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## **ORDINARY 22B**

29th August 2021

A short act of worship for use in peoples homes

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## Call to worship

This day, we step into the river of prayer and worship,  
A river that is always flowing,  
Around the world and throughout the cosmos.  
For these next few minutes, we close our minds to the distractions of life,  
And worship you, O God of all things.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

**Hymn 439 STF – Abba Father** - [YouTube](#)

## Opening Prayers

Gracious God, you have called us to be your people,  
And we come to worship you this day,  
Stepping aside from the distractions of the outside world, to tune our hearts to love  
again.  
You, O Lord, have blessed us richly, with your unchanging faithfulness to us and your  
love for all people.  
Today, we give you our thanks, our praise, and our worship.  
Today, we come to you to seek to connect with the great spirit-of-life that is flowing  
through all creation,  
To be inspired, uplifted, reinvigorated, and reminded of your love for us.  
May we be a people who take that love with us in all that we do,  
This day,  
This week,  
And forevermore.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

**Readings:** Song of Solomon 2:8-12 - [Click for Reading](#)

James 1:17-27 - [Click for Reading](#)

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23 - [Click for Reading](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

## Reflections on the reading

***Today's reflection comes from Holly Adams, part of the Methodist Church's 'Evangelism and Growth' team***

In our gospel today, we heard that the Pharisees and some of the scribes ask Jesus why it is that they eat with defiled hands, without washing them. And Jesus calls them hypocrites, and quotes from Isaiah, saying: "These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." He goes on to tell the crowd that what matters is not what goes into a person, but what comes from a person's heart. This is where defilement takes place and propagates.

Our epistle today is on the same theme and calls us to reflect on the condition of our heart, to rid ourselves "of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness". James writes: "If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless." If our living – our words and actions - don't match up with the deeper truth of our hearts, we are as hypocritical as the Pharisees and the scribes to whom Jesus spoke. If we pay lip service to God's story, but our heart beats to the rhythm of our own story, our religion is worthless.

What is the story of your heart that overflows into your life? Is it one of peace, joy and love, or one of fear, anger, or desire? Are our lives defined by our defilement? And this isn't just a question for each of us as individuals, but as communities too. What is our shared heart, what is the true identity of us as a group of Christians?

Our mission and our evangelism – both as individuals and as a church congregations – deeply depend on our ability to do this work: with kindness and vulnerability to examine our own hearts, and with repentance and humility to set our hearts right before God.

The good news is that we have a God who pitches their tent in the ruins of human hearts. The good news is that we have a God who is in the business of heart-restoration.

As people of Christ, we have invited his healing, redeeming love into our broken hearts. We are called to let that love overflow into the lives and communities around us. We are also called to boldly testify, through what we say and what we do, to the goodness of God we have experienced. And as we do so, if we keep our eyes open, we might just notice the in-breaking of God's kingdom of justice and joy as transformation happens around us.

### **What are you being called to?**

Two questions for you to consider today, as you reflect on Holly's words and the readings.

How might you and your church community, through prayer, worship and fellowship – investigate the condition of your hearts and invite God's love to transform them?

How might you and your church community, through service and evangelism, intentionally testify to God's transforming love in words and actions?

Let us close with reminding ourselves of these words from Holly's reflection: "we have a God who pitches their tent in the ruins of human hearts."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Reflection by Holly Adams part of the Methodist Church's 'Evangelism and Growth' Team

## **Prayers of intercession**

God of renewal, we pray for the Church, thank you that you call us to participate in your mission.

Help us to speak more boldly of your presence in our hearts and lives.

Equip and send out your Church to love our neighbours more faithfully and courageously, make us builders and proclaimers of your Kingdom of justice and joy.

God, may your transforming love renew our Church, In the name of Christ, hear us.

God of restoration, we pray for your creation, we know that this world testifies to your goodness and creativity.

Forgive us, we pray, for all that we have done to destroy and defile your Earth.

Help us to repent and to devote ourselves through prayer and action to protect and sustain the delicate systems of life on this planet.

Thank you that your good news story is big enough for each of us, and for all creation.

God, may your transforming love restore our world,

In the name of Christ, hear us.

God of redemption, we pray for humanity, thank you that you look on us with love and forgiveness and compassion.

Thank you that you offer abundance, not abandonment.

Forgive us, we pray, for all we do to perpetuate systems of injustice and oppression.

Show us the way to build your Kingdom through our living and our praying.

We lift up the lost and the lonely – may they know your closeness today.

We remember our leaders – may they be guided by your wisdom and mercy.

We offer ourselves – you know the deepest truths of our hearts. Heal us, help us, send us.

We pray for all those people on our hearts in the silence now.

God, may your transforming love redeem our lives,

In the name of Christ, hear us.

Amen.<sup>4</sup>

**Hymn: 109 STF – In the darkness of the still night - [YouTube](#)**

## **Blessing**

Go and enter into the flow of love that is at work in the universe.

Go and discover that God is out there, moving, transforming, touching lives and all creation.

Go and encounter the Spirit of God.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Holly Adams

<sup>5</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker