

Christ Church, 5 November 2023

## **Presentation to Isha, not filmed**

### **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** Praise the Lord R&S 116 (Tune *Austria* at R&S 98)

Praise the Lord! ye heavens adore him;  
praise him angels, in the height;  
sun and moon, bow down before him;  
praise him, all ye stars of light.  
Praise the Lord, for he has spoken;  
worlds his mighty voice obeyed;  
laws that never shall be broken  
for their guidance he has made.

Praise the Lord, for he is glorious;  
never shall his promise fail;  
God has made his saints victorious;  
sin and death shall not prevail.  
Praise the God of our salvation;  
hosts on high his power proclaim;  
heaven, and earth, and all creation,  
laud and magnify his name.

### **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 sacrament of Baptism,  
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.**

**Baptism** of Effie Frances Patterson

Christ Church, 5 November 2023

**Song** May God's blessing (red folder 69) as Effie is taken round the church  
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

### **Presentation of certificate and candle**

**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: Mark 10:13-16**  
**Romans 14:7-9**

We are currently in the season of remembrance. This week we celebrated, or at least many denominations of the church celebrated, All Saints Day and All Souls, when we remember Christian martyrs and all those who have died. Today we do a different kind of remembering – 'Remember, remember the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, gunpower, treason and plot' though I suspect most people have forgotten that rhyme, if they ever knew it, along with 'penny for the guy' and the reason we have fireworks at all; though given the anti-Catholic sentiment that went along with the festivities originally, that's probably a good thing. I often wonder, where is Guy Fawkes when you need him, but joking aside, on balance it is good to celebrate that the Houses of Parliament were not blown up. I thought I'd better check my history of Bonfire Night and learnt the second part of the rhyme, which I don't ever remember saying: 'We see no reason, why Gunpowder treason, should ever be forgot' (anyone know that?) And it certainly hasn't been, firework displays, up and down the country happen almost religiously. Another thing I learnt was that in the aftermath of the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, Parliament declared November 5 a national day of thanksgiving. So Clare and Ollie, feel free to declare the date of Effie's baptism a day of thanksgiving in your household.

I've been thinking a lot about life and death this week. Aside from All Saints and All Souls, last week Colin, the director of three local choirs, of which some of us are members, died suddenly. On Monday I went to the funeral of a friend who had also died quite suddenly and relatively young and on the way there my journey was disrupted by someone killed by a train at Rayleigh Station. And of course, every day on the news we still hear of the thousands dying in Israel and Gaza. Every minute

Christ Church, 5 November 2023

of every day, someone, somewhere dies. But also every minute of every day someone is born. In fact, it is every second. There are actually websites that count these things, and you can see the numbers spinning round. Currently, worldwide, though perhaps not so much in Europe, births outnumber deaths by about 2:1. New life comes forth, every second, which is good to remember in the midst of so much bad news. And today we celebrate that. Baptism is a welcome into God's family. It is a sacrament of the church, a rite of passage, a ceremony to mark a stage in life and to mark God's welcome. In some way it's an excuse for a party – we don't really need it to know that everyone of us is loved and welcomed by God, but it is good to celebrate that fact. Baptism, when it is of an infant, also celebrates a new life. It gives thanks for the birth of a healthy child.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul reminds them that we belong to God – in life and death. 'If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.' It is often said when someone dies, as a way to provide comfort, that our life is not our own, it belongs to God. I'm not sure how much comfort that offers if someone dies young, though in the eulogy in Monday's service, his brother said, that Keith had pointed out before he died that it was the quality of life that matters, not the quantity, which I think is true and can be applied to most things, though I think Claudia would beg to differ when it comes to chocolate!

We could have read another section of Paul's letter to the Romans today, from chapter 6. There Paul tells his audience that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death. 'We have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.' Not quite such festive imagery so close to Halloween! But I like that Paul does not talk of eternal life, but that 'we might walk in newness of life.' As Christians we walk in that newness of life, no matter what life might throw at us. In baptism, in particular we are called to follow Christ, in good times and bad, life and death.

In adult baptism, or believer's baptism as it is sometimes called, this imagery is more noticeable. Such baptisms are usually by full immersion to symbolise dying and being reborn in Christ as you spring up from the water again gasping for breath. Some 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. When it is a young child being baptised, the parents make the promises on the child's behalf, promising to bring the child up in the life of the church. When she is old enough, Effie 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, as we all do. All of

Christ Church, 5 November 2023

us 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.

Jesus himself welcomed children, as we heard in our first reading. He took them in his arms and blessed them. This may seem like a fairly normal thing to do 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 became 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, he became indignant, and told them not to stop them. He took them in his arms and blessed them. The same Jesus who cried at the death of his friend Lazarus. Jesus like us, experienced the joy of birth and the sadness of death. In baptism we die with Christ, but through Christ we also walk in the newness of life.

**Hymn** Rejoice, the Lord is King R&S 657

Rejoice, the Lord is King,  
Your Lord and King adore;  
Mortals, give thanks and sing  
And triumph evermore:  
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.*

Jesus, the Saviour reigns,  
The God of truth and love:  
When He had purged our stains  
He took His seat above:

His kingdom cannot fail;  
He rules o'er earth and heav'n;  
The keys of death and hell  
Are to our Jesus giv'n:

He sits at God's right hand  
Till all His foes submit,  
And bow to His command,  
And fall beneath His feet:

Rejoice in glorious hope;  
Jesus the judge shall come,  
And take his servants up  
To their eternal home:  
*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice,  
The trump of God shall sound, rejoice!*

Charles Wesley

### **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 due to the cost-of-living crisis, and who are worried as we approach Christmas about how they might provide food and gifts for their families.

**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 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 peace in all places, especially for the people of Israel and Gaza and for the now forgotten places of war – Ukraine, Yemen and Sudan. And we pray for all those affected by climate change especially those affected by recent storms and earthquakes.

**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 Effie, Clare and Ollie 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. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn** For all the saints R&S 658

For all the saints, who from their labours rest;  
who thee by faith before the world confessed,  
thy name, Lord Jesus, be for ever blessed:  
Alleluia, alleluia!

You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;  
you, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight,  
in deepest darkness thou their one true light.  
Alleluia, alleluia!

O may thy servants, faithful, true and bold,  
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old  
and win with them the victor's crown of gold.  
Alleluia, alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!  
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;  
Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine:  
Alleluia, alleluia!

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

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest shore  
through gates of pearl, streams in the countless host,  
and sings to Father, Son and Holy Ghost:  
Alleluia, alleluia!

W. W. How

**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

Hymns used under the Christ Church CCLI licence 63352  
One License A-738739