

Order of Service 20th March 2022

Seeing the God who sees us

Welcome

A warm welcome to Hearsall at Home for 20th March 2022. Our service today includes Holy Communion, so you might like to find some bread and wine or juice so you can take part in that later. The liturgy for communion includes some words in bold type which are designed for everyone to say aloud, so it could be handy to follow the text of the service that's available on the front page of our website. Let's still our hearts for worship.

Call to Worship

My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion for ever.
Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.

Psalm 73: 26 - 28

We remember the great story of salvation as we sing, *It is a thing most wonderful.*

Hymn (BPW 219) **It is a Thing Most Wonderful**

It is a thing most wonderful,
almost too wonderful to be,
that God's own Son should come from heaven
and die to save a child like me.

And yet I know that it is true:
he came to this poor world below,
and wept, and toiled, and mourned, and died,
only because he loved us so.

I cannot tell how he could love
someone so weak and full of sin;
his love must be most wonderful,
if he could die my love to win.

It is most wonderful to know
his love for me so free and sure;
but 'tis more wonderful to see
my love for him so faint and poor.

And yet I want to love you, Lord;
O teach me how to grow in grace,
and I will love you more and more,
until I see you face to face.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Mighty God you are our light, our salvation and our stronghold.

Praise you, Lord!

Beautiful God, you meet us in the secret temple of our hearts.

Praise you, Lord!

Listening God, you hear the prayers we babble throughout our busy days.

Praise you, Lord!

Peaceful God, you centre us in yourself and grant us the poise to make wise
choices.

Praise you, Lord!

Seeing God, you watch us when we are lost in the wilderness of doubt or despair.

Praise you, Lord!

Faithful God, you stay with us and draw us towards fresh chapters in our lives.

Praise you, Lord!

Creative God, you create fresh possibilities, even for the victims of violence.

Praise you, Lord!

And we confess that we have lived our lives away from the marvel of your loving
presence. In our thoughts, words, actions and inactions, we have not always allowed
your goodness and grace to flow through us. For the sake of Jesus Christ, who died

on the cross to bring us forgiveness, and rose on the third day to give us life without end, forgive us our sins and renew us on the pilgrimage of life. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (The Message version)

Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best --
As above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and
forgiving others.
You're in charge!
You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty!
Yes. Yes. Yes.

Offering

Lord, with joy we offer to you our gifts this day. Please use them to bring light and love to the world. Amen.

I'm delighted to introduce again Sarah Lewis, who is sharing another update on Coventry, City of Culture.

City of Culture Update

We are still the **City of Culture** but only for a few weeks ... we are now in fact talking about days ☐, so here is a variety of activities you might try out.

The **Richard Sadler Photographic Exhibition** is now in its second phase, focusing on the Courthaulds' Factory before the final phase (from April 26th) which features the Cathedral. Sadler was the official photographer there at its consecration. The exhibition is at the Old Grammar School, is free and open 10-4 but closed on Mondays.

The superb **Daniel Lismore Exhibition** continues at the Herbert, but pace yourself, 82 extravagantly dressed mannequins to look at is a lot of sequins! Free.

Creative Collections is a portrait exhibition of people who have had an influence on or were born in our wonderful city. Some have been loaned from galleries and collections nationwide, whilst others belong to the Herbert. The exhibition is free, and I would thoroughly recommend it. No booking required.

Streams of Consciousness is a walking theatre production, using seven City Centre venues. Performed by the Belgrade-based Underground Lights, the production runs from 25th March – 1st April. All performances at 2pm. Booking required.

In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats is set in Coventry in 1989, and the audience know there is a rave on; but where? Go in pursuit at FarGo Village from the end of March to May 1st. Tickets from £6 – performances throughout afternoon and evening, booking required.

Coventry City of Culture Orchestra – Celebration Concert

On April 2nd at the Central Hall there is a big one-off orchestral and choral concert, featuring over 150 local musicians celebrating music ranging from The Specials to Dvořák.

Tickets are £5-8 and are available from www.coventryorchestra.co.uk/concert or from Fran or Seb.

The Great Middlemarch Mystery: come to a moving (literally) performance. Visit 4 close City Centre venues and gather the clues. From 6th -10th April at various times. Booking essential.

There are several **Easter holiday activities**, including at Ullathorne, Earlsdon and Tile Hill libraries. Check out the website for details.

The **Festival Assembly Gardens reopens on Thursday, April 14th** and will remain open throughout the summer. Various “feel-good” events are planned during this time, opening with **Magnets: Legends** – an a cappella group who will take you from music by Queen, the Beatles via the Jackson 5 to Stevie Wonder. Regular stars of the festival season – from the fringe in Adelaide to Glastonbury, no less. Another event announced is the return of **Choir of Man** after their sell-out run in the gardens last year. Their first performance is on May 17th.

New Music Biennial includes a free three-day music festival with a variety of genres, from classical, chamber and opera to jazz folk and electronic. If you're familiar with one but not with others, why not give 'em a go!? The festival is to be held at three venues: Coventry Cathedral, Drapers Hall and the HMV Empire. April 22nd- 24th.

Don't forget the **Stories in Stone** exhibition of Jacob Epstein sculptures which is free at Coventry Cathedral from now until May 1st. Look out in particular for talks to be led by cathedral staff; some educational, with others spiritual.

Unless otherwise stated, further details and tickets from www.coventry2021.co.uk or by going to the City of Culture shop in Hertford Street.

ENJOY!

Many thanks Sarah. It's a privilege to be in this special city of Coventry today, this year. We shout for joy and sing in our next song.

Song (WT 368) **Shout for Joy and Sing**

Shout for joy and sing your praises to the King,
Lift your voice and let your hallelujahs ring.
Come before his throne to worship and adore,
Enter joyfully now the presence of the Lord.
You are my Creator,
You are my Deliverer,
You are my Redeemer, you are Lord,
And you are my Healer.
You are my Provider,
You are now my Shepherd and my Guide,
Jesus, Lord and King, I worship you.

Prayers of Intercession

Let's bring our prayers of concern before God.
Holy God, we bring the concerns of the world before you.
We pray concerning the war in Ukraine.
For soldiers, defending their homeland.

For civilians, fleeing attack.

For refugees, seeking shelter.

For aid workers, offering food, medicine and clothing.

For journalists, bearing witness to the truth.

For politicians, negotiating for a settlement.

For ordinary people across Europe, opening their homes to refugees.

For those Russians who are disgusted by their government's actions.

And, since your Son our Lord Jesus taught us to pray even for our enemies, we pray for the Russian president, for his commanders and for all those Russians who support the invasion of their neighbour.

Lord, we lament every act of violence,

we lament every civilian death,

we lament the destruction of schools, hospitals, monasteries, churches, mosques, and domestic dwellings,

we lament the deaths of soldiers caught up in a senseless war,

we lament the use of destructive weapons wreaking havoc on your beautiful world,

we lament the loss of harvests, livelihoods, the suffering of animals, the destabilising of the world order.

And as we lament, Lord, we cry out to you for justice and peace,

we pray for an end to violence and suffering,

we ask that evil be exposed for what it is,

we long for comfort for the injured, the bereaved, and the displaced.

Hear our prayer for your name's sake, holy Lord.

Closer to home we pray for our city of Coventry, thanking you that, as City of Culture, we have the opportunity to engage in so much creative activity. We pray that all remaining events may bring truth, joy, delight and peace to our great and beloved city. We pray for the local council and for all councillors. We pray that we, as a city, will live up to our billing as a city of peace and reconciliation, and bring hope, welcome and homes to those fleeing warfare.

And now we pray for individuals known to us. Take a moment to bring into your heart those who are sick or suffering or confused or in any other need. Lord, for these ones we hold in our hearts, dear to us, and even dearer to you, we pray. Bring healing, hope, peace and joy into their lives.

We bring all of our prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

We hear now our Bible readings from Genesis and Luke.

Bible Readings

Genesis 16: 1 – 16

Hagar and Ishmael

Now **16** Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, 'The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.'

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³ So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴ He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, 'You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.'

⁶ 'Your slave is in your hands,' Abram said. 'Do with her whatever you think best.' Then Sarai ill-treated Hagar; so she fled from her.

⁷ The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. ⁸ And he said, 'Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?'

'I'm running away from my mistress Sarai,' she answered.

⁹ Then the angel of the LORD told her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her.' ¹⁰ The angel added, 'I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.'

¹¹ The angel of the LORD also said to her:

'You are now pregnant
and you will give birth to a son.

You shall name him Ishmael,

for the LORD has heard of your misery.
¹² He will be a wild donkey of a man;
his hand will be against everyone
and everyone's hand against him,
and he will live in hostility
towards all his brothers.'

¹³ She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.' ¹⁴ That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Luke 22: 54 - 62

Peter disowns Jesus

⁵⁴ Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant-girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, 'This man was with him.'

⁵⁷ But he denied it. 'Woman, I don't know him,' he said.

⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, 'You also are one of them.'

'Man, I am not!' Peter replied.

⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, 'Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.'

⁶⁰ Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times.' ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter broke down when he realised how he had let his Lord down. We all remember that we need the mercy of Jesus as we sing our next song, *God of Grace*.

Song (WT 116) **God of Grace**

Verse

God of grace, I turn my face
To You, I cannot hide;
My nakedness, my shame, my guilt
Are all before Your eyes.
Strivings and all anguished dreams
In rags lie at my feet,
And only grace provides the way
For me to stand complete.

Chorus

*And Your grace clothes me in righteousness,
And Your mercy covers me in love.
Your life adorns and beautifies,
I stand complete in You.*

Repeat Verse

Chorus x2

I stand complete in You.

And now may I speak in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sermon

Seeing the God who sees us

Two Stories

The first, the official narrative: the tale of Abram who becomes Abraham; and his wife Sarai who becomes Sarah. They have been promised they will be ancestors of a great nation via a son born from their own bodies.

The second, the unofficial narrative - the tale of Hagar the Egyptian slave, forced to be a surrogate mother for her mistress Sarai, and to submit to the advances of her elderly master Abram.

The first story gives birth to the second. And the text of Genesis does not smother this second story as illegitimate. It allows Hagar and Ishmael to live, even though their very existence reflects so badly on the heroes of the first story, Abram and Sarai.

In this first story, Sarai has begun to despair of the promise of God. Longing for her promised child to be born, she encourages her husband Abram to have sex with Hagar, who has no choice in the matter. Nowadays I guess this would qualify as rape, since a slave is in no position either to give or deny consent. In the world of four millennia ago, customs were very different, so the Genesis writer probably wants us to understand that Sarai's sin is a failure to trust God to bring a son from their own elderly bodies. They take matters into their own hands. Sarai looks at the practicalities of the situation. If she wants a family, trusting God is not a realistic option. She hatches the plot to use Hagar as a surrogate mother. Incidentally, the text gives no hint that Abram was reluctant to have sex with his wife's slave.

Hagar finds herself pregnant and naturally enough looks down on her mistress Sarai, who had been unable to conceive. In turn Sarai blames Abram and then Abram tells Sarai to treat Hagar as she wishes, and Hagar is treated badly by Sarai.

And so the second story is born. For a little while, we see it beginning to arc away from the first story. Hagar, forced to sleep with Abram, carrying his child, abused by Sarai, flees into the wilderness. And now we see the truth. Sarai and Abram's botched attempts to engineer their own story have led to another story, a different story, a story that is not theirs at all.

Abram has already had some mysterious tête-à-têtes with God. In two chapters' time he will meet the strange angelic visitors at Mamre. But here, the abused one, the consequence of human faithlessness, the refugee from violence, Hagar, meets her own angel in the wilderness. And this angel of the desert says four things to the runaway slave.

He knows her name - and, I suppose, everything about her - but the **first thing** he says is to ask her where she has come from and where she is going? She answers with the truth - she is fleeing her mistress. An understanding has been established between woman and angel.

Second, the angel tells her to return to her mistress and submit to her. I hasten to add that this should not be directly transferred to our context. One fleeing abuse, or a refugee from war, needs to be welcomed, and not returned to the place of suffering.

But here something different is going on, because the **third thing** the angel says is rather special. In a deliberate echo of the promise made to Abram, Hagar is now told that **her** descendants will increase so much as to be too numerous to count. In the midst of her suffering, a blessing to equal that given to her abusive owners has been promised.

Their story - the first official story - seemed to have been stalled by their advancing years. Hagar was caught up in their errors. But she now has her own story, and, astonishingly, it echoes the first story - she too is given a promise to become a matriarch of a nation.

And the **fourth thing** the angel says is a classic biblical birth announcement. The mothers of people like Isaac and Jacob and Samuel and Samson and John and Jesus get this kind of red-carpet treatment. Hagar here is on a par with Sarai, with Rebecca, with Manoah's unnamed wife, with Hannah, with Elizabeth, with Mary. This boy in her womb is special.

In classic birth-announcement style, he gets a name - Ishmael, meaning *God hears*. God has heard of Hagar's misery at Sarai and Abram's hands. And the announcement includes an encapsulation of Ishmael's identity. He will be a "wild donkey of a man", living in a world hostile to him.

The angel awaits a response from Hagar, and here it is:

She, in turn, coins a new name for God. He is "the God who sees me". And she explains she has seen the God who sees her. The boundary between an angelic messenger of God and God himself is often blurred in these old stories. In meeting the angel, she feels she has met God.

My commentary advises me against building too much on the exact meaning of the name she coins for God, because the text is a bit unclear. But the story itself makes the point. A woman driven into the obscurity of the desert, a woman now inconvenient to the story of the rich and powerful Abram and Sarai, a woman they

would now prefer to forget or imagine her and her unborn child perishing out of sight in the desert; this woman, Hagar, is yet seen by God. In meeting his angel, Hagar does see the God who sees her. And the well is named the well of the Living One who sees me.

Ishmael is born and in chapter 21, after the legitimate and miraculous birth of his half-brother Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael are sent away into the desert. In that episode, Abraham shows considerable regret and gives Hagar food and water, and, through God's intervention, they survive. They thrive. More on that anon.

* * *

Brent Renaud was an American journalist who was killed last weekend whilst working on a documentary in Ukraine. "He wanted to tell the stories of the people who were affected by this crisis - by getting close up to the people he was portraying. He was really good at telling human stories." said a colleague.

In February 2012, Sunday Times journalist Marie Colvin crossed the border into Syria on a motorcycle, flouting the Syrian government's attempts to prevent foreign journalists from entering Syria to cover the Syrian Civil War without permission. Colvin found herself in a western district of the city of Homs and made her final broadcast on February 21. She described merciless shelling and sniper attacks against civilian buildings and people on the streets of Homs by Syrian forces. She remarked that the bombardment of Homs was the worst conflict she had ever experienced. Marie Colvin died the next day, alongside photojournalist Rémi Ochlik. In a speech, Marie Colvin once spoke about her driving need to bear witness to the human realities of those who experience war, whether civilians or soldiers.

Those who have survived the war crimes committed by murderous regimes have advised victims in Ukraine to write everything down. Photographers and videographers, bloggers and reporters are playing a vital role in documenting this current frightful conflict. They are a kind of secular saint.

Abusers and oppressors would usually prefer if their worst crimes went unnoticed. Today, with cameras, video cameras, voice recorders and global internet access in most people's pockets, there is every chance that a heinous crime will be documented and remembered. Someone is watching.

We used to say that history was written by the victors. Thanks in no small part to brave journalists, the stories we read are not just those of the victor. Alongside official, dominant stories, there are other stories. We should celebrate those with the courage to witness and to share these alternative stories.

* * *

As you will know, the story of Ishmael is that he became an archer in the desert, took an Egyptian wife, and became the father of the Arabs. He is believed, by Muslims, to be an ancestor of the prophet Mohamed, so Hagar, the woman who might have been written out of the official first story of the Jews, mothers a son who founds a nation according to God's promise. Hagar and Ishmael are said to be buried next to the Kaaba in Mecca.

It's not the official Jewish or Christian story; it's another story. God created a completely different story out of a glitch in the first story.

And now, who's to say which is the first story or the second story or the third story? We live in the Judeo-Christian story and that is primary to our identity. But others live in other stories, and for them, their stories are the first stories.

* * *

We come soon to holy communion, and there we might consider our own personal stories. Peter had boldly said he would follow Jesus wherever he went, and then denied all knowledge of him three times in one fateful night.

As the cock crowed, Jesus gave him the most poignant look of history. "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter... And Peter went outside and wept bitterly."

At the communion table we come to the God who sees us. We encounter him. In Jesus, we see the God who sees us.

We each have our own story. We may have been badly damaged by glitches in other stories. We may be sinners. We may be the victims of the sin of others. For most of us, it's complicated. Our stories are complex brews of self-interest, heroism, success, failure, good motives, shabby motives, poor decisions and occasionally noble choices. Most of us do not understand our own story fully. Why do we do the things we do? Why do we let others down? Why do we fail to live by our own standards? Why do we sometimes manage to transcend self-interest and do

something lovely? Why do we sometimes love another so much that it hurts? It can all be too much for us to grasp. To be a human is to be a potent mix of goodness and badness, of joy and sadness, of failure and success.

But God sees us. He knows our story better than we do; at the communion table we see the God who sees us. The God who, in Jesus, keeps our own story alive, and loves us to the extent that he would suffer and die rather than allow us to be lost in a wilderness of self-pity, confusion or doubt.

So, we come to the God who sees us, and seeing us in all our faith and folly, still loves us. Sometimes it's hard to forgive ourselves for some particular past failing.

Can you return the loving gaze of the God who really sees you? Can you see yourself as he sees you? Can you receive his complete forgiveness? What would it be like to see yourself the way God sees you?

Sometimes mystics will say something like this: the eye who sees me and the eye with which I see God become the same eye. The soul in seeing God, and being seen by God, becomes one with God, taken up into the love that is the burden of his gaze. He sees you as clean and pure and good, and ready to write the next chapter of your story, if only you will see yourself as God sees you.

God's amazing love does indeed reach us wherever we go, as he looks on us with compassion. As we prepare our hearts for holy communion, we sing, *O Love that will not let me go...*

Hymn (BPW 541) *O Love that will not let me go*

O love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O light that follows all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O joy that seeks for me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

O cross that raises up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

Holy Communion

We come to share in Holy Communion.

Gathering Sentences

Gather us in,
the lost and the lonely, the broken and breaking,
the tired and the aching,
who long for the nourishment found at your feast.

Gather us in,
the done and the doubting, the wishing and wondering,
the puzzled and pondering
who long for the company found at your feast.

Gather us in,
the proud and pretentious, the sure and superior,
the never inferior,
who long for the levelling found at your feast.

Gather us in,
the bright and the bustling,
the stirrers, the shakers,
the kind laughter makers
who long for the deeper joys found at your feast.

Gather us in,

from corner or limelight, from mansion or campsite,
from fears and obsession, from tears and depression,
from untold excesses, from treasured successes,
to meet, to eat, to be given a seat,
to be joined to the vine, be offered new wine,
become like the least, be found at the feast.

Gather us in!

Invitation

This is the table,
not of the church,
but of the Lord.

It is to be made ready for those who love him and who want to love him more.

So, come, if you have much faith,
and if you have little,
if you have been here often
and if you have not been for a long time,
if you have tried to follow,
and if you have failed.

Come,
not because it is I who invite you:
it is our Lord.
It is his will
that those who want him should meet him here.

The Story

On the night on which Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper with his disciples. While they were eating, he took a piece of bread, said a blessing, broke it, and gave it to them with the words, 'This is my body. It is for you. Do this to remember me.' Later, he took a cup of wine, saying, 'This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Drink from it, all of you, to remember me.'

Thanksgiving

Gratitude, praise, hearts lifted high,
voices full and joyful:
these you deserve.

For when we were nothing, you made us something.
When we had no name and no faith and no future,
you called us your children,
When we lost our way or turned away, you did not abandon us.
When we came back to you, your arms opened wide in welcome.

And look, you prepare a table for us,
offering not just bread, not just wine, but your very self
so that we may be filled, forgiven, healed, blessed and made new again.
You are worth all our pain and all our praise.

So now we join our voices
to those of the church on earth and in heaven:

Holy, holy, holy Lord.

God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Prayer for the healing of the world

Lord God,
as we come to share the richness of your table,
we cannot forget the rawness of the earth.

We cannot take bread and forget those who are hungry.
Your world is one world, and we are stewards of its nourishment.
Lord, put our prosperity
at the service of the poor.

We cannot take wine and forget those who are thirsty.

The ground and the rootless, the earth and its weary people
cry out for justice.

Lord, put our fullness
at the service of the empty.

We cannot hear your words of peace and forget the world at war.
Show us quickly, Lord,
how to turn weapons into welcome signs
and the lust for power
into a desire for peace.

We cannot celebrate the feast of your family and forget our division.
We are one in spirit but not in fact.
History and hurt still dismember us.
Lord, heal our church of every brokenness. Amen.

The Sharing

Among friends, gathered round a table, Jesus took bread, broke it and said,
'This is my body; it is for you'.

And later he took the cup of wine and said,
'This is the new relationship with God, made possible because of my death.
Take this - all of you - to remember me'.

Look, here is your Lord coming to you in bread and wine.
These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

In our own homes today, we share bread and wine in a spirit of unity.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have put your life in our hands; now we put our lives into yours.
Take us, renew and remake us.
What we have been is past;
what we shall be, through you, still awaits us.

Lead us on.

Take us with you. Amen.

Responses

From where we are to where you need us,

Jesus, now lead on.

From the security of what we know to the adventure of what you will reveal,

Jesus, now lead on.

To refashion the fabric of the world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,

Jesus, now lead on.

Because good things have been prepared

For those who love God,

Jesus, now lead on.

Our closing hymn is *All I once held dear: Knowing you Jesus, there is no greater thing.*

Song (WT 8) **All I Once Held Dear**

All I once held dear built my life upon,

All this world reveres and wars to own;

All I once thought gain, I have counted loss;

Spent and worthless now, compared to this.

Chorus

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,

There is no greater thing:

You're my all, you're the best,

You're my joy, my righteousness;

And I love you, Lord.

Now my heart's desire is to know you more,

To be found in you and known as yours;

To possess by faith what I could not earn –

All-surpassing gift of righteousness.

Chorus

Oh, to know the power of your risen life,
And to know you in your sufferings;
To become like you in your death, my Lord,
So with you to live and never die.

Chorus

*Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,
There is no greater thing:
You're my all, you're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness;
And I love you, Lord.*

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;
And the love of God;
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all, evermore.
Amen

Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you
Wherever he may send you;
May he guide you through the wilderness;
Protect you through the storm;
May he bring you home rejoicing
At the wonders he has shown you;
May he bring you home rejoicing
Once again into our doors.