

Cecil Frances Alexander

Opening Prayer (inspired by Psalm 126)

What are your dreams, people of God?
To be filled with laughter;
to cry with joy, not with sorrow.
What are your hopes, people of God?
To be free of the chains that bind us;
to shout with thanksgiving, not with anguish.
Rejoice, people of God; here and now,
God makes our hopes and dreams come true.

adapted from *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2008*

Here, in this place, we discover the great things God has done.
In story and song, in silence and sacrament,
we are reminded that God's relationship with us lasts forever.
Here, with these people, we find our true home.
where we can run home laughing, after being lost for so long.
Here, today as we celebrate the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion,
we learn of the One who repairs all our mistakes,
of the One who reshapes our brokenness.
In Christ we die and are reborn to full life.
In Christ we are baptized in water by the Holy Spirit.
In God we are made whole. **Amen**

Offering

May the offerings brought this day be used as seeds,
planted faithfully and nurtured lovingly
so that God's way may be realized anew in this world.
Holy God, multiply and use them through the power of the Holy Spirit
to accomplish Christ's work of love in the world. **Amen.**

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Introduction to Baptism (Children's time)

Baptism of Margot Robyn Stokes

Song May God's blessing (red folder 69)

May God's blessing be upon you now
May you know of His great love for you
May God's blessing be upon you now,
Right where you are.

Sung 3 times (Last time repeat last line)

Chris Kipling © 2008 Song solutions daybreak

Blessing of Ivy

Sing **The Aaronic Blessing** R&S 420

The Lord bless you and keep you
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious unto you:
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

Hymn He's got the whole world in his hands red folder 30

He's got the whole world in his hands.
He's got the whole wide world in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got the tiny little baby in his hands.
He's got the tiny little baby in his hands.
He's got the tiny little baby in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got ev'rybody here in his hands.
He's got ev'rybody here in his hands.
He's got ev'rybody here in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.

He's got you and me brother in his hands.
He's got you and me sister in his hands.
He's got you and me brother in his hands.
He's got the whole world in his hands.

Children leave for Sunday Club

Readings: Matthew 3:4-6, 11, 13-17
Mark 10:13-16

You may be surprised to learn that there are three types of baptism mentioned in the Bible, not one. There is the kind of baptism that John the Baptist was doing for the 'forgiveness of sins.' There is Jesus' own baptism, and there is the baptism that Jesus commanded us, his followers, to do when he said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

John the Baptist was quite a strange man; a wandering tramp, what today we'd call homeless. He wore clothes made from camel's hair and ate locusts and wild honey. Some may even have said he was a sandwich short of a full picnic! He was wandering around the wilderness preaching. To be fair there was a lot of it about back then. There were no TVs, cinemas or smart phones; there wasn't much in the way of entertainment. Going to listen to a preacher out in the middle of nowhere was a day's outing. John the Baptist, as his name might suggest, also baptised people. We are told it was a baptism of repentance to forgive sins. People went into the river Jordan and were baptised by

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being submerged and people flocked to do it. So, baptising was definitely a thing before Jesus came along. I can't say that getting baptised in the river Jordan would be my idea of a good time, but there you go. And we hear that Jesus also went to John to get baptised. John wasn't very keen to do it. He knew who Jesus was, and he thought it should be the other way round, Jesus baptising him. In the end, he relented and did it. Without going into too much detail, this was to fulfil a prophecy about Jesus. Jesus' baptism was unique, not just because he was Jesus, but because he was and is the Son of God and this is the first time we hear about it. The Spirit of God descended on him like a dove and a voice from heaven said, 'this is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' I haven't done many baptisms, but I've seen quite a lot of them, and that never happens. That was a one-time deal just for Jesus.

It's interesting that John says Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire, but nowhere in the Bible does Jesus actually baptise anyone. But he does tell his disciples to do it. At the very end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Those are the magic words, if you like, we always baptise in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit and a baptism must involve water. Usually in United Reformed Churches, especially when it is a baby or child, it is just a little water on the head, but for Jesus it was full immersion in the river Jordan, and some other churches also require people to be fully immersed in water, including putting your head under the water. This is to symbolise dying and being reborn in Christ as you spring up from the water again gasping for breath. Those churches, like the Baptist Church do not baptise children. They think that a person should decide for themselves to follow Jesus and become a Christian, and that person should answer the questions themselves and make their own declarations of faith. This is particularly helpful for people who come to faith later in life and want to make their own declaration of it. In the URC we can baptise children or adults, the only thing we can't do is baptise someone more than once. Baptism is a once in a lifetime thing. I think that might be the only really strict rule there is in the URC, they certainly banged on about it when I was at theological college! When it is a baby being baptised, the parents make the promises on the child's behalf, like Charlotte and Richard did earlier, promising to bring the child up in the life of this particular church here. It is also a way of giving thanks to God for the life of a new baby. When she is old enough, Margot (and Ivy) can decide for herself if she wants to confirm her baptism by becoming a church member. Until she is old enough to make that decision, baptism welcomes her into this church family, where we will surround her with love and teach her about following Jesus. 'From early times the Church has received the children of believers by baptism so that with help and support they may grow up in Christ, and by the grace of God serve Christ all their days.' In baptism we affirm that the child baptised belongs to God. Of course, all children belong to God, whether we perform the sacrament of baptism or not, but it is symbolic of welcoming the child into the church family and blessing them.

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Jesus himself welcomed children, as we heard in our second reading. He took them in his arms and blessed them. This may seem like a fairly normal thing to do (well setting aside modern safeguarding concerns of course) but in the times when Jesus was alive, women and children were not considered important. They were thought to be the property of their husbands and fathers. If there was no man around, and they were widows and orphans, they were the lowest of the low, barely thought of as part of society and they had to live off the generosity of other family members, because there wasn't any social security or benefits. This is why throughout the Bible we are told to take care of the widows and orphans. Jesus had a special place in his heart for all the people on the edges of society like widows and orphans, the disabled, people with mental health problems and those who were considered ritually unclean by the religious laws of the time because of the work they did or a particular illness they had. When the disciples tried to stop people bringing children to Jesus for him to bless them, he got really cross, and told them not to stop them.

So today we have welcomed and blessed Margot in baptism, and after we sing another hymn we will all be blessed by the other sacrament of our church – Communion.

Hymn Baptized in water (tune Morning has Broken R&S 45)

Baptised in water,
sealed by the Spirit
cleansed by the blood of Christ our king;
heirs of salvation,
trusting his promise -
faithfully now God's praise we sing.

Baptised in water,
sealed by the Spirit,
dead in the tomb with Christ our king;

one with his rising,
freed and forgiven
thankfully now God's praise we sing.

Baptised in water,
sealed by the Spirit,
marked with the sign of Christ our king;
born of one Father,
we are his children -
joyfully now God's praise we sing.

Michael Saward

The **Lord's table** is open to all. You may take Communion, or not, as you wish. It is our custom here to hold on to the bread, and the wine until everyone has been served and eat and drink together as an expression that we are united in the body of Christ.

Lord's Supper

We remember, as we do at every communion service, 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.

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.

This is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

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 is 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

Prayer after communion

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

Gracious God, we pray today with all those living in poverty. We pray especially for those in our
own country who are suffering greatly due to the cost-of-living crisis, and all those affected by
strikes. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer**

We pray for all those with mental health issues and those who care for them, and for all those who
have become mentally unwell due to worry and stress about paying bills and having enough to eat.

Christ Church, 5 Sept. 2021 Written service circulated to both churches

And we pray for those who are neurodivergent – with learning difficulties or autism, that they may find understanding and support. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer**

We pray for unity and equality and an end to discrimination and prejudice of all kind. We pray for those who have experienced discrimination because of their mental health, or abuse and stigma because they live with dementia; for those who experience prejudice because of their sexuality or the colour of their skin, or because they are poor, or uneducated. Help us to truly remember that in Christ we are all one, created in God's image. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who go hungry and for the people who help them, through volunteering at foodbanks, by donating food and money, or by speaking out and raising awareness of issues. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for doctors, nurses, porters and cleaners, carers and their families, and all those who work in the NHS and caring professions. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for peace in all places, especially in Ukraine and the Middle East. And we pray for all those affected by climate change especially at the moment those in Hawaii who have lost loved ones or homes in the wildfires. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who are ill and those who care for them; for those in hospital, those awaiting test results or treatment, for the dying and those who mourn. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Especially today God, we pray for Margot, Ivy, Charlotte and Richard and all their family and friends. Help them to remember this day, remember the promises they have made, and guide them as faithful followers of Christ, surrounded by your love and grace. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer

Hymn One more step along the world I go R&S 549

One more step along the world I go
One more step along the world I go
From the old things to the new
Keep me traveling along with you
Refrain: *And it's from the old I travel to the new*
Keep me traveling along with you

Round the corner of the world I turn
More and more about the world I learn
And the new things that I see
You'll be looking at along with me

As I travel through the bad and good
Keep me traveling the way I should

Where I see no way to go
You'll be telling me the way, I know

Give me courage when the world is rough
Keep me loving though the world is tough
Leap and sing in all I do
Keep me traveling along with you

You are older than the world can be
You are younger than the life in me
Ever old and ever new
Keep me traveling along with you

Sydney Carter

Blessing (Aaronic Blessing from the International Children's Bible, adapted)

May the Lord bless and keep you all.

May the Lord show us kindness.

May God have mercy on us.

May the Lord watch over us all and give us peace, today and every day. Amen