

twelvebaskets



EASTER 7C

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

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Seventh Sunday of Easter - Year C
1st June 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

571 STF – As your family, Lord, see us here OR

401 STF – Come sinners to the gospel feast

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

553 STF – I am a new creation OR

15 STF – The splendour of the King

Readings: Acts 16:16-34; Psalm 97; Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

Hymn:

610 STF – Best of all is God is with us OR

293 STF – All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

402 STF – Go to the world! Go into all the earth OR

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

347 STF – Crown him with many crowns OR

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?

Blessing

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Call to worship

Here we are gathered, your family, O Lord.
Come to worship and praise,
Come to pray and sing,
Come to listen, share and learn together.
Into our midst, come Lord Jesus, and may we notice your presence,
By your Spirit,
Amen.¹

Hymn:

571 STF – As your family, Lord, see us here OR
401 STF – Come sinners to the gospel feast

Opening Prayers

Let us come together in prayer,
We come just as we are, with our baggage, hopes and fears.
If you haven't already, I invite you to close your eyes and take a deep breath.
We come here amidst the busyness of life,
As you breathe, I would like you to imagine you have arrived at an oasis.
Here we have an opportunity to step into the calm, a nourishing place,
Lay down our baggage, those things that trouble us, weigh heavily upon us.
As we lay things down let us acknowledge where we have gone wrong, the things we
could have done differently.
God loves us and forgives us... help us love and forgive ourselves.
We give our thanks to God for all that we have and for the opportunities we have.
The opportunities we have to stop, breathe and to start again.
In a moment of quiet let us think of things we are grateful for...
Now I know some days it is easier to feel gratitude than others, but I encourage you to find
at least one thing you can acknowledge gratitude for.
Today, in prayer, we meet God at the oasis, help us breathe in love and peace and breathe
out our fear, shame and uncertainty, leaving behind those things that weigh us down and
trying to walk on more lightly in your world accepting and sharing your love.
Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Lorna Dobson

All Age Talk

Have you ever been in a big crowd?

(You might like to invite the congregation to answer this question.)

Maybe it's been a football game, a concert, or even a big school assembly. I wonder if you have thought, "Wow, there are so many people here!"

Now imagine, a long time ago, before any of us were even born, Jesus prayed for you. Yes, you! Not just the people who were with him at the time, but for everyone who would believe in him one day, including all of us here today.

In our gospel reading for today, which we will hear in a few minutes, Jesus is speaking to the Parental God. Jesus knows that he will soon die on the cross and rise again. These are some of his last words before that happens. And what does he choose to do? He prays, and his prayer is full of love.

Here's what Jesus asked for:

- He prayed that all his followers would be united
- He prayed that we would be close to him, just like he is close to God.

Now, let's think for a moment. Have you ever played on a team before? Maybe a football team, a netball team, or even just worked on a school project in a group?

(Wait for responses.)

When teams work together, incredible things can happen, but when they don't, when people argue or decide they want to do their own thing, everything falls apart pretty quickly!

Jesus doesn't want his followers to act like a dysfunctional team where everyone is running in different directions. He wants us to stick together, love one another, and show God's kindness to the world.

Here's a quick challenge for us today:

- Is there someone you can be extra kind to this week?
- Is there someone you could forgive if they've upset you?

When we do these things, we are answering Jesus' prayer and becoming part of His amazing plan to fill the world with God's love.

Amen.³

Hymn:

553 STF – I am a new creation OR
15 STF – The splendour of the King

Readings: Acts 16:16-34; Psalm 97; Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

³ All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

Hymn:

610 STF – Best of all is God is with us OR

293 STF – All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord

Reflections on the readings

It's now the seventh Sunday of Easter. In Lent we prepared ourselves for that which we knew was to come. We then followed Jesus through the events of Holy Week and stood at the foot of the cross on Good Friday. On Easter Sunday we celebrated Jesus' resurrection and in the subsequent weeks we have studied the accounts of his appearances to his disciples and endeavoured to understand and empathise with them.

Like the disciples, we're trying to make sense of what has occurred and what (we know) is to happen. As we await the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we read today's Gospel that takes us back to the evening of Jesus' last meal with his disciples.

What kind of passage is it? How does this passage fit within the Gospel of John? In what context, within that story, does Jesus speak these words? Chapter 17 is towards the end of the gospel as we have it. Previously, in Chapter 13, we have had John's account of the Last Supper, culminating with Jesus' prediction that Peter would deny him. Wouldn't you think that that bombshell would be enough to break the postprandial mood and that the company would then disperse?

Curiously, however, after that episode there is a break in the continuity of the narrative. The author (or editor) of John's Gospel then inserts a lengthy discourse (Chapters 14-17), the last six verses of which we have read. Chapters 14-16 contain teachings. Chapter 17 is a prayer. This is not a private prayer, the words are spoken to God in the presence of the disciples. After a heavy meal and wordy theological teaching, were the disciples still paying attention? The tone of the prayer is rather scholarly, it is very different from that of the prayers recorded in the Synoptic gospel accounts of the events of the evening prior to Jesus' death, in which we sense Christ's agony as he prays in the garden (the accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke).

In chapter 18 the scene will change again as Jesus, with his disciples, departs for the Garden of Gethsemane.

I wonder whether you have heard it said that the passage we have read is a part of 'Jesus' High Priestly Prayer?' The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews would, doubtless, have approved of that designation but it is surely a 'title' that imposes a particular reading on this part of the gospel. Is Jesus a High Priest? The High Priests of the gospel story are Annas and Caiaphas: they were surely not characters with whom we would want to associate the ministry of Jesus. Furthermore, those of us who were brought up 'chapel' are naturally suspicious of anything that suggests any priestly privilege!

This is Jesus' final teaching of his disciples before his trial and crucifixion: we're more comfortable, perhaps, in thinking of Jesus as Rabbi and Teacher whose discourse is scholarly, and whose prayer is theologically robust.

At the beginning of Chapter 17 (verses 1-5) Jesus prays that God's glory will now be seen through him. Next, does he look around the table as he prays for the unity and protection of his believers, knowing he is about to leave them in a hostile world without his presence to protect them (because he knows that he is about to be betrayed) (verses 6-19)? Our knowledge of the story of the relationships between his disciples reveals the need for this prayer at this pivotal point in the story. As we look around our 'table' (our church) do we recognise the need for this same prayer today?

At the commencement of verse 20 Jesus says, "I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word." The prayer for the unity of the first followers was given a missional focus. They had received the message and Jesus had sent them into the world, they, in turn, had brought others to belief. In praying for those additional disciples, Jesus was praying for the first generation of believers but, by extension, is Jesus praying for us in this particular prayer? We claim our place in the story by identifying ourselves as being among those for whom Jesus prayed.

There is so much disunity in the world. There are wars and rumours of wars. Tribal, clan and family loyalties break down. The human race needs greater unity if peace is to be assured.

As inheritors of the faith of the disciples do not we need unity? We need to be part of ONE family, the family of the children of God. Jesus teaches (and prays) that all who come to faith, become part of the family that is that of God the Father and the Son, who are ONE. We are united in Christ. Our unity will enable us to be witnesses to the faith, sharers of the message.

What might unity look like? There are so many churches of different denominations with a variety of teachings and traditions and differing styles of worship. Variety can be beneficial, enabling people to find a route to belief in Christ and a means to worship Him.

Nevertheless, sometimes the faith that should make us one seems instead to set us apart from one another. Observers accuse us of disunity.

We struggle to be one in Christ. Ecumenical cooperation can be hard to achieve.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves:

- Is our understanding of the gospel deficient?
- Are we focused and centred upon Jesus?
- Does our cherished tradition stand in the way of our joint outreach?

There are times when certain interpretations of the gospel seem to take precedent over others, however, unity is not the same as uniformity. We are not necessarily required to all affirm a particular statement of faith or to worship in a certain prescribed pattern.

To believe is to have a trusting relationship with God. As, by his grace, we come to know God we will have his love in us and we will reach out to others. So the world may know.

It is Jesus who prays for us, who makes God known. The God who is more than we can possibly imagine.

Jesus make us ONE, we pray.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

402 STF – Go to the world! Go into all the earth OR

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me

Prayers of intercession

Throughout our prayers, let us use this response. When I say 'Into this broken world, Come, Lord Jesus', I invite you to respond: '**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!**'

⁴ Reflection written by Wendy Kilworth Mason

Prince of Peace, we long for a world where all people might live in peace and harmony. Where nation would not take up arms against nation nor terrorists seek to express their views by means of the bullet or the bomb.

We pray for those caught up in the agony of war, civilians forced to flee for their lives, leaving land and home, medics who try to bring healing and yet themselves become the target of aggressors.

We pray for places and people whose plight we learn about in the media...

Into this broken world, Come, Lord Jesus

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Sovereign Lord, we pray for all who reign or rule.

For monarchs, Presidents and Prime Ministers, for all politicians and diplomats, that they may regard themselves as servant leaders and act and speak for the good of the people.

We pray that, in a fragmented world, together they may promote world peace and the well-being of all people.

Into this broken world, Come, Lord Jesus

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Compassionate Saviour, Feeder of the 5,000, we pray for all who go hungry.

For families in our own area for whom the rising cost of living threatens their food security.

For any who are reliant upon food banks.

For those who have been forced off the land where once they grew their food, who now look to Aid agencies for their food.

For any whose crops have failed due to drought and for the farmers whose yields are affected by climate change.

Help us to reach out to share our relative plenty with those in need.

Into this broken world, Come, Lord Jesus

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Living Lord, we pray for your church. For churches around the world where Christians worship in many tongues and in different ways. May each Church be a place where strangers are welcomed and the hand of fellowship extended.

We pray for our own Church and for all with whom we worship today. We remember those who are unwell, any who are struggling in body, mind or Spirit. Help us to support and encourage one another.

Father make us ONE in you. Enable us to share your love and spread the good news to those whom we encounter in our daily lives.

Into this broken world, Come, Lord Jesus

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Wendy Kilworth Mason

God of this Sunday,
God of every moment, time and space,
God of tomorrow and the week ahead,
We commit these gifts to you, and with them our lives.
Use them, and use us, to bring peace, to share love, to offer hope,
In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

347 STF – Crown him with many crowns OR

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?

Blessing

Our chains have fallen away,
We are set free.
Help each of us to live a life of freedom this week,
Liberated by your eternal love for, and trust in, each of us.

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker