



CHRISTMAS 2A

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

Second Sunday After Christmas - Year A

4th January 2026



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

186 STF – Tell out, my soul

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

217 STF – Silent night, holy night OR

205 STF – It came upon the midnight clear

Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:10-18

Hymn:

190 STF – Angels, from the realms of glory OR

134 STF – Christ, whose glory fills the skies

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

212 STF – O come, all ye faithful OR

208 STF – Let earth and heaven combine

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

202 STF – Hark! the herald-angels sing OR

591 STF – Let all mortal flesh keep silence

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on www.theworshipcloud.com.

Copyright for content is retained by the original author / contributor.

www.theworshipcloud.com

Call to worship

Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord.
Let all my body sing your praises, O God,
And may my life and worship follow in your plan for my life, this and every day,
Amen.¹

Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR
186 STF – Tell out, my soul

Opening Prayers

Let us pray,
as we enter this new year let us take some time in a moment of quiet to look back on last year.

Life is never perfect.
Life can be challenging.

Let us reflect on those moments of joy and difficulties. Difficulties that perhaps we had no control over, or perhaps things that we could have done differently.

In a quiet moment, let's bring the more difficult things forward in our prayers, let us have some time of recognition and honesty when we look at the things we could have done differently. The ways in which we could've reacted differently, in our actions, in our words and in our thoughts. Help us be honest and brave and willing to change and challenge ourselves.

As we pray, let us acknowledge and celebrate the positives of the last year, let us not take things for granted but let us remember to thank God and to thank those who have helped us in our joys and those positive moments.

As we step into this new year help us remember this is a year of possibilities, a year when there will be highs and lows.

Help us see each day as a new beginning a new opportunity.

We have this wonderful world to share in, the beauty of the landscape the beauty of the people we share our lives with, help us lift our faces to you, to the world with thanks and adoration.

Help us to be brave enough to live life boldly... singing your praises and being your people in this world, going forward bringing salt and light to your world and accepting the gift of salt and light from those with whom we share our lives.

Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Lorna Dobson

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

I have a question to begin our time together. I wonder who here has got a family photo somewhere at home? Maybe on your phone, on the fridge, or in a frame on the wall. Show of hands, if that's you.

If you look at those photos, you see people who belong together. You might even say, "These are my people. This is my family."

In one of our readings for today, Ephesians 1, Paul, the writer of this part of the Bible, is doing something a bit like holding up a big family photo. He says that, in Jesus, God has chosen us, adopted us and blessed us.

In other words, God looks at you and says, "You belong in my family. I want you in the picture."

Then, in John 1, our other reading for today, we hear this:

"To all who received him... he gave power to become children of God."

So, when we welcome Jesus, God writes our name under that photo. Kind of like a child would when they do a piece of work that they are proud of.

However, the reality is that families can be messy, can't they? We don't always agree, we sometimes get on each other's nerves, but the photo reminds us: we still belong.

God's family is enormous, every age, every background, every language, brought together in Jesus.

So, here's something simple for this week:

When you see a photo on a phone, a poster, or a magazine, quietly remember two things:

- "I am loved. I belong in God's family."
- "So does my neighbour. God wants them in the picture too."

You might even want to whisper, "Thank you, God, that I belong."

Prayer

Loving and generous God,

Thank you that in Jesus, you have chosen us and adopted us.

When we feel left out or unsure where we fit,
remind us that we are your children, deeply loved.

Help us to see others as brothers and sisters,
and to live as one family in Christ.

Amen.³

Hymn:

217 STF – Silent night, holy night OR

205 STF – It came upon the midnight clear

³ All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:10-18

Hymn:

190 STF – Angels, from the realms of glory OR

134 STF – Christ, whose glory fills the skies

Reflections on the readings

Happy New Year!

How are your New Year's Resolutions going? Hands up if you've set yourself a resolution this year? I wonder if you've kept your resolve these last four days - don't worry I won't make you put your hands up for that one! And if someone were to ask you how you'd like to live this coming year, what might you say? Might you talk about your hopes and fears; your aspirations for you and your loved ones; the things you want to pick up and the things you want to put down?

This is a very fitting lectionary reading for the beginning of the year..

Why? Well firstly, it reminds us of the message of the Gospel! It surmises all that is to come in the New Testament; God is with us; God sent his son; God's son was God and showed us the nature of God; through Jesus Christ we receive grace upon grace. What a reminder of what it means to be a Christ-follower.

What a gift and what a blessing to be reminded of that as we get the ball rolling with 2026. Today, I might suggest three different ways we can take the wisdom from these verses into the year ahead.

Firstly, the hope in God's presence.

Secondly, the hope in God's transformational grace.

Finally, the hope in the mystery of God.

So let's begin at the beginning; with the present-ness of God. I love how the Message translation of John 1 uses 'life-light' instead of 'Word' and emphasises how God works in every person. It says:

The Life-Light was the real thing:

Every person entering Life
he brings into Light.

He was in the world,
the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.

My work is as a Community Development Worker. One of the core principles of this work is known as 'ABCD', Asset-based Community Development. This is what it says on the tin; asset-based means that it begins with what is already abundant and brilliant in a community.

Instead of using a starting point rooted in what's lacking - 'this community is experiencing really high levels of division' or 'this community doesn't have any access to green space!' - we would start with what the community has. For example, a community might look around and say 'we've got a disused piece of land and loads of amazing gardeners, shall we create a community garden? And perhaps that garden might go some way to bring

different facets of that community together, and to provide some locally grown food to those who are struggling financially. My experience is that this ABCD model grows a sense of pride and agency for local folk, and usually creates better results than starting from a place of negativity and 'lack'.

Thinking about John chapter 1 reminded me of the ABCD model because it tells us that God was the Word from the dawn of creation; that God is here in the world, even amongst those who don't know it yet. It might be tempting to look at our lives, the world - the future, even - and see the problems. And of course problems and suffering are real and unavoidable parts of life; human suffering is at the heart of the gospel as much as redemption is through Christ's suffering on the cross. As Richard Rohr puts it:

'The Gospel gives human suffering deep, personal, and cosmic meaning, by connecting our pain to the pain of others and, finally, by connecting us to the very "pain of God"'

I say this to remind us that as Christians we are not promised deliverance from pain; that's not the message to take into 2026, however much we might long for it. Because suffering is real, our hope can't be wishful thinking. It must be rooted in God.

Where, then, is our hope?

Well, my dear brothers and sisters, our hope is that God is here - always has been, always will be. Or to quote Wesley: 'best of all, God is with us.'

If ABCD asks us what already is there that we might build on, then as Christians our answer can always be that God is there. If God is the Word through whom all things are made, then the truest 'asset' in every corner of creation is God's ongoing presence. God is already in our dark night of the soul, where we might not feel it to be true.

Does this feel true to you today? My prayer for each one of us is that it might. The truth I find most comforting, that I hold on to when the suffering in the world feels overwhelming, is that God is Alpha and Omega. That God was here before we were and goes ahead of us. May you know that God is with you and start from that place of strength and comfort in all that you do.

To move into my second point, John is very interested in how we might understand Christ's arrival in the world and what changes metaphysically for us as a result. It is captured in verse 14: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. And 17: For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Reflecting on the theology we've been holding over Christmas - God made flesh and dwelling amongst us - John names what Jesus brought with him: grace and truth. I love the translation of verse 16 that describes it as 'grace upon grace'.

What would it mean for us to look ahead at the year to come and know that each one of us has been covered with grace upon grace? That none of us can earn God's love through the law, but rather we are given it because we are loved just as we are, right now. For me this is a message of transformation. It is not the work of a year - certainly not the work of a moment or a season, but the work of a lifetime to know this grace and to live in line with it. The good news is that we're not on our own in understanding this grace. That's where the Holy Spirit comes in. It is only by the Spirit that we can grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. And be changed by it.

This is a sermon I preach over and over again - that through the Holy Spirit we might know God's grace more completely and be transformed by it. When I ask myself why I come back to this message again and again, I realise it is because I so desperately need it. It is the hope I hold on to; that while I am flawed and sinful and limited, in God I might find grace and be led to a life in which I find more of God and to shed the trappings of the world. I pray that this year takes us all a little further on this transformation journey.

The final point I draw from John's forward to his Gospel is the mystery of God. Verse 18 tells us that No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

However hard I try, I struggle to make sense of this; no one has seen God... but Jesus is God and has revealed God to us? Now I'm not a theologian and I don't understand the complexities of the Trinity that very clever people have spent centuries wrestling with. However, part of what I love is the mystery of all of this. Sometimes I find myself over-intellectualising my faith. Reducing it to what I know in my head. The thing that verses like this - complicated verses that I can't understand - reminds me is that it is not by our intellects that we know God. It is by our hearts. We are invited into the mystery of creation as children of God gifted with other ways of knowing, enabled by the Holy Spirit.

And for those of you that find this hard - who want to know and understand and who find mystery hard, I give you this lovely quote from one of my favourite novelists Elizabeth Strout:

I think our job - maybe even our 'duty' - is - To bear the burden of the mystery with as much grace as we can.

And here we land, at the start of a New Year, burdened with the mystery of God but equipped to face whatever is to come with the hope that God is already present in every corner of creation; that in Christ we have been gifted a transformational grace; and that we are invited into the mystery of the divine. May all of this lead us to participate in bringing about the Kingdom of God. May you be blessed in it with grace upon grace.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

212 STF – O come, all ye faithful OR

208 STF – Let earth and heaven combine

Prayers of intercession

God, thank you for being present amongst us.
We pray for all those who are hurting;
For all those who are longing;
All those who are grieving;
Those who are lost;
May you bring them peace.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

God thank you for your grace upon grace.

We pray for our world leaders, that they might be granted wisdom and a sense of justice as you define it, Lord.

We pray for our communities, that they might be have grace for one another; may we all see our neighbours as fully human and love them as you love them.

We pray for all who are crying out for meaning and comfort; may they find it in you.

⁴ Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinska

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

God we are sorry for where we have fallen short.

Where we have chosen our own desires over yours, where we have ignored the needs of others, where we have borne witness to ourselves rather than to your Kingdom.

Forgive us, Lord.

Lord, in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Take these gifts, O Lord,

and put them to use in your Kingdom here on earth.

May this community, this country, and this world,

be transformed and tuned to love by how we live our lives, plan our budgets, spend our money and use our resources.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

202 STF – Hark! the herald-angels sing OR

591 STF – Let all mortal flesh keep silence

Blessing

Go from here, into the new year, with the Spirit ahead of you, The Christ beside you and the Creator all around you.

May you see the opportunities to being light, life and peace into God's world today and all this week,

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Lucy Zwolinska

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker