Worship at Home for Sunday March 15th, from Jenny Brooks.

Let go of appearances, embrace what's inside

Call to worship

Lord our God, on this Lenten journey, help us see as you see and love as you love.

StF 409 – Let us build a house

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live, a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive. Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true, where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew. Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace; here as one we claim the faith of Jesus: ***Chorus***

Let us build a house where love is found, in water, wine and wheat: a banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet. Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space; as we share in Christ the feast that frees us: ***Chorus***

Let us build a house where hands can reach beyond the wood and stone to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known. Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face; let us bring an end to fear and danger: ***Chorus***

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word. Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace, let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: ***Chorus***

Prayers

Gracious God, we ask you to teach us your way- to open our hearts and minds to your presence among us. Help us to understand more clearly the nature of your kingdom. Equip us to respond to you, committing ourselves wholeheartedly to discipleship and doing what ever we can to share the good news of your love.

Gracious God we pray for your world, beautiful and wondrous, but damaged and broken by the wars of humans. We lament our collective greed and anger. Help us to be part of repairing and restoring, healing and reconciling. We appreciate your forgiveness and love for us. **Amen**

The Lords' Prayer

Bible Readings

1 Samuel chapter 16 verses 1-13 Johns Gospel chapter 9 verses 1-41

StF 611 – Brother, sister let me serve you

Brother, sister let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too

We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road; we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ light for you in the night time of your fear; I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you; I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven we shall find such harmony, born of all we've known together of Christ' love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

Reflection

This week's lectionary readings invite us to reflect on how we perceive others, and how easily we can misjudge what God is doing based on outward appearances.

The mindset shift at the heart of these texts is simple but profound: we need to move from judging people by appearances to recognising dignity. In John 9, the disciples begin with a question that reflects a common assumption: "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" The man's blindness is seen as a sign of moral failure. Meanwhile, the Pharisees appear to be righteous. But Jesus disrupts this framework. He sees the man not as a sinner to be blamed, but as someone through whom God's works will be revealed. As the story unfolds, the man grows in spiritual awareness and courage, while the Pharisees resist the truth. The one who was dismissed becomes a witness to grace; the ones who were revered are revealed to be spiritually closed.

In 1 Samuel 16, Samuel is sent to anoint a new king. He is drawn to Eliab, who looks the part: tall, strong, kingly. But God intervenes: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature… for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (v. 7) David, the youngest and least likely, is chosen. The text notes that David has 'beautiful eyes' – a detail that may hint at his capacity to perceive, to be sensitive to God's call. His outward beauty is not the reason for his selection, but perhaps a poetic echo of his inner attentiveness. Together, these readings challenge us to reconsider how we 'see' others. Who do we overlook because they don't fit our expectations? Who do we elevate because they appear successful, holy or powerful? Lent is a season of reorientation, a time to ask God to help us see with compassion, to recognise the dignity in every person and to be sensitive to the presence of God in unexpected places.

I wonder where we might be tempted to judge others by their outward appearance. Or can we challenge assumptions about who is worthy, beautiful, acceptable. Have you felt dismissed, overlooked or misunderstood?

Every person carries the image of God within them and we are invited to look beyond appearances and assumptions to recognise the dignity in others and in ourselves. God sees your heart and loves you through and through.

Prayers

Holy God, everything we have and are we owe to your amazing generosity and each step we have taken is surrounded by your grace. There is nothing and no one with whom you share your glory. Father day by day you open our eyes to your goodness and around every corner of our lives we see signs of your compassion. Until we allowed you to walk into our lives, it was as if we were walking in darkness and it is your holy presence that removes the cloudiness of sin from our eyes. Help us to listen to you and enable us to share your love with others. **Amen**

StF 530 – To be in your presence

To be in your presence, to sit at your feet, where your love surrounds me and makes me complete:

This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire. This is my desire, O Lord, this is my desire.

To rest in your presence, not rushing away, to cherish each moment - here I would stay. ***Chorus***

Prayer of blessing

May the God who sees the heart open your soul to compassion. May you recognise dignity in every face, including your own.
Amen