

# Church at Home

The Second Sunday before Advent



## Before the Service

**A very warm welcome to Church at Home this Second Sunday before Advent.**

We are delighted that our President is the Revd Hugh Ellis, Team Rector in the High Wycombe Team Ministry in Buckinghamshire, and our address is given by the Revd Liz Jackson, Associate Archdeacon of Berkshire. Other contributions to our worship originate from across the Areas of our Diocese. Many thanks to all who have shared their time, gifts and skills to lead us in worship.

Talking of gifts and skills, the theme of our service this week is **Encouraging Talents**. In the ancient world, a 'talent' was a unit of currency. Our Gospel reading is Jesus' Parable of the Talents – the story of a man who entrusts a quantity of talents to his slaves, then expects them to have multiplied upon his return. Christians have long recognised a play on words in the word 'talent' – assuming this parable is about individual gifts and abilities and how we must use them, or else... Yet as our address reminds us, it is critically important that we have the right understanding of how God is *not* like the master in the parable; and why God calls us to use our gifts in ways that differ from the unjust economic systems of Jesus' age – and of our own. The God revealed in Jesus calls us to grow our gifts and talents out of love not threat, in freedom not fear.

Since well before the challenges and changes of 2020, the Diocese of Oxford has been seeking to encourage everyone of us disciples to discover and develop our talents – in order to grow in faith and love, for the sake of God's world. With the coming of the pandemic, many church communities have responded in extraordinary ways, recognising new talents among themselves in the process. Some have realised new ways of serving neighbours; others have set up new systems for worship; still others have shared artistic and creative talents in compassionate, courageous, and contemplative ways. To find out more, visit: [oxford.anglican.org/advice-and-inspiration-in-uncertain-times](https://oxford.anglican.org/advice-and-inspiration-in-uncertain-times)

Yet, sometimes – even in COVID-19 times – we don't always know which gifts we have, or how they could be a part of our healthy growth as disciples. Based on the Church of England's *Everyday Faith* initiative, the Diocese has tools designed to enable you to identify where your gifts are strongest, and then explore where you may be being called to share them. One such tool is a *Personal Discipleship Plan*. At the end of our service, the Revd Tina Molyneux, Discipleship Enabler in the Diocese of Oxford, talks to Paul Armitage from Wokingham about the difference a Personal Discipleship Plan has made to his faith walk. For more Everyday Faith resources, including how to embark on your own Personal Discipleship Plan, visit: [oxford.anglican.org/personal-discipleship-plan](https://oxford.anglican.org/personal-discipleship-plan)

Today's Epistle reading is from St Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, and concludes with the exhortation to 'encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.' (1 Thess 5:11). As we prepare to worship, may we give thanks for all who have encouraged us; may we share encouragement; and let us pray that all who have experienced discouragement this week, this month, this year, may be built up, restored, and learn again of the gifts they have to share in the grace of God.

# The Gathering

*Our service begins with an anonymous South African devotional set to a Zulu working song  
“What a mighty God we serve”, sung by members of St Matthew’s Church, Oxford.*

## The Greeting

*President*      Grace, mercy and peace  
                         from God our Father  
                         and the Lord Jesus Christ  
                         be with you

*All*                **and also with you.**

*The Revd Hugh Ellis welcomes the congregation from around the Diocese, and introduces the service.*

## Opening hymn – He who would valiant be

He who would valiant be  
'gainst all disaster,  
let him in constancy  
follow the Master.  
There's no discouragement  
shall make him once relent  
his first avowed intent  
to be a pilgrim.

Who so beset him round  
with dismal stories,  
do but themselves confound—  
his strength the more is.  
No foes shall stay his might,  
though he with giants fight;  
he will make good his right  
to be a pilgrim.

Since, Lord, Thou dost defend  
us with Thy Spirit,  
we know we at the end  
shall life inherit.  
Then, fancies, flee away!  
I'll fear not what men say,  
I'll labour night and day  
to be a pilgrim.

*Words: John Bunyan;  
Tune: Monks gate*

*Sung by the Choristers of Christ Church, Worcester and Pembroke Colleges, Oxford,  
accompanied by Sophie Biddell.*

## **Confession & Absolution**

*President* When the Lord comes,  
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,  
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.  
Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

*All* **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name.  
Amen.**

*President* Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

## **The Collect**

*President* Heavenly Lord,  
you long for the world's salvation:  
stir us from apathy,  
restrain us from excess  
and revive in us new hope  
that all creation will one day be healed  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

# The Liturgy of the Word

## Reading

**1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

*Read by a member of St Matthew's Church, Oxford*

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

*Reader* This is the word of the Lord

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

## **Gradual hymn – Like Incense (Sometimes By Step)**

*Led by St Aldates Worship*

May my prayer like incense rise before You;  
the lifting of my hands as sacrifice.  
Oh Lord Jesus turn Your eyes upon me,  
for I know there is mercy in Your sight.

Your statutes are my heritage forever.  
My heart is set on keeping Your decrees.  
Please still my anxious urge toward rebellion;  
let Love keep my will upon its knees

*Oh God, You are my God;  
and I will ever praise You.  
Oh God, You are my God;  
and I will ever praise You.*

To all creation I can see a limit;  
but Your commands are boundless and have none.  
So Your Word is my joy and meditation,  
from the rising to the setting of the sun.

All Your ways are loving and are faithful;  
the road is narrow but Your burden light.  
Because You gladly lean to lead the humble,  
I shall gladly kneel to leave my pride.

*Oh God, You are my God;  
and I will ever praise You.  
Oh God, You are my God;  
and I will ever praise You.*

I will seek You in the morning;  
I will learn to walk in Your ways.  
And step by step You'll lead me,  
and I will follow You all of my days.

*Words and Music: Brooke Ligertwood  
© Hillsong Worship 2010*

## **The Gospel Reading**

**Matthew 25: 14-30**

*Read by Revd Nessa Watts, Assistant Curate, Christ Church, Abingdon*

*Reader*        Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.  
*All*             **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] ‘For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I

would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”.

*Reader* This is the Gospel of the Lord  
*All* **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **The Address**

*The Revd Liz Jackson, Associate Archdeacon of Berkshire*

## **Affirmation of Faith**

*Led by Group 2:42 Home Group, St Clement's Church, Oxford*

*All* Do you believe and trust in God the Father?  
**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

*All* Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ?  
**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

*All* Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?  
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

*Led by Revd Ben Baker and members of St Mary's Church, Barton*

*This response is used after each petition:*

*All* Lord, in your mercy.  
**Hear our prayer.**

*After the final petition, the intercessions conclude:*

*All* Merciful Father,  
**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### The Peace

*President* The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking,  
but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
*All* **and also with you.**

*President* Let us offer one another a sign of peace

### Preparation of the table

*The president prepares the altar-table as we join with the choir of Keble College Oxford,  
singing:*

Hail, Thou source of every blessing,  
sovereign Father of mankind!  
Gentiles now, Thy grace possessing,  
in Thy courts admission find.

Once far off, but now invited,  
we approach Thy sacred throne;  
in Thy covenant united,  
reconciled, redeemed, made one.

Now revealed to Eastern sages,  
See the star of mercy shine;  
mystery hid in former ages,  
mystery great of love divine.

Hail, Thou universal Savior!  
Gentiles now their offerings bring;



In Thy temple seek Thy favour,  
Jesus Christ, our Lord and King.

*Words: Basil Woodd (1760-1831)*  
*Music: Richard Redhead (1820-1901)*

## Taking of the Bread and Wine

*President* As the grain once scattered in the fields  
and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside  
are now reunited on this table in bread and wine,  
so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together  
from the corners of the earth  
into your kingdom.

*All* **Amen.**

## The Eucharistic Prayer

*President* The Lord be with you  
*All* **and also with you.**

*President* Lift up your hearts.  
*All* **We lift them to the Lord.**

*President* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*All* **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

*President* It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should always sing of your glory,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

For you are the hope of the nations,  
the builder of the city that is to come.  
Your love made visible in Jesus Christ  
brings home the lost,  
restores the sinner  
and gives dignity to the despised.

In his face your light shines out,  
flooding lives with goodness and truth,  
gathering into one in your kingdom  
a divided and broken humanity.

Therefore with all who can give voice in your creation  
we glorify your name,  
for ever praising you and saying:

*All*           **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.**

*President*    We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.  
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice  
made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory

*All*           Great is the mystery of faith:  
**Christ has died:  
Christ is risen:  
Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

*All* **Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

*President* As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

*All* **Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## **Breaking of Bread**

*President* Every time we eat this bread  
and drink this cup,  
*All* **we proclaim the Lord's death  
until he comes.**

## **Agnus Dei**

*All* **Jesus, Lamb of God,  
have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, bearer of our sins,  
have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, redeemer of the world,  
grant us peace.**

## Invitation to Communion

*President* God's holy gifts  
for God's holy people.

*All* **Jesus Christ is holy,  
Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.**

*We are invited to make a spiritual communion with God, who comes to meet us wherever we are. There are no special words or actions required for this; only true desire, lively faith, and genuine love.*

*As we make our spiritual communion, take time to notice God's presence with us and trust that, as we desire communion with God, God will meet us in our hearts by faith. If you find it helpful please join in this song celebrating God's love for each one of us.*

### **Music during Communion – We are waiting**

*Performed by Jez, Holly and Amy Spearman, St Clement's Church, Oxford*

We are waiting, we are trusting,  
we are longing for Your blessings Lord.  
And our faith is firmly anchored  
on Your never changing Word

Spirit fall down, fill our souls now.

*Lord, we gather in Your name, Your power.  
All Your promises we claim, together.  
Bind us with grace, the body of Christ;  
all for Your presence we wait.*

We are waiting, we are trusting,  
we are longing, Lord descend.  
Let a flame of love be kindled,  
while before Your throne we bend

Spirit fall down, fill our souls now.

*Lord, we gather in Your name, Your power.  
All Your promises we claim, together.  
Bind us with grace, the body of Christ;  
all for Your presence we wait.*

We are waiting, we are trusting,  
we are longing, Lord revive.  
Death is fading, hope is rising;  
in Your Spirit we're alive.

*Lord, we gather in Your name, Your power.  
All Your promises we claim, together.  
Bind us with grace, the body of Christ;  
all for Your presence we wait.*

*Words and music: Fanny Crosby, David Leonard, Leslie Jordan, Ali Rogers  
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## **Prayer after Communion**

*President*      Let us pray

Gracious Lord,  
in this holy sacrament  
you give substance to our hope:  
bring us at the last  
to that fullness of life for which we long;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

*All*              **Amen.**

## **Final Hymn - Will you come and follow me? (The Summons)**

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown?  
Will you let my name be known?  
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare?  
Should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean?  
And do such as this unseen?  
And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around?  
Through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

*Words: John L. Bell & Graham Maule  
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## **The Dismissal**

*President* May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who is the source of all goodness and growth,  
pour his blessing upon all things created,  
and upon you his children,  
that you may use his gifts to his glory and the welfare of all peoples;  
and the blessing of God almighty  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

*All* **Amen**

*President* Go in the peace of Christ.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

**Our special thanks go to all those who contributed to this service:**

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This service was produced by the Revd Dr Philip Lockley, Curate of St Clement's Church, Oxford; Revd Dr Darren McFarland, Vicar of St Andrew's Church Headington, the Revd Charlotte Bannister-Parker, Associate Chaplain to the Bishop of Oxford; and Steven Buckley, Director of Communications; with the help of Mark Robinson of Digital Creative.

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# Personal discipleship plans

for a greater, fuller life in God from Sunday to Saturday

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