

Circuit Service January 1st 2023

Prepared by Revd Martin Beukes

Opening Prayer:

Mighty God, You make all things new: You have brought hope alive in our hearts, resurrection in the places of death, the abundance of life in the depths of our being.

We commend to you the year that is passed, and with it all the year's sorrows, failures and heartaches. Thank you for your mercies that followed us in every moment.

We celebrate this new year, filled with potential, and possibilities, and your promises. Kindle in us a desire to follow you this year. Help us grow in grace, and in trust.

Amen

Call to Worship: Psalm 131

My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
We our hope in you Lord,
both now and always.

HYMN: STF 83 Praise my Soul

[Praise, my soul, the King of heaven Hymn - Westminster Abbey - YouTube](#)

<p>1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven ; to his feet thy tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, who like thee his praise should sing ? Praise him ! Praise him ! Praise the everlasting King !</p> <p>2 Praise him for his grace and favour to his people in distress ; praise him, still the same for ever, slow to chide, and swift to bless. Praise him ! Praise him ! Glorious in his faithfulness.</p>	<p>3 Father-like, he tends and spares us ; well our feeble frame he knows ; in his hands he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes. Praise him ! Praise him ! Widely as his mercy flows.</p> <p>4 Angels in the height, adore him ; ye behold him face to face ; sun and moon, bow down before him, dwellers all in time and space. Praise him ! Praise him ! Praise with us the God of grace !</p> <p>Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847)</p>
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Luke 2:22-40

Hymn: STF 88 Praise to the lord the almighty

[Praise to the Lord, the Almighty Hymn \(+lyrics\) - Westminster Abbey Commonwealth Day Service 2020 - YouTube](#)

<p>1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation ! O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation ! All ye who hear, brothers and sisters, draw near, praise him in glad adoration.</p> <p>2 Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee ; surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee : ponder anew what the Almighty can do, who with his love doth befriend thee.</p> <p>3 Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee, fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee, then to thy need he like a mother doth speed, spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.</p>	<p>4 Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding, who, when the godless do triumph, all virtue confounding, sheddeth his light, chaseth the horrors of night, saints with his mercy surrounding.</p> <p>5 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him! All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him ! Let the amen sound from his people again : gladly for aye we adore him.</p> <p>Joachim Neander (1650–1680) <i>translated by</i> Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878) and Rupert E. Davies (1909–1994)</p>
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Sermon: What is in a name – Promise and Possibility

How do you feel about the year ahead?

We enter into a new year with hope and expectations. Some people with fear and trembling. But we know that the year has something in store for us. Some of the appeal of a new year is the fact that we don't know all it has in store!

It is the same when we meet a new person, or someone is born. We hear their name for the first time, but we don't know what it may mean... what is in a name? What potential is in this person... is in this year?

For instance, have you ever met a Sean who wasn't naughty?

1) Hope and expectation - Jesus

I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt. New parents, filled with expectations, and their son clearly isn't your average Joe. That was his dad.

Clearly God is very important to them. The text is very clear that they have done everything to fulfil the law. Even things that weren't always done.

They traveled over a hundred kilometers to be at the temple.

They come to make sacrifices and they bring two doves, because they are too poor to afford the lamb that is prescribed. They do not redeem (buy back) Jesus for the 5 shekels that are prescribed after they dedicate him to God. Poor, but also, they know his place is with God!

Their faith really matters to them. They see Jesus as a Gift to them from God!

With all their faith and all their expectation, they stand in the temple not knowing what is ahead, and 2 old prophets come up to them and share what they see and expect.

Mary and Joe (sorry, I could not help myself) must have been *overwhelmed with the possibilities!* I wonder when last you were overwhelmed with the possibilities of a new year. With an expectation that God is doing something big!!!!

The other part of the story is about 2 Prophets waiting for the end of their lives!!! And there is something for us to learn in their names.

2) He hears (and by implication obeys): Simeon

God saves: We don't much live with a sense of needing God's saving today. We can do almost anything we need all by ourselves. So much so we reduced God's saving to 'us in Heaven one day', even though we don't think too much about what scripture say about paradise and God's kingdom.

Simeon is aware of the fact that the world is not all well.

He declares Jesus as the light that reveals God to those who don't know they need it and the Glory of God of those who do.

May the light of Christ shine in the dark places this year.

Even in the best there will be pain: The problem with our expectations is that we almost only expect good. We don't even want to think about the bad, let alone live prepared for it.

Simeon notes that salvation will cost Mary a sword to the heart. I don't think he meant it literally, but, what he did mean is probably far worse. He means that even in the best that God is doing in the world there will still be immeasurable pain for some. Maybe even entirely too large a price to pay.

Not a nice message but important to remember.

May we know God's healing hand on the any pain that lies in wait for us this year.

3) Grace: Hannah

Finding Grace: Hannah is an interesting character. She was a widow at 21ish according to the text and never remarried. A sign in the ancient world of absolute faithfulness. And so, 84 years later, she is in the temple showing her absolute faithfulness to God.

What does she do: She remain with God always, give thanks to God for the gift of her life in his presence, and sharing the gift with others.

Basically, Hannah is the first person who lives out what Jesus teaches about a life lived in grace, and she only saw him as a six week old baby!

If we are to know the fullness of God's grace, then that means that we will have to remain in God's presence always, learn to be thankful, and share the gift with others.

May we all grow in grace, our graciousness to others, our openness to God's new things, and in our experience of God's abiding.

Padraig O'Tuama - Prayer for a new name, from, Daily Prayers

God of Hagar,
When Hagar was exiled in the desert
she me you
and gave you a name:
the Living One
Who Sees Me.

We have walked far,
and have seen many things
and now,
because is what we have seen
because of where we are going
because of where we are
we give this new name now.

We do not destroy past name,
because they have brought us here.

We celebrate the new name
that will bring us on.

Because you are known by many name –
names which bring us on.

Amen

HYMN: 132 O God, Our Help in Ages Past

[Westminster Abbey - Oh God Our Help in Ages Past - YouTube](#)

<p>1 O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.</p> <p>2 Under the shadow of thy throne thy saints have dwelt secure ; sufficient is thine arm alone, and our defence is sure.</p> <p>3 Before the hills in order stood or earth received her frame, from everlasting thou art God, to endless years the same.</p> <p>4 A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone, short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.</p>	<p>5 The busy tribes of flesh and blood, with all their cares and fears, are carried downward by the flood, and lost in following years.</p> <p>6 Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away ; they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.</p> <p>7 O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, be thou our guard while life shall last, and our eternal home.</p> <p>Isaac Watts (1674–1748)</p>
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Intercessions:

Is there anything that happened last year, that you want to give thanks to God for?

HYMN: 503 Love divine, all loves excelling

[Love Divine, All Love Excelling, from the Royal Albert Hall - YouTube](#)

<p>1 Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down, fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown. Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art ; visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.</p> <p>2 Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive ; suddenly return, and never, never more thy temples leave. Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above, pray, and praise thee, without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.</p>	<p>3 Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be ; let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee : changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise !</p> <p>Charles Wesley (1707–1788)</p>
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Grace