

**Worship at Home service Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>  
December 2023 with Revd Ian Forsyth**

**Today is the last of 2023. New Year's Eve. We are following the Out of the ordinary service. Preparing for the extraordinary. Theme 'God in other people'.**

**Opening liturgy**

Christmas God, life for the world, Emmanuel, God with us, we have celebrated and rejoiced, marvelled at your gift and giving, now we worship you again.

Christmas God, **we greet and meet you.**

We have dreams and we have visions, we have yearnings and desires, we have hopes and fears, but in Jesus we find consolation and redemption. Christmas God, **we greet and meet you.**

We are young and we are old, we are from north and south and east and west, we are strong, and we are frail, we are well and we are ill. Christmas God, **we greet and meet you.**

We've heard your message in unexpected places. We've encountered you when we were seeking and when we were not. We've heard you in a cacophony of voices. Our waiting has been fulfilled.

Christmas God, **we greet and meet you.**

Christmas Day is passed but Christmas is not over. Out of the ordinary has come the most extraordinary. Out of the waiting has come the gift of life. Out of the unexpected has come glory, redemption, and revelation. In others we have seen you and simply pray this day, that in us, others see you too. **Amen.**

**A call to worship:**

Praise the Lord!  
Praise him, sun and moon.  
Praise him, shining stars.  
Praise him, highest heavens and running waters.  
Let's praise the name of the Lord from all the earth!

**A gathering prayer**

Faithful, ever-present God, show us where to find the treasure that is wisdom, and to recognise it when we do. Encourage us to look for it every day, to follow the path that will lead us there – and delight in it. **Amen.**

**StF 30 Jesus stand among us**

Jesus, stand among us  
At the meeting of our lives;

Be our sweet agreement  
At the meeting of our eyes.  
O Jesus, we love you, so we gather here;  
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

So, to you we're gathering  
Out of each and every land;  
Christ the love between us  
At the joining of our hands.  
O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;  
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

Jesus, stand among us  
At the breaking of the bread;  
Join us as one body  
As we worship You, our Head.  
O Jesus, we love you, so we gather here;  
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWt5z4G7F1A>

**StF 586 – Here is the bread**

Here is bread, here is wine, Christ is with us, He is with us. Break the bread, drink the wine, Christ is with us here.

Here is grace, here is peace, Christ is with us, He is with us. Know His grace, find peace, feast on Jesus here.

In this bread there is healing, in this cup there's life forever. In this moment, by the Spirit, Christ is with us here.

Here we are, joined as one, Christ is with us, He is with us. We'll proclaim, 'til he comes, Jesus crucified.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgysV3EZKas>

**Bible readings**

Isaiah 61 v 10 – 62 v 3, Luke 2 v 22 – 40

**Prayers of intercession**

Today we honour Simeon and Anna. Old, both, they had a light that sustained them. They both held strongly to what they knew they hoped for. May we – people of all ages – be held together by what sustains us. Whether seven or seventy, may we know what is most important.

**God in your mercy, hear us.**

Today we honour all shapes of families. Families by choice, families by adoption, families by birth, families in grief, families in multiple homes, families in negotiation, families in care, families in support. In all shapes of family, may we find words of love and kindness.

**God in your mercy, hear us.**

Today we pray for people who are ignored because of their age. In an era where youth and beauty are praised, we have so often ignored wisdom, experience, longstanding faithfulness and perspective. For all who have felt overlooked, for all who have love and wisdom to share, we pray.  
**God in your mercy, hear us. Amen.**

### **Time to reflect:**

As we come to this final service of the year with our advent theme, 'Out of the ordinary and Scratching beneath the surface'. Today's New Testament reading from Luke's Gospel is the account of Jesus' mother and father bringing him to the Temple like all the other children for purification and to present him to the Lord. Simeon was sitting and waiting, a generation apart, and took Jesus in his arms and began to praise God.

Down through the years I have benefited from worshipping with different people, especially when we have met in an ecumenical setting. I have had the privilege of teaching for many years in a Cathedral school and working as a Chaplain and teacher in a boarding school, where I worshipped with many people from across the world.

We have the opportunity to learn from others around us and I value the time I spend with people listening to their stories, including their faith stories. This year I have been to various places as my role as mission enabler encouraging Harpole with their fish and chips lunches, Kingsthorpe with their third Friday lunch club and the Park Avenue Monday lunch and not forgetting the Great Billing and Ascote, Scones of Praise.

As I reflect on my life and how blessed I am to have seven grandchildren as when I was young, I did not imagine that I would be married and have children. Our three sons are now grown up and even now as a dad and a grandpa, I am learning from them and my daughter in laws. In our lives we don't stop learning and our lives are richer for that.

We all live in different communities with people of all ages and perspectives. You and I are unique, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, when we put the pieces of a jigsaw together, we can see the full amazing picture. Aristotle said "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts", serving God and moving forward together we impact our communities.

Finally, what is our legacy going to be in the Methodist Church? I was speaking with someone the other day who said that at 3 Generate in Birmingham it was like a giant picnic, similar to the

scene of Jesus feeding the 5000. Some have reported back having had a great experience, with some children returning, asking for help in worshipping and creating gatherings in their home community. Next year wouldn't it be fantastic to have children from Northampton go to 3Generate in 2024: 4 - 6 October at the NEC, Birmingham. Just maybe, we will hear God in and through the young people in our Churches.

### **Rend Collective - For All That You Have Done**

Your grace will never be forgot  
Your mercy, all my life  
Will be my source forever song  
My story and my light.

From mountain top to valley low  
Through laughter and through tears  
Surely the goodness of my God  
Will follow all the years

For all that You have done for us  
For every battle won  
We'll raise a song to bless Your heart  
For all that you have done

You know our failures and regrets  
You always led us home  
Redemption's arm has raised us up  
Our triumph in the storm.

For all that You have done for us  
For every battle won  
We'll raise a song to bless Your heart  
For all that you have done

You're faithful through the ages.

In unity we'll stand as one  
As family we'll go  
Shoulder to shoulder  
Hand in hand  
Into the great unknown

For all that You have done for us  
For every battle won  
We'll raise a song to bless Your heart  
For all that you have done

For all that You have done for us  
For every battle won  
We'll raise a song to bless Your heart  
For all that you have done

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkK01FsfK74>

### **A sending out prayer:**

Lord, the excitement of Christmas Day is over, but Christmas is never over because you are with us – always. Help us to live this coming week, indeed, the coming year, with the same excitement as we had last week. **Amen.**