

Worship at Home – 8 February 2026

An act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by the Revd Rachel Borgars

Call to worship

As we have gathered, so Jesus is here.
As we are connected, so the Spirit unites and inspires us.
As we worship, so the Creator hears our voices and sings with us.
Come, O come, Immanuel.
Amen.

Hymn: 106 STF – God, whose almighty word

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| 1 | Thou whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight;
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the Gospel-day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light. | 3 | Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy Dove,
speed forth thy flight;
move on the water's face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light. |
| 2 | Thou, who didst come to bring
on thy redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
now to all humankind
let there be light. | 4 | Holy and blessed Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might;
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the earth far and wide
let there be light. |

John Marriott (1780-1825), Thomas Raffles (1788-1863) Used By Permission. Created by HymnQuest.com - HymnQuest ID: 62785

Opening Prayers

Hush. Be still.
Rest in the presence of God, wherever you are today.
Hush. Be still.
Come with all you are, the bitter and broken bits, the shining and shimmering parts, the questions and the doubts, the convictions and the certainties.
Hush. Be still.
In quiet humility we confess that we are imperfect people.
Listen to God's wisdom for new ways of being.
Hush. Be still.
Open your heart to the generous grace of God.
Reach out your hands to those who are marginalised,
those who are hungry, the naked, the rejected.
During this act of worship,
remember that you are loved immensely by God and forgiven by him, in Jesus' name
Amen.

Hymn: 167 STF – Colours of day dawn into the mind

- 1 Colours of day dawn into the mind,
The sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
And let's give the message to the people we meet.
*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.*
- 2 Go through the park, on into the town;
The sun still shines on, it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
The people of darkness are needing a friend.
Refrain
- 3 Open your eyes, look into the sky,
The darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
But Jesus is living, His Spirit is near.
Refrain

Sue McClellan (born 1951), John Paculabo (born 1946), Keith Rycroft (born 1949)
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Reading: Isaiah 58:1-12 - False and True Worship

- 58** Shout out; do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
- ² Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they want God on their side.^[a]
- ³ “Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day
and oppress all your workers.
- ⁴ You fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
- ⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,

a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?
⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator^[b] shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
¹¹ The Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.
¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Reflection on the reading

At this time of year, which can sometimes be the coldest part of the winter season, do you yearn for longer, warmer days? Are you longing for a brighter tomorrow? In this season of the Church's year, we have moved from the period of preparation (Advent) to that of celebration (Christmas and the Feast of Epiphany) and now we have entered Ordinary Seasons as we await the beginning of Lent (which can be a lengthy penitential season). It all begins to sound dark, dreary, dank and, at best, humdrum.

Back in the mists of time, life for the people of Jerusalem, those to whom Isaiah spoke, had also taken on a dismal hue. The euphoria surrounding the return to their land had dissipated and disillusionment had set in. We have read various sections of the Book of Isaiah throughout Advent and Christmas. The biblical book in its entirety attempts to reveal God's plan as it interprets the

history of his chosen people from the time of the original Isaiah of Jerusalem through the period of the Babylonian Exile until after the Return.

The Isaiah of this section of the prophetic book is speaking to the people of Jerusalem during and after their return to the city in 539BCE. The returnees hadn't anticipated that life would be so tough. Yes, they had returned home but life wasn't joyous (as they had hoped would be the case). Surely, a holy people living in God's holy city should not be undergoing so much suffering? The city lay in ruins. Intermittent droughts caused crop failures. Life was tough. Drudgery was rife.

Despite the hardships, they are a faithful people who turn to God. They are fasting and praying assiduously, awaiting a response from God. The people believe that they are, genuinely, doing what is right. They are working to rebuild the city. They are fervent in their prayer and fasting and have been taught that this fasting and humbling of themselves will please God. Why is their covenant God not keeping his side of the bargain? Why are they not experiencing blessing?

Isaiah 58.1-12 can be viewed as a dialogue between God (voiced by Isaiah) and the people. The people are saying to God: "we are fasting and praying, why aren't you noticing?" How does God (through his prophet Isaiah) respond? God tells them that they are missing the (real) point. They may be fasting and praying and carrying out religious observances but they are not actually living life aright. They only fast in order to seek attention. They only fast in order to quarrel amongst themselves. It's the wrong kind of fasting. The 'fasting' God wants is nothing to do with minor planned food deprivation: rather it is "to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Is. 58.6)

God wants the people to completely reorder their priorities, to change their lifestyle. They are to share their bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into their house; when they see the naked, to cover them and not to hide themselves from their own kin? If God's people embrace this whole new way of life, then their light shall shine. And, when they ask, "Where is our God in this?" God will respond, "Here I am."

This is to say, that God will make Godself known, not to those whose fasting and praying is self-seeking, but to those who seek the Lord through their service to others. To those first hearers of Isaiah this must have been a shocking message. God is telling them that what they thought to be (orthodox) piety is not the worship that God wants.

How does this touch us? The challenge is to consider whether we are truly listening to God's voice through that of Isaiah. God invites His people to live differently, to seek justice as moral agents in the world. Maybe you watch or listen to the news and feel powerless but there are surely ways in which each of us could make small differences and, together, we might do more.

Are you familiar with the hymn "Longing for Light" (StF 706)? It weds together the themes of light and darkness with the challenge to address the injustices that are as present today as they were in the time of Isaiah. The hymn concludes with the line, "Let us be servants to one another, making your kingdom come." If we so ordered our lives, then we could be 'salty-servants' and light-bearers in a dank and dreary winter world.

Hymn: 504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day

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|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do and say. | | sick and sorrowing. |
| 2 | May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power. | 4 | May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self abasing,
this is victory. |
| 3 | May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort | 5 | May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go. |

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Prayers of intercession

In our confusion, we turn to you.

We pray for the powerful and the influential, that they may be servants of the common good.

In a world of deep fakes and deceptions,

We seek your truth, your light, your will for us, your people.

Help us to be truly holy, set apart for you in service to others.

Christ our Light

Make us salt and light for others, so that your Kingdom may come

Lord, we pray for true peace, not just the absence of war.

We pray for those whose lives are threatened by warfare and aggression.

We call to mind the peoples of the places that figure all too often in our news feeds:

the people of Ukraine and Russia,

of Palestine and Israel,

of the Congo and of Sudan...

We pray for warmongers and for peacemakers

Change hearts bring your reign of peace and security for all peoples.

Enable us to speak out for peace and champion those who are victims of aggressors.

Christ our Light

Make us salt and light for others, so that your Kingdom may come

We pray for all farmers and food producers.

We pray for food security for those in lands where crops have failed owing to drought, flood,
disease or other disaster.

Lord, in a world of plenty,

where the rich can gorge on the good things,

where some go on diets whilst others stare starvation in the face,

when, even in our own area, there are those who must choose between eating or heating,

bless the endeavours of relief charities worldwide and those of our local foodbanks and food
pantries.

Christ our Light

Make us salt and light for others, so that your Kingdom may come

We give thanks for homes to go to, places where we feel warm and secure
We pray for the homeless, the rough sleepers and sofa-surfers.
We pray for those helped by homelessness charities.
We pray for those evicted by uncaring landlords
For those for whom rents on habitable properties are unaffordable.
For anyone struggling to find a place in which to live in an unfamiliar town
For all who need a new place to call home.
Inspire us to welcome newcomers and those who relocate to our communities.

Christ our Light

Make us salt and light for others, so that your Kingdom may come

We hold before you, Lord, all who are sick or sorrowing.
We think of loved ones lost and those who mourn them.
We pray for those undergoing or awaiting medical treatment
And for any fearing what tests will reveal.
We remember those who care at home for loved ones
Help us to reach out to all in need, in your name.

Christ our Light

Make us salt and light for others, so that your Kingdom may come.

Amen.

We say the Lord's Prayer in its traditional form.

Hymn: 545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3 Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
be thou mine inheritance now and always;
be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5 High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, c 8th century translated by Mary E Byrne (1880-1931), versified by Eleanor H Hull (1860-1935)

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Blessing

As this act of worship draws to a close,
may you know God's grace in your heart,
may you follow the way of Christ,
And may you be inspired by the Spirit,
moving through the world, ahead of you, lighting the way,
Amen.

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