**7th May 2023**

**Call to worship**

The Father teaches us the true meaning of parenthood and care.
Jesus shows us what it is to love and forgive.
The life-giving Spirit breathes life into us, so we can be children of God.
Let us come now to worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**A gathering prayer**

Father God, you know us better than we know ourselves;
yet you still love us.
Lord Jesus, help us to become more like you,
so that others will see you in us.
Spirit of the living God fall on us afresh today
and remake us in God’s image.
**Amen.**

**A prayer of approach**

Almighty God, your Word has led us here;
your truth has echoed in our minds,
your Spirit has touched our lives, your being is within us.
You are more than we see and more than we know,
more than we can comprehend or imagine or wish for.
You are ours and we are yours,
and together, we are your family.
To you be all praise and glory.
**Amen**

**A prayer of adoration**

Blessed God, we cannot see and know the depth of your being,
but, for what we do see and know, we worship and adore you.

We find in you protection, guidance and love.
We find in you forgiveness, acceptance and repentance.
We see in you a way of living that is right and just, loving and caring.
We feel the spark of your Spirit in the depths of our beings and know you to be true.

You search us and know us and are forever with us.
Blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as you are one,
may we be one with you and all.
**Amen**.

**A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness**

**A prayer of confession**

Holy God, whose perfect nature challenges and changes us, our guilt weighs heavy on our shoulders.
It saddens us that we fail you so often when we:
fail our families, friends and neighbours;
fail to recognise need;
fail to see how we can be the hand that guides, the love that enfolds, the word that strengthens.

Forgive us that we deliberately look the other way and avoid the hard challenges you call us to.
Forgive us, O God, for our failings, our deafness and our blindness in reaching out and offering your love.
**Amen.**

**Assurance of forgiveness**

Your love is abundant, your forgiveness unimaginable, O God.
May we hear your still small voice that says,
‘My child, my much-loved child, your sins are forgiven, your slate wiped clean, the weight of your guilt removed.
Go in peace to love and serve your neighbour.
**Amen.**

**A prayer of praise**

We praise you, O God, for your creation: for plants, for flowers
and food, for animals and people, for sustenance and provision.

We praise you for sight and sound, for touch and taste and
smell and feeling; for emotions and inspiration; for your
indwelling spirit. For all of this and so much more that makes
life what it is, and reveals what living and loving are.

We praise you for guidance; for dreams and visions that reveal
you to us.

We praise and thank you for all people – the good, the bad,
and everything in between – who have made us the people
we are, and who encourage us to be the people you want us
to be. You are our compass, our plumb line, our map through
the choices of life. To you, O God, we offer our thanks this and
every day.
**Amen.**

**Coronation – who watched who didn’t and why? One thing that stood out for you?**

**Do you think Charles will be like his mother or do you think they will be different?**

**Family traits game W E**

**Explore how we represent our families**

**You will need:** pen and paper for each person, box/container.

* Using pen and paper, ask each young person to anonymously write four bullet points that describe their 'family', family traits or ways of living.
* Invite them to fold these up, place them in a box, then ask someone to pull one ‘family list’ out and read it aloud. Encourage the rest of the group to guess whose family it is.
* Ask: What would you expect to pull out if we were doing this activity as children of God?

**Who do you think you are? 10 mins W E**

**Discuss how we represent God**

**You will need:** access to a device to play clips. ([Independent](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/who-do-you-think-are-josh-widdicombe-b1937384.html);[BBC](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09xvlc0)).

* Together, watch Danny dyer, actor from Eastenders, in the clip, discover that he is related to royalty.
* Ask the group if they know anything of the people they are descended from. How might they as young individuals try and represent their family now
* Remind the group that we are all part of God’s family.
* Spend time talking about how others might see God in us.
* What does it feel like to know that as Christians we show God to others?

 Jesus said Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? **10**Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

**Selfie prayers 5 mins W S**

**Reflect upon showing God’s character to others**

**You will need:** access to mobile phones.

* Play ‘[You Are Love](https://open.spotify.com/track/29EJC979W65Nqfx1QHBuqU?si=57f03a818ce849c5)’, Rend Collective on *Organic Family Hymnal*.
* Encourage the young people to put their phone on selfie mode and to look at themselves. As they do this, ask everyone to think about how they represent God and the things they show to others of Jesus.
* Invite them to spend time asking God what they could do to represent, and to reveal that they are, part of God's family.



**The Presentation of the Bible**

***The Moderator of the General Assembly of The Church of Scotland:***
Sir: to keep you ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God
as the Rule for the whole life and government of Christian Princes,
receive this Book,
the most valuable thing that this world affords.
Here is Wisdom;
This is the royal Law;
These are the lively Oracles of God.

The Bible (‘the Word of God') is the church’s first gift to the King. The words, spoken by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, sets the ‘word of God’ above all human laws: “This is the royal Law”. To accept the gift is for The King to recognise its authority and to accept that constitutionally there should not be any attempt by human authorities to overrule it. Because it is “lively” it should be studied so that its words may speak into The King’s life. Its presentation before any of the regalia reminds us all, as well as The King, that he is called to govern with good conscience in the sight of God.

The formal Presentation of the Bible to the Sovereign dates back to the joint Coronation of William III and Mary II in 1689. In 1953 it was brought towards the start of the service; it was also in 1953 that the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland took part in the service for the first time.

The increased involvement and support in the service by the Moderator is in its own way symbolic of the progression and improvement of ecumenical relations and how as Christians we are united in our diversity under the word of God.

This service is full of Scripture. This presentation, and the beautiful language which accompanies it, is a reminder that careful and prayerful attention to the Bible is at the heart of Christian worship and devotion, as well as being the historical foundation of so much of Britain's culture and ethics.

**Reading John 14.1-14**

The multiculturalism of the Coronation service was a new innovation since the last monarch was crowned in 1953. In

The Oath

**Archbishop of Canterbury:**
Your Majesty, the Church established by law,
whose settlement you will swear to maintain,
is committed to the true profession of the Gospel,
and, in so doing, will seek to foster an environment
in which people of all faiths and beliefs may live freely.
The Coronation Oath has stood for centuries and is enshrined in law.
Are you willing to take the Oath?

**The King:**
I am willing.

*The King places his hand on the Bible,
and the Archbishop administers the Oath.*

**Archbishop of Canterbury:**
Will you to the utmost of your power maintain
the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel?
Will you to the utmost of your power maintain
in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law?
Will you maintain and preserve inviolably
the settlement of the Church of England,
and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof,
as by law established in England?
And will you preserve unto the Bishops and Clergy of England,
and to the Churches there committed to their charge,
all such rights and privileges as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?

and declare that I am a faithful Protestant,

*.*

The wording before the Oath explains that the Church of England seeks to foster an environment where people of all faiths and beliefs may live freely. In the words of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, “gently and assuredly, the Church of England has created an environment for other faith communities and indeed people of no faith to live freely”. King Charles III, at a reception at Buckingham Palace days before his late mother’s funeral, drew attention to this same fact. He reflected that his Anglican Christian confession committed him to the common good of freedom for all faith and belief traditions, as articulated in this wording.

An oath or promise made by the monarch has always been part of the Coronation Rite. In 973 King Edgar’s promise was to defend the church in peace, to forbid extortion and crime, and to be equable and merciful in his judgements. King Edgar’s Promise was largely unchanged for three hundred years, when a fourth clause was added. In 1689 the Oath was expanded and reformulated for the joint Coronation of William and Mary.

This Oath is prescribed by the Coronation Oath Act 1688, an Act of Parliament. An innovation in this service is that the Oath is preceded by a short paragraph in which the Archbishop reflects that the church will continue to seek to foster an environment where all people may live freely. This reflects the words of Her Late Majesty in 2012, when she said ‘The concept of our established Church is occasionally misunderstood and, I believe, commonly under- appreciated. Its role is not to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country.’

***In an unprecedented gesture consolidating the significance of the religious diversity of the Realms, the Sovereign will take his final moments of the service to receive a greeting from the leaders and representatives of the major non-Christian faith traditions.***

There is enough internal evidence in the Gospel of John to suggest that the church that wrote the gospel was surrounded by people of other faiths. Some key words are borrowed or chosen carefully to relate faith in Jesus to the language used in other faiths. 'In the beginning was the word', 'the way, the truth and the life' and 'no one comes to the Father but by me' can be put forward for analysis. It would have been foolish to write, for example, 'no one comes to God but by me' since many people – Jews, Greeks, people from the east – worshipped 'God'. The church was careful to make it clear that it is specifically God known as Father whom Jesus makes known.

John's church was situated in a context where, apparently, several different faiths and cultures met. Perhaps the term 'multiculturalism' will always be an inadequate concept when, as is frequently the case in Britain, faith and culture are not recognised as being inescapably inter-related. And further that religion understood primarily as culture is equally pointless. A current criticism of religious education in schools is that while it is rich in teaching pupils 'about' faiths and about the more unusual practices of religions, it does not generally tackle well the more difficult task of helping children to have to a faith to live by. In short, RE is often about religions as culture without theology; it does not explore the possibility of there being a way, a truth and a life for the individual.

Jesus saying ‘I am the way the truth and the life’ has become one of the most controversial sayings of Jesus within the western world of the last two centuries. How dare he, people have asked. How dare John, or the church, or anyone else put these words into his mouth. Isn’t this the height of arrogance, to imagine that Jesus or anyone else was the only way? Don’t we know that this attitude has done untold damage around the world, as Jesus followers have insisted that everyone else should give up their own ways of life and follow him instead?

There are sadly many examples of the persecution by religious people who believe that they have the truth and that others who don’t agree with them should die of heresy.

Heres a joke – always dangerous telling a religious joke:

Context - who is telling the joke - is a really important factor. If someone is telling a joke about Catholics and they are a Northern Irish protestant paramilitary, that is very different from a Catholic priest telling a joke against himself."

I was walking across a bridge one day, and I saw a man standing on the edge, about to jump. I ran over and said: "Stop. Don't do it."

"Why shouldn't I?" he asked.

"Well, there's so much to live for!"

"Like what?"

"Are you religious?"

He said: "Yes."

I said: "Me too. Are you Christian or Buddhist?"

"Christian."

"Me too. Are you Catholic or Protestant?"

"Protestant."

"Me too. Are you Episcopalian or Baptist?"

"Baptist."

"Wow. Me too. Are you Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?"

"Baptist Church of God."

"Me too. Are you original Baptist Church of God, or are you Reformed Baptist Church of God?"

"Reformed Baptist Church of God."

"Me too. Are you Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1879, or Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1915?"

He said: "Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1915."

I said: "Die, heretic scum," and pushed him off.

For this reason, some Christians have made it a central article of faith to reject the idea of the uniqueness of Jesus partly because of their concerns about how the church has behaved in the past, and partly out of a desire to be sensitive and accommodating to those who hold different beliefs.

The trouble with this is that it doesn’t work. If you dethrone Jesus, you enthrone something or someone else instead. The belief that ‘all religions are really the same’ sounds nice and democratic – though the study of religions quickly shows it isn’t true. What you are really saying if you claim that they’re all the same is that none of them are more than distant echoes, distorted images, of reality. You’re saying that ‘reality, god, the divine, is remote and unknowable, and that neither Jesus nor Buddha nor Moses nor Krishna gives us direct access to it. They all provide a way towards the foothills of the mountain, not the way to the summit. That is a faith position.

Jesus didn’t say no one comes to God but by me’ but ‘no one comes to the Father but by me’. The Christian view of God is shaped by the life and work of Jesus, within whom we believe we have seen the revelation of God. This God is the one whom Jesus called Father. We don’t come with a set, fixed idea of who God is and try to fit Jesus into it. We look at Jesus to get the reflection of God.

It’s true that Christians and churches have been arrogant in the way they have presented the gospel, the whole setting of this passage shows that such arrogance is a denial of the very truth it’s claiming to present. The truth, the life through which we find the way, is Jesus himself: the Jesus who washed his disciple’s feet and told them to copy his example, the Jesus who was on his way to give his life as the shepherd for the sheep; the Jesus who reached out to all, the blasphemers and the sinners with love and understanding. Was that arrogant? Was that self serving? Only when the church recovers the nerve to follow Jesus in his own mission and vocation will we be able to recover our nerve fully in making the claim of verse 6.

The early Christian martyrs called down blessing and forgiveness, rather than cursing and judgement, on their executioners and torturers. They really had learnt something about the way of Jesus, who made loving one’s enemies a central, non-negotiable part of his teaching – not something one might think about now and again but not try very hard to put into practice. On the cross Jesus prayed that those nailing him up there might be forgiven. This is the way of Christ – it was non negotiable. When you confess that Jesus is the way the truth and the life – this is the way you are following.

In all of life’s conflicts and disagreements, may we follow the way of Christ and so reflect the gracious forgiveness and acceptance of the God Jesus called Father, the Father whom we have seen in Jesus.

**Do you know anyone of a different faith ? What do you respect about them?**

**How do you understand Jesus statement ‘I am the way the truth and the Life?**

**Reactions to my thoughts?**

**Prayers of intercession**

Lord, you say, ‘Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.’ So, Lord, we bring before you what is on our hearts today.

We ask for your hand on the situation in Sudan and on all those trying to flee. May you give them strength and courage. Travel alongside, speaking to their hearts as you lead them to safety.

We pray too for all those trapped in their homes unable to venture out safely, unable to even go out for provisions. Provide for their needs, Lord, physical and spiritual. Keep them safe.

We pray for an end to all conflict, in Sudan and in Ukraine. Have mercy on all living amid danger. Bring peace to your world.

**Lord, may we represent you and always show your love.
We lift our hearts to you, offering our prayer
and asking in your holy name that your will be done.**

We bring before you, Lord our struggling health service. We ask that the strikes be resolved, enabling postponed appointments and procedures to go ahead before situations worsen and put an even greater strain on the NHS. Resolve issues Lord, so that all will find their needs met and lives saved. May your hand be on all who are ill. In a moment of silence, we bring those we know personally who are in need of your hand upon them. *Pause.* Touch them with your healing hand.

**Lord, may we represent you and always show your love.
We lift our hearts to you, offering our prayer
and asking in your holy name that your will be done.**

Lord God, the coronation of King Charles III brings in a new era. During the coronation we saw old symbolic traditions mingled with the new – such as the three ancient swords of Mercy, Temporal justice and Spiritual justice carried in the coronation procession and the newly commissioned Anointing Screen. May the king be aware of your anointing upon him from this day forward.

The king has taken his seat on the ancestral throne and the weight of the crown upon his head. We pray Lord that, from your heavenly throne, you will help our king carry the weight of all that is put upon him in his role as our monarch.

His mother, our late Queen Elizabeth, reigned with honour, wisdom and integrity. Her heart was yours. And we pray the king's will be yours too as he reigns over us. May he listen, draw strength and be guided by you always.

We pray for Queen Camilla, that you will strengthen and encourage her as she supports the king. We pray also that she be filled with your Holy Spirit as represented by the dove on the rod used in her coronation. We pray for all the royal family, that each may look to you, Lord.

**Lord, may we represent you and always show your love.
We lift our hearts to you, offering our prayer
and asking in your holy name that your will be done.**

Many people from all walks of life have roles to play in the coronation celebrations. We pray for those performing at Windsor Castle in the coronation choir. Fire-fighters, cab drivers, farmers and volunteer lifeboat crew are among those taking part. We pray that you will settle their nerves and help create a memory for all to treasure.

As communities gather this weekend with celebratory picnics and lunches, Lord, we pray that you will be represented throughout. We pray that you will unite communities as new friendships are forged and old ones rekindled over the sharing of food.

This week also sees the National Day of Volunteering taking place. We pray that this will bring forward a new generation of volunteers in our communities. Lord, you give us all different skills. Help us to put those skills to good use for others.

**Lord, may we represent you and always show your love.
Help us as a church to represent you wherever we are,
whatever we are doing.
May your church bring glory to your name
by trusting and following the family traits
of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
We lift our hearts to you, offering our prayer
and asking in your holy name that your will be done. Amen.**



**A prayer for all ages together**

As an alternative to the suggested actions, you could use sign language throughout.
Father, may the love of Jesus be shown by us.
*(arms around yourself like a hug)*
May the peace of Jesus be known in us.
*(reach out to hold or touch the hand(s) or someone else)*
May the joy of Jesus be spread by us. Alleluia!
*(hands raised high)*



**A sending out prayer**

Send us out, Lord, into your world.
Draw us closer to yourself by your Spirit,
so that others may see your presence in us
in all we do and say and are.
In Jesus’ name.
**Amen.**