

**Call to Worship - responsive** (1 Samuel 3:1-20)

Let us worship the One who calls us.

**Here we are, ready or not,  
called by the One who lived and died and rose to live again among us.**

Here we are, ready or not,  
bringing our everyday selves to praise and to pray,  
to know the Holy One in the midst of our lives.

**Let us worship the One who calls us.**

**Hymn** Lord of creation R&S 532 (Tune *Slane* at 531)

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!  
Most mighty your working, most wondrous  
your ways!  
Your glory and greatness no mortal can tell,  
and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,  
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfill.  
Your bondage is freedom, your service is  
song,  
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is  
strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind;  
rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to  
find;

What eye has not seen and what ear has not  
heard  
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your  
Word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;  
I praise and adore you for all you impart:  
your love to inspire me, your counsel to lead,  
your presence to shield me, whatever my  
need.

Lord of all being, I give you my all,  
for if I disown you, I stumble and fall;  
but led in your service your word to obey,  
I walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Jack Winslow

**Offering**

God, whose giving knows no ending,  
we offer up the treasure that you have entrusted to us;  
we offer up the skills and time that you have graciously given to us;  
we offer up ourselves in service and praise.

Receive these gifts by your grace.

Multiply and use them through the power of the Holy Spirit  
to accomplish Christ's work of love in the world. **Amen.**

**Bible Reading (Children's Bible)** 1 Samuel 3:1-10

**Introduction/Children's Time** – Induction of Elders/Calling

**Induction of Elders**

**Prayers – responsive**

God whispers to each of us: you are my beloved, created in love for love.

**My spirit answers,**

**Here I am, Lord.**

**Speak to me anew.**

God breathes on us the Holy Spirit, knitting many members into one body, the body of Christ.

**Together we answer,**

**Here we are Lord.**

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

God has yet more vision for the people.

Who will work for God to extend God's kingdom into our hurting world?

**Here we are Lord. Empower us for your work.**

God calls the small, and helps them do great things.  
God calls the weak, and reveals their hidden gifts.  
God calls the rejected, and opens their eyes to their worth.  
**Here we are Lord, humble and waiting.**

Then let us gather, old and young, small and great, to dream God's dreams,  
receive God's power, and do God's deeds.  
**Here we are Lord. Shine the light of your love on us.**  
**Kindle your Spirit within us.**  
**Work your redeeming will in us, that all the world may be one**  
**through the power of your love. Amen.**

**Hymn** I, the Lord of sea and sky Red Folder 41

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?

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 words 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 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 be satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?

**Children leave for Sunday Club**

**Opening Prayer**

Eternal God, you are the maker of us all, and we are your creation,  
people formed in your image, as individuals, as community –  
formed and fed and furnished with understanding of who you are and who we belong to.  
We are worshipping you today in recognition of your calling,  
of your communicating, of your caring to invite us to share in your creative and healing work.  
We are here because we have heard you speak in us and through others.  
Help us to ever respond to you and your invitation to your grace.

God of all our moments, of our days and our nights, you speak and you act in the world around us,  
not only to call all people to you, but also to direct and guide us in the way of healing and  
wholeness. Awaken us Lord, to hear what you would say to us.  
Help us to open our ears, our eyes, and our hearts to your presence.  
Help us to know when it is your voice we are hearing and it when it is our prejudices  
and desires to which we are paying heed.

O God, you know each one of us, and call each one of us even before we know your voice. Open  
our minds to your word, and bless us all in our calling, especially today Keith and Gwyneth as they  
are inducted anew to your service as serving elders of this congregation. Amen

**Hymn** O God you search me and you know me (CH4 97)

Christ Church, 2 June 2024

O God, you search me, and you know me  
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze  
When I walk or lie down, you are before me  
Ever the maker and keeper of my days

You know my resting and my rising  
You discern my purpose from afar  
And with love everlasting, you besiege me  
In ev'ry moment of life or death, you are

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord  
You have known its meaning through and  
through

You are with me beyond my understanding  
God of my present, my past and future, too

Although your Spirit is upon me  
Still I search for shelter from your light  
There is nowhere on earth I can escape you  
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight

For you created me and shaped me  
Gave me life within my mother's womb  
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you  
Safe in your hands, all creation is made new

Bernadette Farrell

**Bible reading: Mark 2:23-3:6**

At the start of our worship today, we heard of God calling Samuel, and the calling of URC Elders, now the gospel of Mark moves our attention to Jesus. We are only in chapter two of the Gospel and already we have conflict escalating between Jesus and the religious leaders of the time – the scribes and Pharisees. Chapter 2 starts with a paralyzed man being lowered into the room where Jesus was. Jesus sees the faith of the friends of the paralyzed man who go to such lengths to help him and says to the man “your sins are forgiven”. Immediately the scribes start questioning this, as in their view only God can forgive sins, they think this is blasphemy. Jesus tells them that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins. We might say that Jesus is God on earth. In verse 28, Jesus tells them he has authority over the sabbath too. At the start of the chapter the scribes are questioning things in their hearts, by chapter 3, verse 6, the Pharisees are plotting with the Herodians to destroy Jesus. In a few verses, Jesus publicly declares his authority to forgive sins and to overrule the Sabbath and his enemies secretly move from being sceptical to murderous intent.

To focus on today's two accounts of things that happen on the sabbath, let us first look at the importance of Sabbath in first-century Judaism. Nowadays some Jews and Christians faithfully observe their Sabbaths; others no longer set that day apart from the week's other six. For many people who aren't hard at work 24/7, Sunday's only difference might be getting chores done – supermarkets for example seem to be busier now on Sundays than on Saturdays, or taking children to sporting activities, or possibly spending more time with family. Even for church members, attending a church service is not a given and the rest of the day will likely be given over to non-religious pursuits and things that in Biblical times would have been considered work and so banned on the Sabbath, like cooking or gardening. In modern-day Israel, a country in which many are not practicing Jews, the Sabbath is still quite strictly observed – most shops are closed, and there is no public

transport. The most observant Jews will not even turn on a light switch, from sundown on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

In Jesus' day keeping the Sabbath was the norm in establishing Jewish identity. Grounded in the creation narrative in Genesis and the Ten Commandments, Sabbath observance was an essential part of the Jewish faith. From sundown on Friday until Saturday's sunset, Jews encouraged one another to enjoy a day of worshiping the Lord, laying aside ordinary work, and fighting only in self-defence. The aim of the day was to give humans relaxation from continuous, unending toil and by refreshing their bodies with this regular rest, to send them out renewed for their usual activities. Jewish groups debated among themselves which activities were permissible on the Sabbath and then, and now how much you can or cannot do, depends on how rigorously one interprets and acts on the Jewish law. For the ultra-scrupulous, or you might say the ultra-religious, not plucking grain on the Sabbath was a way of safeguarding that holy day from profanity, or disobedience of the Ten Commandments — not allowing even the hint of laborious reaping — by hedging it with multiplied restrictions.

But Jesus throws all that aside, declaring that the Sabbath is made for humans, not humanity for the Sabbath. We have to use our intellect, and our compassion and empathy to decide what is appropriate to do on the Sabbath, rather than being slaves to the law. And he uses reference to the scriptures to make his case reminding the Pharisees that when King David and his followers were hungry they went into the house of God and ate the bread that only priests were allowed to eat. This thinking for ourselves and not blindly following rules and prohibitions is one of the important factors of our non-conformist tradition. We are to interpret the Word of God through Jesus and speak and act accordingly, even if that hits up against the laws of the land or the mores of society. And I hope we all remember that when we vote in a few short weeks!

Another thing we need to think about in this reading and many others is a knee-jerk response to the Pharisees, who appear in Mark for the first time in today's reading. Pharisees are nearly always portrayed as self-righteous hypocrites, which is not surprising as Jesus himself accuses them of hypocrisy. But the Pharisees were part of a reform movement within first-century Judaism, dedicated to supreme adherence to Torah, that is the Jewish law, in all walks of life. According to contemporary historian, Josephus, Pharisees were celebrated by their Jewish contemporaries for practicing the highest ideals in their way of living and speaking. They were regarded as upstanding, devout, Bible-believing pillars of the community. They thought they were doing the right thing and being as obedient to God and the law as they could be.

Two significant issues arise from these verses of Mark chapter 2. As in his claim of authority to forgive sins, Jesus also asserts extraordinary sovereignty to interpret God's intent for the Sabbath in ways that, for others, seem to undermine it. "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath" And then in chapter 3 verse 4 "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" We God-fearing, church-going Pharisees could think to ourselves, that question is irrelevant, and immaterial, surely 'Every case where life is in danger supersedes keeping the laws of the Sabbath' But the life of the man with a withered hand is not at risk. Immediate treatment is not required. His cure could wait until the next day. The Pharisees do not in fact answer Jesus' question, but their silence angers him. In their preference for the law over humanity towards the disabled man, they show a hardness of heart that grieves him.

Angered by such hard-hearted fault-finding, Jesus forces the issue: He summons the man with the withered hand, who has no more asked for healing than the paralytic in verse 4 sought forgiveness and restores another body to wholeness. Whether the issue is hunger or healing, for Jesus the satisfaction of human need trumps religiosity and rule keeping every time. Unlike the scholarly scribes and the pious Pharisees, his ministry injects something new into the old, fermenting wine that bursts old skins (also in chapter two at verse 21). Predictably, defenders of the status quo don't like that one bit. They begin mobilizing, to destroy him.

In Mark the bases for controversies between Jesus and his antagonists are not his mighty works as such, nor his credentials, of which he has none they accept. He simply speaks and acts, then allows his witnesses to draw their own conclusions. Jesus is a radical figure whose deeds and pronouncements strike at the root of what it means to be faithfully Jewish and, for us what it really means to be Christian.

Are we any less outraged by profligate forgiveness or fraternizing with notorious sinners, outcasts, and the flagrantly wicked, without demanding that they first clean up their acts (In verses 15 and 16 we see Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors and the Pharisees complaining about it)? How will we feel when Jesus runs roughshod over whatever we consider to be the definitive rules of Christian conduct, even when we find it in the Bible? When the Son of Man comes wielding authority on earth and lordship even over the Sabbath, our lifelong assumptions cannot go unchallenged. Jesus did not come to cosy up to the scribes and Pharisees, the intellectuals and the pious law-keepers. He came to eat with the sinners, to give forgiveness to the outcast, to heal those who were not whole, to

free the prisoners, and to bring the Good News to those on the outskirts of society. As followers of Christ, as those called and who claim to answer that call, let us do likewise.

**Hymn** Jesus Christ is waiting (Tune *Noel Nouvelet* R&S 243)

Jesus Christ is waiting,  
Waiting in the streets;  
No one is his neighbour,  
All alone he eats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I am lonely too.  
Make me, friend or stranger,  
Fit to wait on you

Jesus Christ is raging,  
Raging in the streets,  
Where injustice spirals  
And real hope retreats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I am angry too.  
In the Kingdom's causes  
Let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is healing,  
Healing in the streets;  
Curing those who suffer,  
Touching those he greets.

Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I have pity too.  
Let my care be active,  
Healing just like you.

Jesus Christ is dancing,  
Dancing in the streets,  
Where each sign of hatred  
He, with love, defeats.  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
I should triumph too.  
On suspicion's graveyard  
Let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling,  
Calling in the streets,  
"Who will join my journey?  
I will guide their feet."  
Listen, Lord Jesus,  
Let my fears be few.  
Walk one step before me;  
I will follow you.

John L. Bell and Graham Maule

**Prayers of intercession**

Beloved God, You know us inside and out and you still call us to serve you.  
Honestly we are often hesitant, afraid, and wish to remain hidden.  
Empower us to listen for and to hear your call  
Empower us to answer your call with "Here I am Lord"  
Empower us to follow you when you call us to follow you.  
Especially today empower Keith, Gwyneth, Richard and Phillip to follow you as they serve this congregation as Elders.

Lord of mercy and justice, so many have gone before us working to bring justice and peace to our country and our world.  
Their footsteps seem too big to step into  
to continue the work you have called us all to;  
so we hesitantly take one step at a time,  
bringing your seeds of hope, justice and peace  
in a world crying out for them.  
In the run-up to the election, help us to be guided by your ideas of justice  
and not listen to empty promises of politicians, driven by their own desires for power.

Lord of hope, we pray for our country, our leaders and politicians, and those seeking office that they may be guided by your wisdom and values. And that the country may come together for the good, putting aside differences of the past. We pray for healing, reconciliation, forgiveness and peace in all countries, but thinking especially of the Middle East, Sudan and Ukraine.

Lord of peace, we pray for your compassion and healing for those individuals in our congregation who need it. We pray for your comfort and presence for those who are grieving, lonely and oppressed. We pray for warmth, shelter, clothing and food for those who are without.

Christ Church, 2 June 2024

Lord we say to you this day, as Samuel did,  
"Here we are your servants willing to preach your word,  
offer care where care is needed, presence where presence is needed,  
your love where love is needed."  
Lord, strengthen us for our ministry today and every day.  
In Jesus' name we pray, who taught us when we pray to say:

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn** Lord you have come to the seashore (Church Hymnary 532)

Lord, you have come to the seashore,  
neither searching for the rich nor the wise,  
desiring only that I should follow.

*O, Lord, with your eyes set upon me,  
gently smiling, you have spoken my name;  
all I longed for I have found by the water,  
at your side, I will seek other shores.*

Lord, see my goods, my possessions;  
in my boat you find no power, no wealth.  
Will you accept, then, my nets and labour?

Lord, take my hands and direct them.  
Help me spend myself in seeking the lost,  
returning love for the love you gave me.

Lord, as I drift on the waters,  
be the resting place of my restless heart,  
my life's companion, my friend and refuge.

Cesareo Gabarain

### **Blessing**

Go now. Listen for the voice of the Lord and follow wherever it leads.  
Do not be dominated by other things.  
Allow no room within yourselves for deceit,  
but offer yourselves as a temple for the Holy Spirit.  
And may God be with you and speak through you;  
May Christ Jesus be one who walks alongside you and raises you to new life;  
And may the Holy Spirit dwell within you and make you holy. Amen

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