

Local Arrangement Service for Summer – “Give Thanks”

June 2016

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this service for an Own Arrangement service designated on the plan for your congregation. I hope you find it helpful. The service has a general theme, which I thought suitable for the ‘Ordinary’ season of summertime, but which you could also use at most times during the year. The theme is “Give Thanks!” and in the service we will be thinking about thankfulness as our appropriate response to what God has done and still does for us. An “attitude of gratitude” is a wonderful gift for Christians to cultivate, for it will see them through not only the good times, but those times when life is more challenging or painful.

You will see, on the first page of the service, under ‘Prayer of Praise’, that we start the prayer content of this service with the opportunity for members of the congregation to give thanks and praise to God for whatever good things or experiences are uppermost in their minds. There is a response provided, so that the entire congregation can share in that member’s thanksgiving. I have also included a prepared prayer of praise, which, if you feel your congregation might not be comfortable with the ‘sharing prayer’ you can use instead. You could also use this in addition to the ‘sharing prayer’. If you are using the ‘sharing prayer’ I would suggest you find some way of noting down the thanksgiving requests. It’s easy to forget what has been said in the heat of the service!

Please also note, on page 4, that there is space in the intercessions to include topical and local congregational concerns. If you wish to do this, you will need to think about it.

The hymns are only suggestions – if your congregation knows others that fit in with the theme, especially any newer ones, please use those. This is *your* service of worship to God.

I have suggested that you use 2 leaders and 4 readers, but please feel free to adjust that, too!

I hope you enjoy your service and find it helpful.

Local Arrangement Service for Summer – “Give Thanks!”

Call to Worship: (Leader 1)

We are here to worship the living God,
To offer our heartfelt thanks and praise;
Not because we are holy, not because we are good,
But because we are loved, forgiven and free.

Introduction to service and theme: (Leader 1)

In our service this morning we're going to be thinking about thankfulness. A great spiritual writer once wrote 'If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is "thank you", it will be enough'. How good are we at saying "Thank you" - to our friends and family, to one another, and most of all, to God? An attitude of gratitude to God is one that can transform our lives, filling them with trust and joy as it also helps remove feelings of self-pity or resentment. So let us worship with thankfulness, the loving God and Saviour, as we sing our first hymn....

HYMN: - Now thank we all our God... *StF 81; H&P 566; MP 486*

Prayer of Praise: (Leader 2)

We have so much for which to be grateful to God, as that hymn recalls.
(Optional sharing time – ask the congregation what they are feeling particularly thankful for at this time and express these thanks, using the following response after each:

*L: For all your gifts: R: **We praise you, Lord.**)*

So, let us pray....

Sharing Prayer:

AND/OR

Creator God, we praise and thank you for the immensity of your love:
the love that brought the universe to birth;
the love that designed and ordered our world;
the love that breathed life into humankind.

Creator God, we praise and thank you for the immensity of your love.

Saving God, we praise and thank you for the endurance of your love:
the love that came to share our human life;
the love that died for us upon the Cross;
the love that triumphed over hatred and death.

Saving God, we praise and thank you for the endurance of your love.

Strengthening God, we praise and thank you for the power of your love:
the love that brought your church to life;
the love that transforms hearts and minds;
the love that dares and cares, shares and unites.

Strengthening God, we praise and thank you for the power of your love. **Amen**

Comment: (Leader 1)

We do have so much to thank God for!! When we read our Bibles, we read first of the Creator God, stories of his love and care for his people shown through creation and history. And so we continue, in our worship, to say 'Thank you, Loving God, for your care for your world and people!'

Psalm: (said responsively, led by Reader 1) – Psalm 95: 1 - 7 – *StF 818; H&P 865 or print out.*

Reflection: (Reader 2)

The Psalmist knew how to be thankful to God for the beauty and bounty of his creation. We know that time spent enjoying the natural world can be healing and calming. An appreciation of nature

can be a spiritual experience, giving rise to true thankfulness to God. The great naturalist, John Muir, who came from Scotland but moved to America in his youth and set up National Parks there, wrote: 'Come to the woods, for here is rest. There is no repose like that of the green deep woods. Here grow the wallflower and the violet... Of all the 'upness' accessible to mortals, there is no 'upness' comparable to the mountains... and no name for God is as perfect as 'Beauty'. Whether as seen carving the lines of the mountains with glaciers, or gathering matter into stars, or planning the movements of water, or gardening - still all is Beauty!'

Prayer of Confession: (Leader 2)

Loving God, we confess to you the times when we have forgotten to say 'Thank you, Lord' for the many blessings you have poured out upon us:

the blessings of the beauty of the natural world;
the blessings of your daily loving presence with us;
the blessings of the gift of life in all its fullness;
the blessings of knowing Jesus as our Saviour and friend;
the blessings of the love of family, friends and church;
the blessings of food, water, warmth and shelter.

Forgive us when we forget that *every* good gift comes from you.

Create a new spirit within us, that our lives may be full of thankfulness and praise, and we may walk joyfully and confidently with our Lord. In whose name we pray, **Amen.**

HYMN: The Lord's my Shepherd... *StF 81; MP 1008; or H&P 69 or 70*

Comment: (Leader One)

As Christians, we believe that the greatest gift for which we have to thank God is the gift of his Son, Jesus. We also want to thank Jesus for bringing us back into a loving and living relationship with God. Our thankfulness is a sign that we have accepted this offer. So we say "Thank you, Jesus!!!" We hear the story of one man who remembered to say "Thank you!"

Gospel Reading: (Reader 3) Luke 17: 11 - 19

Reflection: (Reader 4)

There were ten of us lepers. Leprosy was all we really had in common - I was a Samaritan, unlike the others, for one thing. But as we weren't allowed to mix with other people, we stuck together. There isn't any cure – for the disease, or the loneliness, or the poverty – or the resentment. Just a sense of uncleanness that made us dislike even ourselves.

One of us said "There's a Healer, Jesus – perhaps you've heard of him – travelling along the border towards Jerusalem. Perhaps we should go and find him and ask if he can help. From a distance, of course!"

We saw him on the road, and called out for help. He told us to go and show ourselves to the priests. A bit odd, that, because that's what a leper does when they think they've been cured, and nothing seemed to have happened to us and no magic words were spoken in our direction. But we did what we were told. And as we walked – well, the dirtiness of disease seemed to lift from us. I can't explain it – but when we got to the priests, they told us we weren't lepers anymore.

What do you do with that sort of news? I started praising God for what was surely a miracle. "We must go back, find Jesus, and thank him" I said to the others. But, as I said, it was only the leprosy that had made us friends. They said "Why should we say thank you when it was about time God did something for us. We don't want to go back – we want to get on with our lives, get back to our families in Galilee." But I did wonder if they didn't want to be seen with a Samaritan.

Now I was cured, I could get really close to Jesus, so I fell at his feet and thanked him. He was pleased to see me. My thankfulness showed that both my life and my faith had been restored.

Introduction to Epistle reading: (Leader 1)

Our gospel reading tells of how Jesus's healing touch brought healing to different aspects of a man's life. The reading from the letter to the Romans that we will hear now is a clear statement of the fullness of life with God that we can now experience because of what Christ has done for us.

Epistle Reading: (Reader 1) – Romans 5: 6 - 11

Prayer of Thanksgiving: (Leader 2)

Lord, we want to thank you for the offer you have given to us of life in all its fullness, a true, rich life lived in you.

We want to thank you for making that offer through Christ's death, and proving it by his Resurrection.

We ask that our lives be so lit up by the spirit of thankfulness that others may see them and learn of your love. In Jesus's Name, **Amen.**

HYMN: To God be the glory... *StF 94; H&P 463; MP 708.*

Comment: (Leader 1)

The coming of the Holy Spirit transformed the hearts, minds and lives of the first Christians. And so we say 'Thank you, Holy Spirit!'

Epistle Reading: (Reader 2)

We have much for which to thank the Holy Spirit. Listen to words from Galatians 5: 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.' And from Romans 5: 'Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.'

Readings on Christian Thankfulness: (Reader 3)

Thankfulness is also a precious gift from the Holy Spirit. Like the Spirit's other gifts it can transform and light up our lives. Listen to what some of our great Christian writers have to say about thankfulness in every circumstance of our lives... C S Lewis wrote "We ought to give thanks for all fortune: if it is good, because it is good; if bad, because it works in us patience, humility and the contempt of this world and the hope of our eternal country." John Newton wrote "The Lord afflicts us at times; but it is always a thousand times less than we deserve, and much less than many of our fellow-creatures are suffering around us. Let us therefore pray for grace to be humble, thankful, and patient." And the novelist, G K Chesterton wrote "I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."

Offering and prayer: (Leader 1)

We cannot earn your love, saving God,
as this money has been earned.

We cannot earn your love,
but we can thank you for giving it to us,

by offering you everything we have and are.
In Jesus's Name, **Amen.**

HYMN: Holy Spirit, we welcome you... *StF 385; MP 241 OR Father of everlasting grace H&P 300*

Comment: (Leader 1)

Our next reading from the epistles reminds us that we not only need to thank God for the spiritual gifts he has made to us, but we need to thank him for giving us one another, and we need to say to one another 'Thank you, sisters and brothers in Christ!'

Epistle Reading: (Reader 4) – Colossians 1: 3 - 14

Comment: (Leader 1)

There is a slot on the Radio 4 Saturday Live programme (bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01ybdtz), for listeners to get in touch if they have been on the receiving end of 'kindness from strangers' but were not able to say "thank you" to their helpers at the time. On the radio, they tell their stories, sometimes of incidents long ago, and in the telling say a big "THANK YOU" to those who helped them. Saying "thank you" is so important to our sense of right and to our relationships. The things they have thanked people for include donating a heart, help in the London Underground, help with a runaway caravan, rescuing a lost child, the gift of free bed and breakfast, jam tarts, saving them from goats! Perhaps we should ask ourselves "Is there someone I should have thanked?" Is there someone here in church today you would like to say "thank you" to? Why not do it after the service? It will be a gift for both of you.

Prayers of Intercession: (Leader 2) There is a response in this prayer –

L: Our prayer is heard: **R: Thanks be to God.** Let us pray:

Loving God, giver of every good gift,

We pray that we might be your thankful people.

We pray for those with power and influence in our country and in the world, asking that they may be thankful for the opportunities their positions give them and that they may show their gratitude by fulfilling their responsibilities conscientiously and with wisdom, justice and compassion.

We pray for.... (*leaders in the news*)

L: Our prayer is heard: **R: Thanks be to God.**

We pray for those who live healthy and prosperous lives, asking that they may be thankful for the security that their health and wealth give them, and that they may show their gratitude for these gifts by using them to enrich the lives of those who find life a struggle.

We pray for.... (*areas of concern and people who are ill*)

L: Our prayer is heard: **R: Thanks be to God.**

We pray for all who know your saving love in their lives, asking that they may be thankful for the joy and peace and fellowship that faith in you gives them, and that they may show their gratitude by sharing their faith and living with love in their hearts for others.

L: Our prayer is heard: **R: Thanks be to God.**

We pray for ourselves, each with special gifts from you, asking that we may be thankful for the unique calling we each have received, and that we may show that gratitude by using our gifts and talents in the service of others and to the glory of your name.

L: Our prayer is heard: **R: Thanks be to God.**

We remember, with gratitude, all those who have lived their lives as a thank-offering to you, Loving God. May we follow their example, in the name of Christ, our Saviour and our Friend, **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

HYMN: Give thanks with a grateful heart... *StF 78; MP 170*

OR Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing *H&P 652*

Blessing: (Leader 1)

Go out into the world with hearts full of thanks for all that God has done with you, to share the joy of that salvation with the lives that touch yours, And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest and remain upon each one of us, today and evermore. **Amen.**