

# **FAITH WORK**

**An Act of Worship**

## **DISMISSAL**

**Then give us grace, Companion-Lord  
to choose again the pilgrim way,  
and help us to accept with joy  
the challenge of tomorrow's day.**

*Fred Kaan*

## **THE BLESSING**

Leader: It is not true that our dreams for the liberation of humankind, our dreams of justice, of human dignity, of peace, are not meant for this earth and this history.

**ALL: THIS IS TRUE: THE HOUR COMES, AND IT IS NOW, WHEN THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS SHALL WORSHIP THE CREATOR IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.**

**HYMN** (During this Hymn the offering will be taken)

Praise God, for the harvest of orchard and field,  
praise God for the people who gather their yield,  
the long hours of labour, the skills of a team,  
the patience of science, the power of machine.

Praise God for the harvest that comes from afar,  
from market and harbour, the sea and the shore:  
foods packed and transported, and gathered and grown  
by God-given neighbours, unseen and unknown.

Praise God for the harvest that's quarried and mined,  
selected and smelted, or shaped and refined:  
for oil and for iron, for copper and coal,  
praise God, who in love has provided them all.

Praise God for the harvest of science and skill,  
the urge to discover, create and fulfil:  
for dreams and inventions that promise to gain  
a future more hopeful, a world more humane.

Praise God for the harvest of mercy and love  
from leaders and peoples who struggle and serve  
for fairness and kindness, that all may be led  
in freedom and justice, and all may be fed.

*Brian Wren*

## CALL TO WORSHIP

**When the Church of Jesus shuts its outer door,  
lest the roar of traffic drown the voice of prayer:  
may our prayers, Lord, make us ten times more aware  
that the world we banish is our Christian care.**

*F Pratt Green*

## HYMN

1. The Earth, the sky, the oceans  
And all that they contain,  
The world with all its secrets,  
They are our God's domain.  
To rule this great creation,  
God shares with humankind  
The gifts of strength and courage  
And an inventive mind.
2. To us from birth is given  
Our stewardship and brief:  
To search for truth and purpose,  
To find the heart of life.  
God calls us to adventure  
With work of hand and brain;  
To share with all the people  
The profits we may gain.
3. For quest and exploration,  
our God has given the key  
to free the hidden forces  
And wealth of soil and sea.  
To new advance in science,  
research to conquer pain,  
to growth in skill and  
knowledge  
We are by God ordained.
4. We pledge ourselves to service  
that with the help of Christ  
we may be able stewards  
Of all things that exist.  
Whatever we discover,  
on earth or out in space,  
God grant that we may use it  
To bless the human race.

*Fred Kaan*

*Tunes: Crüger or Pearsall*

## SUNDAY BY SUNDAY

*From Changing Times – Unchanging Values?  
[The William Temple Foundation Occasional paper No 21]*

Sunday by Sunday  
the church gathers.  
Women and men meet  
to worship  
to withdraw  
from the world?  
Or to bring the world  
their living with them?

Women and men  
living with tensions  
struggling with dilemmas  
challenged by change  
oppressed by changes  
that are too rapid,  
wonders of maximising profit.

Is this the place  
is it together  
that they can affirm  
*this* is where life is  
given meaning?

Or do they sing uneasily  
because here is the place  
where no meaning is given  
to the context and content  
of their daily lives?

Can I bring by anger with me  
or must it be quelled before I enter?

Leader: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction.

**ALL: THIS IS TRUE: I HAVE COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY.**

Leader: It is not true that violence and hatred shall have the last word, and that war and destruction have come to stay forever.

**ALL: THIS IS TRUE: TO US A CHILD IS BORN, AND TO US A SON IS GIVEN, AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER, AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.**

Leader: It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil that seek to rule the world.

**ALL: THIS IS TRUE: TO ME IS GIVEN ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH, AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD.**

Leader: It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the church, before we can do anything.

**ALL: THIS IS TRUE: I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH, AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE SHALL SEE VISIONS AND YOUR OLD PEOPLE SHALL DREAM DREAMS.**

## MEDITATION

Not just to prayer and worship we're committed  
but, for the struggle for a new world fitted,  
'gainst principalities and powers we're pitted:  
**we're to be church.**

Not just in buildings blessed by consecration  
- in bank and business, coping with inflation,  
and at the office, school and railway station:  
**we're to be church.**

Not just on Sundays, festivals observing,  
but in the weekdays at a check-out serving,  
God looks to us for faithfulness unswerving:  
**we're to be church.**

Not just for worship is the promise given,  
earth has to be sustained – so that, in heaven,  
work linked with prayer together show we've striven  
**here to be church.**

*Ian M Fraser*

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

### AFFIRMATION

Leader: It is not true that this world and its inhabitants are  
doomed to die and be lost.

**ALL: THIS IS TRUE: GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD  
THAT HE SENT HIS SON THAT WHOEVER  
BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD BE SAVED.**

Can I bring my confusion  
or should I simply pretend there is none?  
What do I do with the contradictions  
of loving my family  
yet rarely seeing them?  
Or with pressure to raise  
excessive profits without  
the tempering of justice  
and compassion?

What do I do with the  
painful knowledge  
of failing  
to touch with understanding  
the urgent needs  
of my fellow human being?

Soothing will not ease my burdens.  
Where can I find the courage  
to confront my problems?  
Can we not find a way  
to build a better society  
in a land  
which is too bright  
with promises of material well-being  
while the aggressive flashing lights  
of individualism  
distort the patterns  
of relatedness?

Dare we challenge the concerted chorus  
which sings the wonders of maximising profit  
and condemns the poor for failing to be profitable,  
which ridicules professions for not being market led  
and is guided by efficiency without humanity?

And as we gather  
and disperse  
can we find together  
the strength  
the imagination  
the wisdom  
to sing a different song  
to chart another journey?

*Rachel Jenkins*

### **THANKSGIVING FOR OTHERS' WORK**

From whose work have we gained in the past week?  
From nurse, from tea grower, from public vehicle cleaner?  
From research chemist, from publisher, from clockmaker?  
From inventor, from entertainer, from chicken farmer?  
From freezer manufacturer, from school teacher,  
    from game show host?  
From police constable, from refuse collector,  
    from member of parliament?  
From wages clerk, from managing director, from corner shop owner?

What has been the cost of all we have gained?  
In others' aching limbs and exhausted minds?  
In others' difficult, even painful choices?  
In others' boring work which leaves skills unstretched?  
In others' breakdowns from overwhelming stress?  
In others' industrial illnesses?  
In others' amazing patience with our needs?

*Bernard Braley*

### **THE CHURCH REMINDS SOCIETY**

Four points made by the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle:

- The role of the Church is to remind society of what is good for its health.
- The salaries of those at the top of the ladder should not differ from that of those on the bottom rung by more than a factor of three.
- If the system you're working makes three million people unemployed, and those of you working the system run round faster than ever getting ulcers and heart attacks, the system patently isn't working.
- We need individuals who have the courage to embark on acts of divine madness – like Mother Teresa.

*Ambrose Griffiths*

### **THE UNUSED TALENT**

*From the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon to the Confederation of British Industry in Derby Cathedral, 1992.*

Unless we want ever greater poverty and destitution, we must honour and encourage those who use their God given talents to help produce goods and services for others. Without them we cannot have a plentiful planet and the human adventure will end with the same wailing and grinding of teeth that awaited the servant who failed to use his talent.

*George Carey*

### **NOTHING TO SAY**

The Church appears to have nothing to say to those people who use and multiply their talents and provide services, jobs wealth for others. Is it any wonder that these people are conspicuous by their absence from the pews?

Indeed from our pulpits we hear what these people could be forgiven for believing is a condemnation of their activities and praise for the 'carers'. We pray weekly for the teacher, the nurse, the doctor, social worker, et cetera, et cetera: how often do we pray for the salesman, the bank manager, the production line worker, the marketing manager or the accountant?

*A West Country Correspondent*

## THE SHOPPERS

Shopping is also work as every person running a home as well as earning a living or caring for small children knows only too well. In a wider sense too, if we take our roles as God's stewards seriously, shoppers collectively are a very powerful group. Where we shop, how we shop and what we buy is a living statement of what we believe.

If we wish to make the statement that we love our neighbour as ourselves, we have to take on board that car-owners' shopping at the out-of-town hypermarket, may close down the corner-shop the immobile find valuable or even essential.

If, when not ourselves on the poverty line, we always go for the cheapest price, without considering that this price is achieved through ethically unacceptable working conditions somewhere in the world, we are making a statement about our understanding of the word 'neighbour'.

If we are reckless or greedy in our claim on natural resources, we may push up the price of a product and make it unaffordable to those with smaller budgets; or ignore entirely the needs of our neighbours or future generations.

Shopping which involves the shopper in making ethical and religious judgements may be nearer to the worship God requires than any number of pious prayers in church.

*Bernard Braley*

## NEW TESTAMENT READING

## SERMON

## HYMN

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Come to us, creative Spirit,<br>in our Father's house,<br>every natural talent foster,<br>hidden skills arouse,<br>that within your earthly temple<br>wise and simple<br>may rejoice.       | 3 | Word from God Eternal springing,<br>fill our minds, we pray.<br>and in all artistic vision<br>give integrity.<br>May the flame within us burning<br>kindle yearning<br>day by day.      |
| 2 | Poet, painter, music-maker,<br>all your treasures bring;<br>craftsman, actor, graceful dancer,<br>make your offering:<br>join your hands in celebration!<br>Let creation<br>shout and sing! | 4 | In all places and for ever<br>glory be expressed<br>to the Son, with God the Father,<br>and the Spirit blest.<br>In our worship and our living<br>keep us striving<br>towards the best. |

*David Mowbray  
Tune: Angel Voices*

## DAILY WORK IS THEIR PRAYER

A scholar's wisdom comes of ample leisure:  
if a man is to be wise he must be relieved of other tasks.

How can a man become wise who guides the plough,  
whose pride is in wielding his goad,  
who is absorbed in the task of driving oxen,  
and talks only about cattle?

**He concentrates on ploughing his furrows,  
and works late to give the heifers their fodder.**

So it is with every craftsman or designer  
Who works by night as well as by day,  
Such as those who make engravings on signets,  
And patiently vary the design;  
**They concentrate on making an exact representation,  
And sit up late to finish their task.**

So it is with the smith, sitting by his anvil,  
intent on his iron-work.  
The smoke of the fire shrivels his flesh,  
as he wrestles in the heat of the furnace.  
The hammer rings again and again in his ears,  
and his eyes are on the pattern he is copying.  
**He concentrates on completing the task,  
and stays up late to give it a perfect finish.**

So it is with the potter, sitting at his work,  
turning the wheel with his feet,  
always engrossed in the task  
of making up his tally;  
he moulds the clay with his arm,  
crouching forward to apply his strength.  
**He concentrates on finishing the glazing,  
and stays awake to clean out the furnace.**

All these rely on their hands,  
and each is skilful at his own craft.  
**Without them a city would have no inhabitants;  
no settlers or travellers would come to it.**

Yet they are not in demand at public discussions  
or prominent in the assembly.  
They do not sit on the judge's bench  
or understand the decisions of the courts.  
They cannot expound moral or legal principles  
and are not ready with maxims.  
**But they maintain the fabric of this world,  
and their daily work is their prayer.**

*Ecclesiasticus 38, 24-34 NEB Apocrypha (using variant reading for v34)*

## **HYMN      Corners of the Earth**

1. Eastwards, westwards, northbound, southbound,  
born to give and to receive;  
others' styles of Christlike living  
may our hearts and minds perceive:  
shared across the nations' frontiers  
insights for the common good  
from all races and all cultures  
are the human spirit's food.
2. Farmers, builders, bankers, traders,  
born to give and to receive;  
may the wealth we gain as stewards  
world-wide poverty relieve,  
mathematics, meditation –  
let each use another's skill:  
that from God's entire provision  
All the nations have their fill.
3. Parents, offspring, friends and neighbours,  
born to give and to receive;  
charged by Christ to bear his image,  
full maturity achieve  
in the discipline of matching  
intertwining gifts and needs,  
growing in their Master's likeness  
proving faith with lovers' deeds.
4. Let us catch infectious laughter,  
born to give and to receive,  
let us bear each others' trials  
acting out what we believe,  
thus each day shall Christ's disciples  
live the call to serve and heal,  
two-way loving, prayer and action,  
God inspires and God shall seal.

*Bernard Braley  
Tune: Abbot's Leigh*