

Call to Worship

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lam 3:22-23)*

Worship in song: *by Samuel Davies (MHB 356)*

1. Great God of wonders! all thy ways display the attributes divine;
But countless acts of pardoning grace beyond thine other wonders shine:
Who is a pardoning God like thee? Or who has grace so rich and free?
2. In wonder lost, with trembling joy we take the pardon of our God;
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus's blood:
3. Pardon-from an offended God! Pardon-from sin of deepest dye!
Pardon-bestowed through Jesus's blood! Pardon-that brings the rebel nigh!
4. Oh may this strange, this matchless grace, this God-like miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise, as now it fills the choirs above!

Bible Readings

- Psalm 1
- Hosea 10:12

Prayer of confession

Loving Father, we declare your glory, delight in your truth and celebrate your love.
However, we can feel overwhelmed by your holiness for it shows us up for what we are.
Our sin hangs heavy upon us. It steals our joy, de-motivates our mission, and distorts our appreciation of truth.

We are burdened by that which you condemn and know we need your forgiveness.

At your invitation, we confess:

- The tyranny of our selfishness
- The tyranny of our fearfulness and
- The tyranny of our pride.

Lord Jesus, lift our sins from us and free us to embrace new beginnings, so we can fully rejoice in your love and play our part in your mission to the world. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18-19)

Prayer of thanksgiving

Loving Father, we delight in you, for you are a God of new beginnings.

When we were condemned by our sins, you paid the price for them on a cross and become for us – a God of new beginnings.

When we feel weak and ill-equipped for mission, you empower us by your Spirit and become for us – a God of new beginnings.

When we feel too small and unimportant for your kingdom, you honour the meek, call us to greatness and become for us – a God of new beginnings.

When we have betrayed you and let you down, You come to us, commission us afresh and become for us – a God of new beginnings.

When in the midst of great suffering and evil, You guarantee our eternal future and become for us – a God of new beginnings.

And so most gracious God, we honour and bless your holy name.

Holy Communion:

Jesus asked us to remember him in the simple act of sharing in bread and wine. As such, Holy Communion looks back with gratitude for the sacrifice Jesus made in taking the blame for all the bad things we think and do that would otherwise make us ineligible for life with God. On the night Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, broke it,

(pick up the bread, hold it aloft and break it in two. Hold out the two pieces.)

and said, 'This is my body given for you'. Likewise, after supper, Jesus took the cup of wine and said,

(Pick up the wine goblet and hold it aloft)

'This cup of wine is my blood which is poured out for you to take away your sins. Drink this,' said Jesus, 'all of you.'

It was also at this supper that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Holy Communion, therefore, not only looks back, but it commissions us to wash each other's feet, i.e. to serve one another, today. The act of Communion binds us together and commissions us share in Christ's mission of service and sacrificial love.

Finally, Holy Communion is also a foretaste of the Heavenly banquet Christians look forward to when God restores us fully to himself and makes all things new in his new kingdom. Christians are therefore a people of hope.

As such, Holy Communion celebrates three things. It celebrates the past, the present and the future.

(Say a prayer of thanks for the bread and the wine which is the body and blood of Jesus sacrificed in order to rescue us back to God. Then partake together.)

The Message: **MASTERS OF TIME**

The new year is some months past now. Did you wonder what it would bring? It's an odd feeling, isn't it, seeing a new year emerge, and already it is well over quarter gone. More than anything else, it marks the passage of time and history.

What are we to do with time? What contributions will our use of time make to history? What was it that God wanted us to fulfil when he reserved us for this particular age we live in? How are we to be masters of the time he has given us?

I find the concept of wasting time, whiling away time, an obscenity. This doesn't mean there is not an appropriate time for rest and recreation as well as work (see Eccl 3:7-9). But, surely, time is far too special to waste.

Understand time

Time doesn't have to exist. It exists only because God created it. This is not easy for us to understand as we think the passing of time *has* to happen. However, this is not so. Just as water is invisible to a fish who swims in it all its life, so time is invisible to us because we live in it. However, it doesn't have to exist. God created it.

St Augustine said that time began when God created. In other words, to ask what God was doing before he created makes no sense. Before God created, time itself didn't exist.

The flexibility and constraints of time have famously been explored by Einstein (1915). He speaks of a space-time continuum. Space and time are warped by gravity. Which means, interestingly, that the time at the top of a tall building is not quite the same as at the bottom of a building (because gravity is different). You can also play with time because time is affected by speed. In 1971, Joseph Hafele and Richard Keating placed four highly accurate atomic clocks on a jet aircraft and flew them eastwards around Earth. After the jet returned, the on-board clocks were compared with reference atomic clocks at the US Naval Observatory. When they did this, they discovered that the travelling clocks were a tiny fraction of a second behind the reference clocks. Similarly, if one of a pair of twins got in a rocket and flew near the speed of light for 50 years and returned, he would still be a young man whilst his brother would be an old man. This is because time slows down when you travel near the speed of light. So time, just like everything else in this universe, is a creation of God. It is not just something that exists; you can do things with it.

What are we to do with it?

Biblical understanding of time

First, time is a gift, a creation of God. Above all else, time represents opportunity for stuff to happen. It is the blank white page you have to draw on. The question is, of course, "What will you draw?"

Second, the other feature of a biblical understanding of time is that time is heading somewhere. It is not, like Buddhist and Aboriginal cultures, a circular thing going nowhere. Time is linear. Biblical time is heading somewhere. It has a goal and it is heading there in a straight line. Not only that, when it gets there, it will end and a new dimension, totally unknown to us, will take over – the dimension of eternity.

Things we are not to know about time

There are things that we are not to know about Time. Jesus said: *“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority”* (Acts 1:7).

The Things we are to do with time

1) Seek the wisdom to use time appropriately.

Whoever obeys this command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure (Eccl 8:5).

2) Jesus expects us to be able to track the events happening in time and see that they are heading towards a conclusion which God will bring about.

(Jesus) replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times (Mt 16:2-3).

We are to understand what the characteristics of our own time are. The Bible warns us that evil times are a reality and we should be ready to keep our heads down. The Old Testament prophet, Amos, says: *“Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil”* (Amos 5:13).

The Bible also speaks of the men of Issachar *“who understood the times and knew what Israel should do”* (1 Chron 12:32). We too should understand “the times”.

We are to use the time to: *“Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.”* (Hos 10:12)¹

Jesus had a keen sense of what it was appropriate to do at any one time and was keenly aware of the significance of the time he was living.

“Woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus said. “My hour has not yet come.” (Jn 2:4).

Jesus told them, “My time is not yet here; for you any time will do” (Jn 7:6).

I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” (Jn 7:8).

Jesus looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you (Jn 17:1).

As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work (Jn 9:4).

Now is the time for judgement on this world. (Jn 12:31).

Know the importance of time right now - this instant

I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor 6:2)

What we can know absolutely about time right now is that if anything is holding you back from embracing God's love, truth and mission – then right time to fix it is now

¹ This is lovely prophecy of Jesus. He is God who “comes,” and who “showers his righteousness” on us.

(immediately). Certainly, if you are not yet a Christian with an assured eternal future with God, you need to accept Jesus' love and lordship right now. Jesus said:

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life (Jn 5:24).

Now is the time to accept 'life' God.

Know what will happen at the end of time – and plan for it

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev 21:3-4).

I want you to be part of this.

Will you ask Jesus to forgive your sins and be the leader of your life?

Hymn

1. Awake, my soul, and with the sun thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise to pay thy morning sacrifice.
2. Redeem thy misspent time that’s past, and live this day as if the last;
Improve thy talent with due care; for the great day thyself prepare.
3. Let all thy converse be sincere, thy conscience as the noon-day clear;
Think how all-seeing God thy ways and all thy secret thoughts surveys.
4. Wake, and lift up thyself, my heart, and with the angels bear thy part,
Who all night long unwearied sing high praise to the eternal King.
5. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Prayers for others

Pray with passion for those things God has placed on your heart, remembering the persecuted church, world events, the sick and our leaders.

Benediction

Heavenly Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice. Send us out now in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your glory, Amen.

Australian Anglican Prayer Book, p.174 (adapted)

This service (with hymns added) is part of a series prepared by Nick Hawkes and made available by him in late 2022 for use by HopeNet SA.

ADDENDA

KID'S CHURCH or KID'S TALK or SUNDAY SCHOOL

God created the universe

Genesis 1:1-31

You will need:

- 1) Pictures of stars and moons (with Blu-Tack on the back)
- 2) A pot plant or flower arrangement
- 3) A picture of a mountain range (with Blu-Tack on the back)
- 4) A dog on a lead (a toy one or real one)

Tell the children this story:

Long before God made the universe, he was thinking about things he really wanted to do. On top of his list was that he wanted to share his love more widely than he'd ever done before.

God thought and thought and thought. Then God knew exactly whom he wanted to share his love with.

The trouble was that God hadn't made them yet. So, God set to work. If God had a set of old blue jeans, he would have put them on. If God had a working shirt on, he would have rolled up it's sleeves ...whatever God did, he set about to make the universe.

God made galaxies, solar systems, moons and stars - millions of them. But although God loved them, it wasn't them God wanted to share his special love with.

Ask the children to stick cardboard cut-out drawings of moons and stars (backed with "Blu-tack") on the surrounding furniture.

God made the sky, the sea, mountains and plants. But although God loved them, it wasn't them God wanted to share his special love with.

Put one of the flower displays if front of the children and ask another to stick up a simple picture of a mountain.

Then God made bugs, fish, worms, caterpillars, whales and all the animals, including dogs.

Have someone lead in a pet dog, (suitably docile). As an alternative, you can pull across a stuffed toy dog on a piece of string.

But although God loved them very much, it wasn't them God wanted to share his special love with.

Have the dog led out.

God knew who it was he wanted to share his special love with ... and God smiled when he made them. God made, ...now let me see where I've put them, God made ...aah, there you are!

Masters Of Time

Ask all the children to stand up.

God made you. It was YOU that God had thought of to share his very special love with before the universe was even created. Isn't that wonderful?

Close with prayer.