

## Preparation:

Bible readings set this Sunday (22<sup>nd</sup> November):

1. You may want to read some or all of these readings before starting your worship.
  - Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
  - Psalm 100
  - Ephesians 1:15-23
  - Matthew 25:31-46
2. When preparing for this worship, find a place and time where you can be comfortable for half an hour, preferably where you cannot be disturbed. (Turn off the TV!).
3. Place something that speaks to you of your care for your neighbour or something that someone has given you that speaks to you of Christ's love
4. For the hymns, you can sing them if you are able, or you can read the words out loud – or silently if that seems better – or you may be able to find them on YouTube or elsewhere on the internet.
5. When you are ready, light a candle/tea light if it helps you to focus. This can mean many things to you but maybe bear in mind the words of the psalmist: "100:5 For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)
6. Now, sit down, relax your body and your breathing...
7. Welcome to worship!

## Order for worship on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November



Grant, Kathy. Lucy Higgs: **Tending to the Wounded**, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57806> [retrieved November 17, 2020]. Original source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lucy\\_Higgs\\_Union\\_Civil\\_War\\_Nurse.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lucy_Higgs_Union_Civil_War_Nurse.JPG).

### **Call to worship:**

This is the day the lord has made: **we will rejoice and be glad in it!**

### **StF 134 – Christ whose glory fills the skies**

**Opening Prayer.** Holy God, as we sit here in our own homes, together we enter your gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and we enter your courts with praise. We bless your name! God of compassion forgive us when we have been unkind or uncaring this week, or indeed during our lives. Remind us of your presence and that we reach out to you when we care for those in need around us. Lord, transform our hearts to do your will. *In Christ we are forgiven and restored: **Thanks be to God! Amen.***

**Reading: Matthew 25:39-40** 'When was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' the king will answer, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me.'

### **StF 256 – When I needed a neighbour**

#### **Reflection**

In Ezekiel, both shepherds and fat sheep are getting it wrong: no one should get fat whilst others starve. So God promises to step in and provide a different reality for those who are vulnerable and suffering. With God, if you are in need, you will be loved back into wholeness. Through God's comes the promise of food, clothing and comfort for each one who is suffering. So God's nature is revealed to us.

Psalm 100 also focusses on God's nature. One might say that the psalmist sums up how the whole Hebrew Scriptures talk of God's nature. Verse 3 says, "Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" and verse 5, "For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." We could do worse than memorise these two verses when we want a quick reminder of God's nature.

The Ephesians reading offers glimpse of God's nature in Christ, and also the nature of the Church, Christ's body. Paul leads us to see our relationships with one another in the church, through Christ our head. And the Gospel reading provides us with a balance as we return to the concerns expressed by Ezekiel. Jesus challenges us that without our hearts honestly and practically reflecting God's generous and compassionate nature we will not be able to enter God's gates.

As advent approaches, we remember how Christ has fulfilled the prophesy of Ezekiel, and continues to do fulfil that prophesy through our lives and our compassionate acts. At the end of time, Ezekiel's prophesy comes true in Jesus' parable, through the ones who have acted in favour of the poor, oppressed and marginalised. These ones cared for Christ even if they did not know his name. If we are invited to reflect on God's acts and encounter God's nature this week we are also reminded that our acts reveal the nature of our hearts.

### **StF 90 – Sweet is the work**

#### **Offertory and dedication**

Take a moment of quiet to consider how to offer yourself to God in the coming week.

#### **Prayers of Intercession:**

Pray today for those who are grieving, those who long to reach out in love but are afraid to do so, those who feel locked up by the current lockdown, especially those in care homes, living alone, lonely, anxious or depressed. Pray for ourselves and our church, and for all those entrusted to our care.

#### **Lord's Prayer:**

**StF 350 - I cannot tell**

#### **Blessing**

May God bless us, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

**Grace:** May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen