

## Christ the King Sunday – Year B

**Sunday 24 November 2024**

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank members of Integrity, the Church of Scotland's Gender-Based Violence Task Group: Sally Sheail (Convener), Rev Andrew Kimmitt (Vice Convener) and Rev Alastair Bruce, for their thoughts on Christ the King Sunday – the last Sunday before Advent.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the Sanctuary First website:

<https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/daily-worship>

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

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## Introduction

Integrity is a task group of the Church of Scotland; our purpose is to raise awareness of gender justice within the Church and society. In doing so, we aim to minimise the instances of gender injustice and bring about equality for all and enabling the Church to provide a safe place for victims and survivors.

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is on 25 November, followed by the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. This is a global moment to help #EndViolence against women and girls. Preventing this violence is possible, but only if we act together, now. Visit the World Health Organisation website for more information: [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#)

It is hoped that you will find some inspiration as you pray and work through the readings for this Sunday and the suggested approaches you could take to incorporate the need for gender justice, how to spot it, how to challenge and how to pre-empt it.

Culture and attitude play a significant part in allowing gender injustice to prevail. There remains within our Church a sector who do not consider women equal to men in leadership, not just citing their own views but assuming God's view through minimal passages of scripture. This influences attitudes and so we need to examine our own culture and attitudes as well as challenging societal attitudes and behaviours, be it in our homes, our communities, our worship...

As we look to the New Testament, various cultural emphases of gender roles are found – many of which don't translate into today's cultures. In encounters with Jesus, women are honoured not for fulfilling the expectations of the gender, but for their faith. They were included in leadership; they were missionaries and teachers. Yet for centuries, the role of women in the Church has been undermined and under-appreciated because of the power exercised by patriarchal structures.

With this Sunday often having been referred to as 'Christ the King Sunday' and with the heavily gendered language of 'kingship' a prevalent theme in multiple of the readings, we take the opportunity to explore what sort of relationship there is (or isn't!) between the understanding of the reign of God and the rulership of Christ and earthly social structures that perpetuate patriarchal power.

Gender justice is essential if families are going to work themselves out of poverty, for crime and disorder to diminish, for creation to prosper and the Church to be reborn.

Take some time to reflect on the suggested approaches for each of the lectionary readings for today. See what floats to the top, what strikes a chord with you.

### John 18:33-37

The interaction between Pilate and Jesus plays out differently in John's gospel compared to the other three. In all four gospels the conversation begins with Pilate asking, "Are you the King of the Jews?" to which Jesus replies, "You have said so" in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In those three accounts Jesus then falls completely silent, even in the face of subsequent accusations brought by various parties, and even to the 'amazement' of Pilate and bystanders.

Here in John's gospel, Jesus' initial reply isn't so different – it is similarly evasive, throwing the words of the claim toward 'kingship' back to Pilate, but further asking Pilate on whose account he is asking. Jesus often answers a question with a question.

What then plays out a spectacularly dissonant conversation: while Pilate and Jesus are conversation partners that are superficially and grammatically replying to each other, each is talking about completely different things. When it comes to the idea of 'king', Pilate is talking about an explicitly earthly political question (and as a Roman Governor charged with keeping nascent Judaeian rebellions under control, a very important question to him); but John's gospel has Jesus answer on a completely different, theological and heavenly level.

This 'deliberate misapprehension' is a feature of conversations had between Jesus and those He encounters throughout John's gospel (see His interaction on 'being born again' with Nicodemus in chapter 3; or the 'living water' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4). In each case Jesus takes an instance of plain everyday meaning and imbues it with a heavenly truth that His conversation partner doesn't grasp (but readers of the whole gospel are invited to understand).

That Pilate misunderstands what Jesus means by 'kingship' invites us also to consider carefully whether we have properly understood what it means to talk of Christ the 'king'. For one thing, Jesus never actually claims the title of 'king' (though one gets the sense of the narrator's approval in John's gospel when Pilate will go on to have that title of 'king' written for all to see on the cross, even in the face of objections (19:22)) other than implicitly, accepting that He has a kingdom (which 'does not belong to this world').

Certainly the misunderstanding around 'kingship' in this passage allows us good reason to pause and reflect very carefully on what aspects of 'kingship' may or may not appropriately

be said of Jesus, Christ the King. Where 'kingship' comes with connotations of human patriarchal power and privilege, we should not only be careful, but fulsomely reject the move (consciously or unconsciously) to project these onto our understanding of Christ: the Jesus who confounds Pilate and continually turns the expectations of earthly powers upside-down.

"For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth" (v37) – what is the truth of Jesus Christ the king?

### Psalm 93

"The LORD is king" is how this psalm begins, with the rest of the psalm unfolding the description of the royal splendour of the Lord. In commentary, Willem Prinsloo notes that translators are faced with how best to translate the Hebrew original of the phrase: 'The LORD is king'/'The LORD reigns' vs 'The LORD has become king'. [1]

The point in highlighting this is not about an exercise in obscure Hebrew grammar, but that it gets to the heart of the question of any language of how a human concept applies to God.

Human language is always going to fall short of speaking fully about any aspect of the nature of our infinite and humanly-incomprehensible God. But clearly that doesn't mean we fall silent. So the question this psalm helps us raise is how human language of 'kingship' is used meaningfully of God.

When we say/sing/preach/proclaim the 'The Lord is king,' are we taking something of our sense and experience of kingship on earth (with all its human flaws, imperfections, and fallen notions of power structures) and attempting to project that onto the person of God? Or are we willing to use what we know and experience of God to define what true 'kingship' looks like?

Which way round is it?

The invitation is to consider that too often we start from our earthly experience of 'kingship' and then try to use the same sense of that word for God, just with the volume turned up to max. And we don't get to God by extrapolating from earthly things and amplifying them to a perfect degree. This becomes especially problematic if aspects of earthly qualifications for 'kingship' (among them, being male) find themselves projected onto God, the God in whom there is no male or female. This is therefore a passage which

gives us the opportunity to think carefully about any gendered language in relation to God, and the impact that language has.

What if we start from what else we know of God, and then interrogate what 'kingship' looks like?

- Need true heavenly kingship be about power and might? What of our God of love and mercy?
- Need true heavenly kingship be about battles won and foes conquered? What of our Christ of the cross?
- Need true heavenly kingship be about perpetuating patterns of patriarchy? What does our knowledge of God who is 'king' say to that?

[1] Willem S. Prinsloo, 'The Psalms', in Eerdman's Commentary on the Bible, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 409.

## **Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 and Revelation 1:4b-8**

### **Handling apocalyptic texts in worship**

The readings from Daniel and Revelation share a literary genre in being 'apocalyptic.' This is a biblical genre within some of the prophetic books and it can be very difficult to approach, largely because of the cultural gap between the conventions of the genre of apocalyptic literature and the way we expect to read and interpret texts. In apocalyptic literature all the images are striking: if it were visual art the colour would be oversaturated and the contrast dialled too high; if it were music the volume is turned up to max. For us the vividness of the images in the passage can be distracting as readers and hearers today. Our culture's ears are not as well tuned to the genre of 'apocalyptic' as the authors of the books of Daniel or Revelation might expect of an audience. In a literary genre where striking and vivid images are the norm, how do we perceive the heart of the text?

That said, our culture has its apocalyptic genres, and using the analogy of these can help us when faced with biblical apocalyptic. For example, whether you like them or not, our culture does understand the 'Zombie' genre. In these stories the focus isn't ever really on the horror or the apocalyptic scenes that form the backdrop for the story, but always on the human interactions that play out against that context of zombie apocalypse. What does love/morality/family/survival look like in extreme settings? And therefore what should it look like for us in more everyday settings?

Similarly, biblical apocalyptic has at its heart a series of relational questions, played out against the background of strange or new contexts. Here though, the relationship is between God and God's people: we might gather these questions under the overarching umbrella of what it means to be God's people in these times.

### **Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14**

This vision of Daniel's is set with striking apocalyptic imagery. All the descriptions are set vividly with maximum force and paint a scene which has our ears pricked for a 'sit up and listen' moment. The force of the image might even be overpowering and in a sense scary (with the 'fiery flames' and 'burning fire' of Daniel 7:9).

The content of the vision centres around the Ancient One passing an 'everlasting dominion' to 'one like a human being coming from the clouds of heaven.' Within a Christian thought-world it is easy to reach quickly for an understanding of this vision through the lens of Jesus: that this is a vision depicting 'Christ the king' ruling in heavenly glory: certainly centuries of art have taken that mantle and aspects of the visual language of this passage are found in depictions of Christ, reigning in heavenly glory.

If we take a moment to look beyond the striking images, we notice that at the heart of the text are two main themes – both are themes of reassurance (rather than fiery terror) for readers:

- At the centre of the passage is the sense that there is one who holds ultimate rulership and authority (dominion) – and that this one rules from heaven. That is, in the ultimate and eternal sense, God reigns – over and above whatever struggles and travails we could ever know.
- The one to whom dominion is given, holds that dominion to bring unity (v14 'all peoples, nations and languages'). The centre of the text is about the promise of unity under heavenly reign.

These themes of ultimate reassurance of God's heavenly eternal reign, and the promise of unity are the grounding centre points for the entire vision. How ought we live if we know ourselves to be under the eternal reign of the God who calls us to unity? What does acknowledging the heavenly reign mean for our understandings of earthly power (and its use and abuse)? And what does pursuing unity ask of us?

### **Revelation 1:4b-8**

These verses come from the very beginning of the book of revelation, again (alongside the Daniel reading) coming from the apocalyptic genre of scripture ('Revelation' is the translation of the Greek word 'apocalypsis'), however rather than coming from the middle



of one of the grand apocalyptic visions (and Revelation has cycles of these to come) these verses are more of a headline for the rest of the book.

As a headline, these verses have a function within the structure of the rest of the book but they also carry substance themselves. Functionally, there is a greeting from the author (John of Patmos, by some early Christian traditions also John the Evangelist, although this is not now the majority view) in the typical style of 'Grace and peace'; but this greeting is also extended on behalf of Jesus Christ. This adoption of the first-person voice of Christ by John is an extended feature of the book of Revelation (such that 'Red Letter Bibles' often include the relevant parts of Revelation as being among the words of Christ), and here at the beginning it functions as a strong (indeed the strongest possible) appeal to the authority of the revelations within the visions to come.

That the lectionary has grouped it with the reading from Daniel allows us to see shared elements, both of imagery (heavenly clouds, the throne above) and of thematic substance (universal unity: 'every eye,' 'all the tribes of earth'). These links allow us to see the literary heritage of the book of Revelation, but also the developments and the especially the new explicitly Christological links being made between the crucified Jesus (the one who was 'pierced' (v7), and also 'firstborn of the dead' (v5)) and the eternal and almighty Lord God.

In this passage (as with the Daniel passage) time and eternity play an important role. Specifically the revelation that almighty God reigns over, above and through all time, at the beginning and the end (Alpha and Omega). This focus on time in its widest and eternal sense also provokes reflection on the 'now': both in terms of how we understand the reign of Christ over this present moment in the history of the Church, and reflect on the features of the 'kingdom' we have been made into (v6); and ask, what is our part to play in the story, in the now between the A and the Z?

## Sermon ideas

Christ the King Sunday, also known as the Reign of Christ, provides us with some challenging ideas and concepts, especially when viewing this through a gender justice lens.

How we perceive a king or kingship greatly influences how we interpret and apply passages such as these. Take time to explore what an earthly king might look like, for example, a king who:

- rules with an iron fist.
- you would go to war for
- a figurehead who and has no power



Then compare them to the attributes of the king, of Jesus, described in our readings.

To truly understand the nature of the Reign of Christ it is helpful to reflect on the character and actions of Jesus whilst on earth. Why did he do what he did, and how?

Psalm 93 helps us to appreciate God's character as being **holy**.

What does it mean to be holy? It is essentially about what is right. Doing what is right and being what is right.

You might want to work with WWJD (What would Jesus Do?) when considering what is right. Its more than following a set of rules and regulations. God's statutes are perfect, unlike our human attempts at creating laws, which leave big loopholes, yet at the same time, we can end up tying ourselves up in knots.

Daniel's vision reminds us that God's kingdom, God's rule, is here to stay, it will not pass away and can never be destroyed. It speaks of the books being opened, the book of life where every believer's name is written and the book of judgment. This is about hope, it is about opportunity, it is about eternity.

Many victims and survivors of violence and abuse are convinced, by the perpetrator, that they are to blame and can spend a lifetime beating themselves up, judging themselves. Yet God knows, *El Roi*, the God who sees me (Gen 16:13).

God offers the gift of salvation, writing your name in the book of life. God offers a new life, a life without fear, a life with love and a sense of worth. This is affirmed in the reading from Revelation. Jesus is the First to Rise from the Dead, the perfect sacrifice, revealing death is not the end. For those named in the book of judgment, those who 'pierced him', there will come a time when they must account for their actions.

In his gospel, John tells us: 'Pilate asks the question, 'What is truth?'' How do we interpret truth? Some of the things we are taught as truths are distortions, social media trends, some societal norms are born out of misconceptions. What is truth?

Jesus came to testify to the truth – how do we testify to the truth? How do we testify to Jesus? How do we speak truth to power when power and position are misused?

One day Jesus will come again, with the clouds of heaven, majestic and awesome. We will not miss it. It will be seen by all.

## Prayers

### **Call to worship** *(from Psalm 95: The Message)*

There is a place that calls us apart  
summons us beyond, asks us for more.

**A place where God is sovereign.**

There is a place that fractures the norms  
splits the standards, shatters the culture.

**A place where God rules.**

There is a place that fosters real questions  
engenders honest conversation, summons our souls' connection.

**A place where God holds sway.**

This is that place.

A place that reminds us  
of heaven, when we let it.

**A place where we come together as one.**

Let us worship God

### **Prayer of Approach and Confession**

Loving God,  
Long ago, out of the chaos of darkness  
You created everything above our heads  
and everything below our feet.

And we thank You for it.

In Your great love and goodness,  
You created human-kind,  
to be co-creators, co-sustainers of the world.

And You created and called it all good.

So, we come this morning to give You thanks  
for the wonderful diversity You have placed in humanity.  
We thank You for the skills and gifts entrusted to each of us –

gifts of artistry and design, of construction and manufacture,  
gifts of compassion and understanding, and of insight and logic.  
And we thank You that in Your wisdom You have  
given to each of us without prejudice or bias.

Yet, we have not responded with the same kindness.

We have been swift to judge which gifts  
should be given to some and not to others.  
We have been hasty to assess another's worthiness  
based on the world's standards and not on Your wisdom.  
We have made snap judgements from ease, rather than  
doing the hard work of informing and then transforming our stance.

For the times when we've judged another's worthiness  
based on gender, or age, or race, we ask for Your forgiveness.

For the times when, in the muddle of our minds,  
we've instantly written another off  
based only on what we see from the outside,  
we ask for Your forgiveness.

Gracious God,  
Challenge us, bother us and inconvenience us, so we are no longer  
satisfied with a society that acts out of habit, especially when those habits  
habitually disadvantage just one expression of Your glorious creation.

So, gracious God, in these few moments of stillness we bring before You  
any times this week we've been swift to judge, hasty to assess another's worth,  
and neglected to heed Your wisdom.

*[Hold a time of stillness]*

God of forgiveness,  
we thank You that we can come to You in  
humility and ask for Your mercy.

And in Your unlimited love, You forgive us,  
but You also dare us to be more like You every day.

To live a life that echoes the equality  
revealed in Your glorious creation.

In Jesus' name we pray  
Amen.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

(Parts inspired by 'A Liturgy before Giving...' from Every Moment Holy (Vol 1) by Douglas McKelvey)

Generous God,  
we have nothing that did not come from You,  
nothing we own is ours, it is all a gift from You.

So, as we offer these gifts, things You have lent us,  
may we offer them humbly for Your glory  
and to be used to serve You.

May these gifts of money before us,  
and gifts of direct debits, bank transfer and standing order  
that we cannot see, be used to make Your kingdom more  
clear in our world and in our community here in [*place name*]

And, let our offerings not just be financial.  
In these brief moments we offer our lives back to  
You in service through Your church.

Lord, let the best love that shapes our lives,  
be clear in everything we give and everything we do.  
In Jesus' name, Amen

### **Prayers for Others**

Quotes in italics from "An Ode We Owe" by Amanda Gorman – read during the opening the 77th Session the UN General Assembly in New York)

*We shall respect and protect  
Every part of this planet,  
Hand it to every heart on this earth,  
Until no one's worth is rendered*

*By the race, gender, class, or identity  
They were born. This morn let it be sworn  
That we are one human kin,  
Grounded not just by the griefs  
We bear, but by the good we begin.*

Sovereign God,  
Your realm is unlike the world we see around.  
Your realm bends towards those the world would rather forget.  
Your realm outshines the world in grace and forgiveness, justice and generosity.  
Your realm renders worth by the simple truth of Your unlimited love for all of humanity.

Yet, when we gaze around our communities,  
when we open our newspapers or apps,  
scroll our social media or TV channels,  
we are too often hounded by images and stories of  
destruction, revenge, imbalance and discrimination.  
Where those who need the most help are afforded the least.  
And in these moments something kindles our souls  
and tells us that this is not the way the world should be.

So, gracious God, we bring before You our prayers for our world,  
our prayers for our community and our prayers for those who burden  
our hearts at this time.

*This morn let it be sworn  
That we are one human kin,  
Grounded not just by the griefs  
We bear, but by the good we begin.*

We pray this morning for those women who have been victims of gender-based violence.

We pray for those who have been supported by rape crisis Scotland,  
and for those who are still on waiting lists.  
We pray for the Scottish Parliament –  
to extend the emergency waiting list funding,  
to commit to long term sustainable funding for rape crisis services in Scotland,  
to support the ‘Survivors Can’t Wait’ campaign. [2]

We also pray for areas in the world where people are enduring widespread violence: We pray for peace in war-torn areas, such as Ukraine, Darfur, Iraq, Syria, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic.

*This morn let it be sworn  
That we are one human kin,  
Grounded not just by the griefs  
We bear, but by the good we begin.*

We pray for those in our communities who feel disconnected from others, for those who are isolated in any way, those who are dealing with substance use issues, with mental health concerns, depression and anxiety.

Holy Spirit, bring calm and bring stillness.

We pray for those who work to help our communities, we pray for those who work for the police, fire service, our health centres, social work departments, and charities that support those who are struggling. Sustain them when they cannot see an end to their work, or when work is overwhelming in any way. Help them to be open to supports when they are on offer and give them the strength to humbly accept help when needed.

*This morn let it be sworn  
That we are one human kin,  
Grounded not just by the griefs  
We bear, but by the good we begin.*

We pray for ourselves. We pray for those times when we've felt the sting of judgment and criticism. Help us to put these moments into Your hands, and help us, through the compassion of the Holy Spirit, to respond in honesty, with gentleness, with surprising kindness. And may we be aware of our own moments of prejudice –

moments where we judge without thinking.  
So, help us rely on the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives  
everywhere we are and everywhere we go.

*This morn let it be sworn  
That we are one human kin,  
Grounded not just by the griefs  
We bear, but by the good we begin.*

And we pray for those we know and we love.  
We pray for those with life limiting,  
life altering and life ending conditions.  
We pray for those with dementia and Alzheimer's disease,  
and those who care for them.  
We pray for those with complex dietary conditions,  
struggles with food and those who don't have enough to live on.

And in these moments of stillness we pray name before You  
those who weigh heavy on our hearts this morning.

*[Hold a time of stillness]*

*This morn let it be sworn  
That we are one human kin,  
Grounded not just by the griefs  
We bear, but by the good we begin.*

Ever-loving God,  
ruler of the world and sovereign of our hearts,  
beginning and end, first and last,  
Alpha and Omega,  
help us this week to bear Your image well to our world,  
and may those we meet and encounter, experience  
something of Your realm, Your ethereal culture,  
in us.

*We shall respect and protect  
Every part of this planet,  
Hand it to every heart on this earth,*



*Until no one's worth is rendered  
By the race, gender, class, or identity  
They were born. This morn let it be sworn  
That we are one human kin,  
Grounded not just by the griefs  
We bear, but by the good we begin.*

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[2] Source: <https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/resources/Rape-Crisis-Scotland-briefing.pdf>)

## Musical suggestions

*God Welcomes All* is the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

The full music version is now available; and the words-only book, digital resources including the expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website, will be published in due course, with streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos. *God Welcomes All* is available to order from <https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225573/god-welcomes-all>

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

Hymns have been chosen to reflect the theme of gender inclusivity and humanity being made in God's image. In addition, Christ the King Sunday has been taken into account, but deliberately the hymns, where possible, have been chosen to use inclusive language to describe God's sovereignty.

- CH4 104 – “The Lord of heaven confess” – a hymn exploring God's good creation of the world and celebrating the diversity within it

- CH4 105 – “Glory to God above” – another hymn exploring God’s good creation of the world and celebrating the diversity within it
- CH4 127 – “O worship the King” – a traditional hymn for Christ the King Sunday
- CH4 132 – “Immortal, invisible, God only wise” – a traditional hymn for Christ the King Sunday
- CH4 254 – “O God we bear the imprint of your face” – a hymn to remind us of God’s image in us: humans, female and male.
- CH4 291 – “When out of poverty is born” – a hymn, leading us into advent, that calls to mind the part Mary played in the incarnation.
- CH4 510 – “Jesus calls us here to meet him” – a hymn to a well-known traditional tune that brings us into worship and reminds us that within God’s kingdom there are no gender divisions
- CH4 537 – “We do not hope to ease our minds” – a hymn that challenges us not to look for easy answers but to do the hard work that calls us to equality. This hymn also references some parts of the John reading.
- CH4 710 – “‘I have a dream’, a man once said” – words that dream of a world where there are no divisions. Although this week’s lection is a different reading from Daniel than the one about dreams and visions, it reminds us of Daniel’s overall prophesy.

### **GOD WELCOMES ALL**

- GWA 25 – “The God of Sarah praise” – an updated, more inclusive, version of the tradition Christ The King hymn ‘The God of Abraham Praise’
- GWA 113 – “God, we praise you for the women” – a hymn in praise of the women saints in scripture
- GWA 125 – “See what a morning” – a modern classic that links both with the Revelation reading and recognises Mary’s emotional agony during the crucifixion.
- GWA 140 – “You are the Alpha and the Omega” – a modern hymn that links to the Revelation reading
- GWA 215 – “O God of Creation, we see around us” – another hymn recognising God’s image in humanity and acknowledging the inequality in our world

**KNOWN UNKNOWN:** *100 Contemporary Texts to Common Tunes*: John L Bell & Graham Maule. Wild Goose Publications.

- KU 27 – “God’s is a world of beauty (Tune: Thornbury) – lovely words that celebrate God’s image in humanity and the diversity of it.
- KU 78 – “There is a line of women (Tune: The Seven Joys of Mary) – a hymn that speaks of the influence of women on the story of scripture.

- KU 88 – “For those whose song is silent (Tune: Were Our Den Lieben Gott (Neumark)) – a very powerful hymn addressing issues of abuse. This could only be used in a very supportive, pastoral context.

### **OTHER SOURCES**

- “When the World Is Shaken” (Chris Juby & Matt Weeks [www.resoundworship.org](http://www.resoundworship.org)) – a hymn that links to the Revelation reading
- “I Will Sing the Lord’s High Triumph” (Tune: Cwm Rhondda) – words by Christopher Idle ([www.jubilate.co.uk](http://www.jubilate.co.uk)). A hymn praying God as ruler over all
- “A Stranger Starving on the Streets” (Tune: Kingsfold) – this story-form hymn expresses a contemporary ‘Emmaus Road’ experience as it affirms the Christ-presence in persons of feminine gender. The hymn includes themes of homelessness, communion, and ministry as it calls the Church to an awakening. From <https://www.larryeschultz.com/> and <https://thehymnsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/JANNAL1.pdf> (Last accessed 2nd Sept 2024)

## **Reflecting on our worship practice**

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord’s Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of ‘holy chaos’.

- If singing in our congregations is restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?  
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/  
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?  
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?  
Did it function well as a whole?  
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?  
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?  
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/  
community?  
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?  
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

## Useful links

*God Welcomes All* can be ordered from [Hymns Ancient & Modern](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)

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