

Worship for 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Good morning to everyone as we gather to worship God together. Many people work to enable this service to become manifest so it is time to give thanks to them.

There is a pastoral letter from Janet, Richard will give us our sermon. Readings will be done by members of our churches in Tysoe and Warwick. The jigsaw-like pieces of a Circuit service are 'put into place' by those with the technical know-how. I give my thanks to those responsible for making a complete picture for today's service. I am Nigel Saxton and my role is to welcome you – which I am doing now, lead us in prayer and choose the majority of the hymns.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

As our call to worship I will begin by using Psalm 40, verses 1-3

“I waited patiently for the Lord, he inclined unto me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.”

Lord, daily you lift us from darkness into light, you offer forgiveness and renewal, you give us life. In the hours ahead help us to see resurrection in every meeting, feel love in every conversation, and feel hope in every action. Oh Lord, put a new song in our mouths, a song of love, of life and praise.

Amen.

Our first song is 356 from StF – Jesus shall take the highest honour.

Hymn: StF 356 – Jesus shall take the highest honour

**1. Jesus shall take the highest honour,
Jesus shall take the highest praise;
let all earth join heaven in exalting
the Name which is above all other names.
Let's bow the knee in humble adoration,
for at his name every knee must bow.
Let every tongue confess he is Christ, God's
only Son.**

Sovereign Lord we give you glory now.

***For all honour and blessing and power
belongs to you, belongs to you.***

***All honour and blessing and power
belongs to you, belongs to you,***

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God.

Christopher Alan Bowater (b. 1947)

Prayer of approach

Grant us grace, O God, to take your son for our redeemer, his life for our example, his Spirit for our guide, his wounds for our healing and his cross for our salvation, that he may take possession of our hearts.

Amen.

Prayer of adoration

Lord, we adore you because of your love. You have made us rich beyond anything in the world by coming to us in Jesus. You chose us before the world began to be your children. Blessed be your glorious name forever.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Too often Lord, we give the things of this world priority. Too often we indulge in idle talk and seek satisfaction from the things of the world, going our own way and abandoning the servant heart that we are meant to have as followers of Jesus. Why do we still want to stand beside the great when we are called to sit beside the broken? We now ask for forgiveness.

Silence

Declaration of forgiveness

Lord, your forgiveness is always immediate and never ending. Give us clarity of mind so as not to take for granted your forgiving nature. Give us strength of purpose and humility of heart.

Amen.

Our next song is number 441 from StF – As water to the thirsty

Hymn: StF 441 – As water to the thirsty

- 1. As water to the thirsty,
as beauty to the eyes,
as strength that follows weakness,
as truth instead of lies,
as songtime and springtime
and summertime to be,
so is my Lord,
my living Lord,
so is my Lord to me.**
- 2. Like calm in place of clamour,
like peace that follows pain,
like meeting after parting,
like sunshine after rain,
like moonlight and starlight
and sunlight on the sea,
so is my Lord,
my living Lord,
so is my Lord to me.**

- 3. As sleep that follows fever,
as gold instead of grey,
as freedom after bondage,
as sunrise to the day,
as home to the traveller
and all we long to see,
so is my Lord,
my living Lord,
so is my Lord to me.**

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b. 1926)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading 2 Samuel 7:1-14 (NRSVA)

God's Covenant with David

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.'

³Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.'

⁴But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name,

like the name of the great ones of the earth.
¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,
¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ¹⁴I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.

Psalm 89:20-37 (NRSVA)

²⁰I have found my servant David;
with my holy oil I have anointed him;
²¹my hand shall always remain with him;
my arm also shall strengthen him.
²²The enemy shall not outwit him,
the wicked shall not humble him.
²³I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who hate him.
²⁴My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him;
and in my name his horn shall be exalted.
²⁵I will set his hand on the sea
and his right hand on the rivers.
²⁶He shall cry to me, "You are my Father,
my God, and the Rock of my salvation!"
²⁷I will make him the firstborn,
the highest of the kings of the earth.
²⁸For-ever I will keep my steadfast love for him,
and my covenant with him will stand firm.
²⁹I will establish his line for ever,
and his throne as long as the heavens endure.
³⁰If his children forsake my law
and do not walk according to my ordinances,

³¹if they violate my statutes
and do not keep my commandments,
³²then I will punish their transgression with the rod
and their iniquity with scourges;
³³but I will not remove from him my steadfast love,
or be false to my faithfulness.
³⁴I will not violate my covenant,
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.
³⁵Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness;
I will not lie to David.
³⁶His line shall continue for ever,
and his throne endure before me like the sun.
³⁷It shall be established for ever like the moon,
an enduring witness in the skies.' *Selah*

Epistle Ephesians 2:11-22 (NRSVA)

One in Christ

¹¹So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called 'the uncircumcision' by those who are called 'the circumcision'—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for

through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Gospel Mark 6:30-34,53-56 (NRSVA)

Feeding the Five Thousand

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Healing the Sick in Gennesaret

⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. ⁵⁴When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, ⁵⁵and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market-places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

Sermon

Some conversations you will never forget. I sat beside my Dad's hospital bed having a catch up having not seen him for over four months. The timing was not our choice to say the least. It was the first year in ministry and I was in Harare one week into an intensive (five week) language school to learn the Shona language having been in circuit in Gweru just over three months when the phone call came. It was the Methodist Church Overseas Division Pastoral Secretary who told me that my father was critically ill, undergoing emergency aortic surgery and the family want you to return. Book the next economy flight and we will pay the fare. I left my wife and three young children behind and was 'home' within 48 hours. Over the next two weeks I visited most days spending time with him and the immediate family and liaising with him to keep his business running. He had six men working on three different sites and I was the only immediate family member who knew the Fencing Trade well enough to stand in.

He was interested to hear about my experience of ministry and my early impressions of Zimbabwe. Among many things I remember telling him that the Shona people had an inbuilt respect culture which had an hierarchy from top to bottom as follows: Senior men, senior women, married men, married men with children, married women, married women with children, unmarried adult men, unmarried adult women, children. It was assumed that older men in particular possess greater wisdom and therefore had greater authority. At that point in time I was just over 31 while Dad was 63 – twice my age therefore twice my wisdom. His reply surprised me. "I don't think that's true" he said "I'm just as capable of making mistakes and getting it wrong now as I was when I was your age" To which I

replied “as capable perhaps but less likely to as you have more experience than me. We discussed this for some while and I offer it to you for thought.

There has always been debate around the difference between knowledge and wisdom. The classic example of ‘knowledge tell you a tomato is a fruit, wisdom advises against putting it in a fruit salad’. No doubt you can think of many and better examples. But I do believe that you cannot have much wisdom without knowledge whole I agree that possession of knowledge does not guarantee wisdom. Armed with both knowledge and wisdom born of experience and an open mind combined with a concern for what is best for oneself and others we are best equipped for decision making. But we can still get it wrong. King David is not credited in the Bible as having great wisdom, that description was given to his son, Solomon. But throughout his life he did make some excellent decisions and he listened to his advisors especially Nathan the prophet.

The shepherd boy David was the unlikely choice to face and defeat Goliath, his faith and cunning destined him for leadership and ultimately the throne which he achieved without sacrificing loyalty to King Saul or compromising his friendship with Prince Jonathan. He shepherded Israel to become a prosperous and united nation with respect for God and His guiding principles. Throughout his life David sought to live according to those principles himself though he would be the first to admit he often failed and sometimes got things very wrong. His affair with Bathsheba and the conspiracy to do away with her husband were his worst errors of judgment, of human weakness, but his achievements were outstanding. My son is a Defence Strategist and Advisor working for the M.O.D. He spent some

time discussing with me from an academic point of view David’s military strategies who he saw as many generations ahead of others in the ancient world. Moving his headquarters from Beersheba to Salem, renamed Jerusalem being one of them. (The fortress city was home of a Canaanite Deity “Shalem” so claiming it and renaming it sent a powerful message of defeat and humiliation to the Canaanites. Salem has linguistic echoes of shalom which translates as peace, while the prefix Je is a respect name for God hence city of God’s peace worth defending with your life...)

Yet it is Solomon who is singled out as the wise King in the Scriptures. The wise way he handled and settled a conflict between two young women each claiming the baby born alive was theirs became legendary. 1 Kings 4: 29 – 34 puts it like this:

²⁹God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. ³⁰Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ³²He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. ³⁴From all nations people came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

I note this translation has altered some words. Originally it was “wisdom greater than all men”

and in verse 34 “any man”. When I first read it I thought that the exclusion of women was deliberate because there were and are plenty of women who are wiser! Some folk noted that the nations who best handled the COVID virus were led by women – Germany, New Zealand etc...

Anyhow, in spite of this description with the inclusive language I don't think Solomon always 'got it right' In our passage this morning from 2 Samuel the Lord gives clear guidance to King David not to build a temple. More important than fine stones and gold trimmings would be his reputation for justice and all the nation living the way God instructed and guides. In these verses The Lord, through Nathan, points ahead to the Kingdom that will be established by one who is David's descendent. We believe that to be Jesus and we seek his Kingdom first in our generation. Solomon, renowned for his wisdom is the king who sets about building a temple changing the theology from a broad belief that God is to be found wherever we are to One who has a place of special reverence. As we look back over the centuries of conflict around Jerusalem currently Muslims and Jews who each want exclusive tenancy of the temple site I can't help but wonder if Solomon made a mistake. But then I've made the odd mistake myself over the years....

I have focussed our thoughts this morning on the difficulty of making wise decisions for ourselves as individuals and for the wider community which will be very pertinent from tomorrow- 19th July. (At the time of writing our government's intention is to set society pretty much free of COVID restrictions). We have lived through the biggest trauma in several generations, the social, economic, religious, and health – physical and mental- costs are yet to be fully realised. National governments and international organisations have done their best to guide us

through sometimes getting it right, sometimes doing the right thing but too late, and sometimes just getting the balance wrong. We are all deeply grateful for the international team of scientists particularly those at Oxford who devised and got vaccines approved so quickly. Grateful too for the herculean effort of so many staff and volunteers who have delivered the injections. (I hate the word “jabs”!)

But now it's down to us. Our government believes the time is right to replace law with advice, trusting the public to do what is best. We are going to need wisdom in making sound decisions. My worry is whether we have enough knowledge to make good decisions. I also worry that human selfishness – sin in Biblical language – will skew judgements and set us back a bit. That said, this had to come at some point – tomorrow or in another few weeks- and we are going to have face it. The cynic in me thinks the government is passing the responsibility to us so that if we have a third wave it will be our fault, not theirs! Hopefully that's not the case. When to put on a face covering? Who and where to mix with others? Should I stay at home or go out at all? Should I come back to public worship? These will be difficulty personal decisions balancing protection and well being of self with that of others. And we must avoid the trap of becoming judgemental of other people's decisions.

Oh lord, give us all greater wisdom and greater insight than that of Solomon so that we can do well in these next weeks and months.
Amen

Hymn: StF 682 – God of grace and God of glory

1. God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power;
crown your ancient Church's story;
bring her bud to glorious flower.

Grant us wisdom,
grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour.

2. Heal your children's warring madness;
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom,
grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.
3. Lo, the hosts of evil round us
scorn your Christ, assail his ways!
Fears and doubts too long have bound us;
free our hearts to work and praise.
Grant us wisdom,
grant us courage,
for the living of these days.

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of thanksgiving

We give thanks to you Lord as we remember your love for us. If we were to make a list of all our possessions from thimbles to houses and everything in between it would be a very long one. As inhabitants of a rich country we live in perpetual danger of material things taking centre stage in our lives. By applying our wills backed up by your power we hold you, Father, as the number one in our lives. Help us to see all other things as extras that we cannot keep. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Father God, throughout your world are people in desperate need. Every week we pray into situations and do what we can to alleviate suffering. Let us now, in the following time of silence pray into those circumstances uppermost in our own hearts. LONG PAUSE. If we get

discouraged Lord – and we do – remind us of all the evidence that proves that you are at work in the world and always have been.

The Lord's Prayer

This version of the Lord's Prayer comes from Central America where hunger and heat are major issues and dictators are all too common.

**Our Father who is here on earth,
holy is your name in the hungry who share their
bread and their song.
Your kingdom come, a generous land where
confidence and truth reign.
Let us do your will, being a cool breeze for those
who sweat.
Forgive us for keeping silent in the face of
injustice and for burying our dreams.
Don't let us fall into the temptation of taking up
the same arms as the enemy,
but deliver us from the evil which disunites us.
Let us believe in humanity and life,
then we shall know that your kingdom is being
built
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Offering & prayer

Now comes the time for me to ask for God's blessing on our gifts, of whatever kind, given to help build the kingdom of God about which Jesus spoke so frequently. For those of us who feel good about giving – which is understandable – teach us that it is also OK to receive.

Amen.

Every moment we live before the face of God. There are no forgotten deeds, no disregarded words and no inconsequential choices. As we sing our last song, let its words reflect these truths for us. It is StF no. 489 – All I once held dear.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 489 – All I once held dear

1. All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

2. Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

3. Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Knowing you, Jesus,

*knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Prayer & blessing

Lord God almighty. Thank you for the time we have spent together. We appreciate being able to sing, to pray and to listen to your word – things for which believers in many parts of the world are persecuted. Let us not take the privilege of being free to worship you for granted and as we end this time of worship Lord help us to be aware of your presence everywhere we go. Amen.

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StF 356 – Jesus shall take the highest honour

Christopher Alan Bowater (*b.* 1947)

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StF 441 – As water to the thirsty

Timothy Dudley-Smith (*b.* 1926)

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StF 489 – All I once held dear

Graham Kendrick (*b.* 1950)

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StF 682 – God of grace and God of glory

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969)

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NRSV & NRSVA

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