

Local Arrangement Service
(2 leaders and 4 readers)

‘WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?’ – the story of God’s people in the Old Testament

Introduction: *Leader 1* On ‘Who do you think you are?’, the popular TV programme, celebrity guests are helped and encouraged to look back into their family histories to find out where they have come from, in every sense. Some of their discoveries are uplifting, others deeply upsetting or shocking. But all of them shed light on that question ‘Who do you think you are?’

When we read the Old Testament we find much of it uplifting, but some that is deeply upsetting or shocking. We ask ourselves how much of it we need to understand literally. Our difficulties in reading it means that sometimes we wonder ‘Why read it at all – isn’t the New Testament enough?’. But it is in the Old Testament that we, as God’s family, find the stories of a developing understanding of God and so discover important elements of our family history and learn more of what led up to the coming of Jesus and his message of salvation. It reveals to us how God’s people, our ancestors in the faith, matured in their relationship with God. It is this story, which is both theirs and ours that we delve into in our service. So, let us worship -

Call to Worship: *Leaders 1& 2*

2: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

1: God said ‘Let there be light’. And God saw the light was good.

2: Come, let us worship the Author of the Universe

1: Who makes something out of nothing;

2: Who makes light out of darkness;

1: Who loves and watches over the whole of creation.

HYMN: For the beauty of the earth (*StF 102; H&P 333; HON 167; MP 152; SoF 112*)

CREATION AND FALL – Growing Up

Prayer of Adoration: *Leader 1* In our prayer of Adoration there is a response:

L: With all that is, and was, and will be: **R: Creator God, we praise you.**

Let us pray:

From nothingness, from chaos, you called forth existence, order and life:

L: With all that is, and was, and will be: **R: Creator God, we praise you.**

From darkness you called forth light: from swirling waters, stable dry land:

L: With all that is, and was, and will be: **R: Creator God, we praise you.**

From the fullness of your heart and the riches of your imagination

The world was filled with myriad varieties of life.

L: With all that is, and was, and will be: **R: Creator God, we praise you.**

From your desire to share your love you fashioned woman and man to seek and to know you.

L: With all that is, and was, and will be: **R: Creator God, we praise you.**

Your love for all that exists is the beating heart of Creation, the pulse of life that is never stilled.

You continually protect us, guide us and strengthen us, never forgetting one thing you have made.

L: With all that is, and was, and will be: **R: Creator God, we praise you.**

In the name of Christ, the Word of God, **Amen.**

Introduction to readings: *Leader 1*

We now listen to two readings from the second story of the creation of the world in the book of Genesis, which helped God’s people find answers to the questions ‘Why are we here?’ and ‘Why is life such hard work?’.

OT Readings: *Reader 1* Genesis 2: vv7, 8, 15 – 22. *Reader 2* Genesis 3: 1 – 13; 22, 23.

Reflexion: Reader 3

The apple shone among the leaves, glinting in the sunlight.
The new-made world smelt soft and fresh. All was relaxed,
Nothing to strive for, totally laid back.

The apple glinted like a knife just out of reach on a table-top.
'Don't touch, child Adam, child Eve –
That hard, sharp knife, though of infinite use,
Can cut and scar and maim.'

The apple shone among the leaves.
Its radiance burnt into their hearts;
Its fragrance excited their every thought.
Child Eve reached up, picked it, ate it, shared it
And it was very sharp.

Prayer of Confession: Leader 2

Let us pray:

Loving Parent God, you have given us everything we need for life in all its fullness –
But we do not live as grateful people.

Loving Parent God, you have told us how we should care for your world and one another –
But we are disobedient.

Loving Parent God, you have shown us the Way, the Truth and the Life –
But we have gone our own ways, followed our own truths, and spoilt our own lives.

Forgive us our ingratitude, disobedience and lack of faith

And restore us to the paradise of closeness with you,

In the name of our brother, Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost, **Amen.**

Hear again the words of grace 'Your sins are forgiven', as God welcomes us home once more.

HYMN: Amazing grace – how sweet the sound (*StF 440; H&P 215; HON 30; MP 31; SoF 19*)

TRAVELLING ON – Finding our place

Thought: Leader 1 – In the Genesis story Adam and Eve, the man and the woman, had, like many of us, to leave home. The place where they had been nurtured had become too restrictive for them and they had to branch out and find their own way of living. The part of family of humankind who were the people of God had a number of adventures, including being taken into slavery, before they could travel on the difficult journey to their own earthly home.

OT Reading: Reader 4

Exodus 33: 1, 12 - 16

Quotations: Readers 2 & 3

2: God's people sought a new home. But what is a home? Here are some people's thoughts:

3: *"The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned."* Maya Angelou

2: *"Home is where one starts from."* T S Eliot

3: *"Where love is – is home, home that our feet may leave but not our hearts."* Oliver W Holmes

2: *"To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition."* Samuel Johnson

3: *"To Adam, Paradise was home. To the good among his descendants home is Paradise."*
Augustus Hare

2: *"Yes, I have doubted. I have wandered off the path. I have been lost. But I always returned. It is beyond the logic I seek. It is intuitive – an intrinsic, built in sense of direction. I seem to find my way home. My faith has wavered but has saved me."* Helen Hayes

3: *"I've got a home in Gloryland."* Black American Spiritual Home

2: *"'Tis Jesus, the first and the last, whose Spirit shall guide us safe home."* Joseph Hart

3: A question to think about – where is our true home?

HYMN: 'Moses, I know you're the man' (StF 473; H&P 450; HON 448) **OR**
Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah (StF 465; H&P 437; HON 240; MP 201; SoF 148.)

LIVING TOGETHER – who makes the decisions?

Thought: Leader 1 – The people of God, after a time of change and struggle, made a new home. But, as many young adults have found, they discovered that setting up home meant making a lot of decisions and taking on new responsibilities. Who could help them with this? The prophets' answer was 'God'. But, looking around them at how their neighbouring nations did things, the people saw that others had kings to make those decisions for them, take on those responsibilities. And they wanted to be like other people – they wanted kings, too!

OT Readings: Reader 1 1 Samuel 8: 4 - 22

Prayer: Leader 2 In our prayer of Intercession there is a response:
Your kingdom come: **your will be done.**

Let us pray,
God of wisdom, we long for a world of love and understanding,
Where people of different colours, creeds and cultures
Live together peacefully, respect one another, care for one another.
We long for your kingdom where love has full authority.
Your kingdom come: **your will be done.**

God of wisdom, we long for a church that is truly the body of Christ,
Where members with different beliefs, traditions and ideals
Worship together joyfully, build one another up, unite in serving those in need.
We long for your kingdom where love has full authority.
Your kingdom come: **your will be done.**

God of wisdom, we long for a society that is just and compassionate,
Where men, women and children, wealthy and poor
Work together for a good future, value one another, provide for one another.
We long for your kingdom where love has full authority.
Your kingdom come: **your will be done.**

God of wisdom, may human authority be exercised with love; may human knowledge be illumined
by love; may human lives be inspired by love for you.
Your kingdom come: **your will be done.**

In the name of Jesus, our Saviour and our King, **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

HYMN: Make way, make way for Christ the King (StF 264; HON 436; MP 457; SoF 384) **OR**
The kingdom of God is justice and joy (StF 255; H&P 139; MP 651)

LIVING AS GOD'S PEOPLE – hearing his challenge

Thought: Leader 1 God's family have found their new home, decided on how they will run it, but they are still in trouble. They find that however good family relationships are and however well intentioned we may be, there are times when we all get things wrong. God's people knew that they had a special relationship with him, and were happy to show their love through their religious observance, but often missed the point of what God really wanted from them. The prophets came to give them relationship counselling!

OT Reading: Reader 3 Isaiah 1: 2, 10 – 20

Reflexion: Reader 4 (or 3 & 4) – Are you a follower of Jesus?

Are you a follower of Jesus?

Yes, I'm a Christian. I go to church. I do my bit for charity. I try to be nice.

Are you a follower of Jesus?

Yes, I'm a Christian. I wear cheerful but challenging badges. I quote the Bible. I try to be friendly.

Are you a follower of Jesus?

Yes, I'm a Christian. I do a lot for the church. I write for the newsletter. I try to be helpful.

But are you a follower of Jesus?

Yes, I'm a Christian. I love.

Even when the going is rough and my heart is afraid, my mind full of doubt, I still, painfully, love.

Yes, I follow Jesus.

OFFERING

& Prayer: Leader 2

Let us pray:

God, who loves and rejoices in your people, make us cheerful givers of the things that we own and the people we are, In Jesus's Name, **Amen.**

HYMN: Beauty for brokenness (*StF 693; HON 54; MP 806*) **OR**

The Church of Christ, in every age (*StF 415; H&P 804*)

GOD'S FINAL WORD – looking forward

OT Reading: *Reader 1* Isaiah 11: 1 - 5

NT Reading: *Reader 1 or 2* Luke 4: 16 - 21

Thought: *Leader 1*

The family of God had a difficult history. They made many mistakes and suffered a great deal. But, although the prophet Isaiah pointed out where the people had gone wrong, he also gave them prophecies of hope for a new and better future for coming generations. It is this promise that we, as members of the Christian branch of the family, see fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, the Love of God made flesh, our Brother and our Saviour.

Prayer: *Leader 2*

Loving God, we thank you for the many ways in which you have cared for and guided your people since the very beginning. We thank you that we have come to know you even better, as the Jesus who came to show your forgiving love for all your children. Help us, by the power of your Holy Spirit, to lead lives that show our family resemblance to you, God, our loving heavenly Parent. In the name of Jesus, **Amen.**

HYMN: Your (*Thy*) hand, O God, has guided; (*StF 692; H&P 784; HON 678; MP 705*)

Blessing: *Leader 1*

Wherever we go, God our Parent goes with us.

Whatever we do, God our Brother is beside us.

Whatever happens to us, the God of our lives will uphold us.

May we always be aware of God's surrounding love.