

Service sheets January 2024

Dear All,

Happy New Year and all the best for 2024.

Please let me know if you want me to continue sending these service sheets. If you do, I hope this enables you to continue to be connected to the worshipping congregation each Sunday, knowing that they too will be looking at the following passages. Please be assured you continue to be in our thoughts and prayers.

Every blessing

Janet

All material taken from Roots on the Web 2024

January 7th 2024 God shakes things up

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Baptism of the Lord Year B Psalm 29;
Acts 19.1-7; Mark 1.4-11

Genesis 1.1-5;

In this description or imagining of creation, before God creates the heavens and earth, there is only a formless void, complete darkness and endless water. God's first act is to create light, and then to separate light from dark, day from night – the first day.

This week, we are looking at ways in which God's Spirit moves to shakes things up and begins new things.

January 7th 2024 – Covenant Sunday [Taken from the Methodist Worship book]

Lord God, holy Father, since you have called us through Christ to share in this gracious covenant, we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience and, for love of you, engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will.

We are no longer our own but yours.

The Covenant prayer

I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen. 14 - 20 January 2024

14 January 2024 Recognising when and how God calls.

Psalm 139.1-6,13-18; 1 Corinthians 6.12-20; John 1.43-51

1 Samuel 3.1-10, (11-20)

The young Samuel hears the Lord call to him, but thinks it is his master, Eli. After this happens three times, Eli tells Samuel to answer the Lord, saying 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening'. Samuel does so and receives a vision that God was about to do something new. After sharing his vision with Eli, and receiving more encouragement, Samuel grows up to be a renowned and trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

God calls in many ways, so we need to be alert in order to recognise the call. This week we look at ways in which we might be called by our God, who is caring and understanding.

21st January 2024 How we respond to God's call

Epiphany 3 Year B Psalm 62.5-12; 1 Corinthians 7.29-31; Mark 1.14-20

Jonah 3.1-5,10

After a perilous journey, running away from God, Jonah finally does as God has asked of him and goes to Nineveh to deliver God's call to repent. Surprisingly (to Jonah), the people do repent and God forgives them.

How do we respond when God calls us to do something hard or outside our comfort zone? Are we reluctant, making excuses, or are we prepared to give it a go or try a bit harder? Today we explore some of these questions.

28th January How we discern what comes from God.

Epiphany 4 Year B Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8.1-13; Mark 1.21-28

Deuteronomy 18.15-20

Moses, speaking to the people, says that one day God will send another prophet like him. This prophet will speak God's words with God's full authority, such that anyone who refuses to listen will be held accountable by God. The people are also warned against listening to false prophets. An authentic prophet's words will prove to be true.

In this week's Gospel reading, people are astounded by the authority with which Jesus teaches. In the passage from Deuteronomy, we hear of a prophet into whose mouth God will put his words. Both of these readings encourage us to consider the authority of those who seek to influence us.

~~~~~

### A prayer of adoration week beginning 14<sup>th</sup> January

God of all knowing and all loving,  
you fashioned us and know us through and through:  
**we rejoice at your love and care for us.**  
Lord Jesus, you know the cries of the world  
and call us to reach out to those in need:  
**we rejoice at your love and care for us.**  
Holy Spirit, you call us deep within, and empower us  
to trust the gifts you have equipped us with:  
**Father, Son and Holy Spirit,**  
**we rejoice at your love and care for us. Amen.**

### A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness

#### **A prayer of confession**

*Response after each phrase:*

**Forgive me and help me to trust you more deeply.**

Dear God, when knowing myself causes me –  
to doubt that you could ever want me as your disciple:

to doubt that you could ever love me:

to doubt that you could ever accept me:

In Jesus' name I pray. **Amen.**

### **Assurance of forgiveness**

Generous God, thank you that, in forgiving us, you give us  
fresh energy to serve you,  
fresh understanding of our calling,  
fresh wisdom as we share our faith,  
fresh purpose as we live out that faith day by day,  
fresh appreciation of the gifts of others,  
and fresh hope for all that lies ahead. **Amen.**

### **Thought for the week: 'Go by!' 'Come back!' 'Sit!' 14<sup>th</sup> January**

Even whistles at different pitches or a wave of the hand can mean a particular command to a sheep dog. For a sheep dog to operate successfully there is a partnership and trust based on years of training and a relationship between animal and owner. The commands may be difficult sometimes, but the owner knows the strengths and weaknesses of the animal and knows its capabilities. If the dog is young and inexperienced, the owner will maybe work the dog alongside a more experienced animal and will not push a younger animal too hard. The trust and affection between dog and handler is something beautiful to see, and is very effective in achieving the desired result. If the owner were simply to shout commands at the dog, without the partnership between them, the results would mean a scattering rather than gathering or directing of the sheep. And we might also note that not all commands are for action. Sometimes a dog needs to wait for the next call. Rushing ahead could mean the opposite result from that required.

This week's psalm tells in detail how God knows and understands us: 'O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.' It is reassuring that God knows and understands us before he calls us. He wants to work in partnership with us and doesn't leave us all alone to do the task. And importantly, of course, there are others in partnership with him too, with whom we can work.

Nathanael appears in our Gospel reading, with his calling being given an important place in Matthew's Gospel. But we do not hear of Nathanael later in the Gospel; he was not one of the 12 apostles. His calling and tasks were in line with God's care and knowledge of him. It is interesting that Jesus knew about him. He had even seen him sitting under the fig tree before they met! When we hear God's call to us 'Go by!', 'Come back!' or 'Sit!', we are being called to the task by one who knows and loves us so we can have confidence when we follow him.

### **Prayers of intercession from week beginning 28<sup>th</sup> January**

God of our impressionable world,  
we pray for the leaders of the nations,  
that they would be wise, just and compassionate  
as they exercise their authority.

We remember especially those in power in Russia –  
and those protesting at the imprisonment of Alexei Navalny.

We remember the governments in the Netherlands,  
in the United States, and here in the UK,  
praying for all leaders as they discern the way forward  
amid the difficult social and economic challenges of the pandemic.  
May your truth be known,  
**and your love be shared in Jesus' name.**

We pray for a smooth and just rolling out of vaccine programmes,  
for those who are vulnerable,  
for those who mistrust the vaccine,  
for those for whom it has come too late.  
We pray for the families, and friends of –  
and all ministering to –  
the dying and the bereaved.  
May your truth be known,  
**and your love be shared in Jesus' name.**

We pray for those who feel overwhelmed  
by the additional pressures of home schooling,  
for those whose relationships are at breaking point.  
We pray for those who have lost their lives to depression,  
and for their families and friends.  
We pray too for those whose lives are blighted by anxiety and stress.  
We pray for the health services and charities trying to support them.  
May your truth be known,  
**and your love be shared in Jesus' name.**

We pray for your church – around the world and in our own community,  
we pray for creative ways to serve and to share,  
for courage and integrity as we listen and pray,  
for urgency and daring as we respond to the needs around us.  
May your truth be known,  
**and your love be shared in Jesus' name.**

We pray, in a moment of silence,  
for all those on our hearts  
and for all those who have no one to name them in prayer.  
May your truth be known,  
**and your love be shared in Jesus' name.**

**Amen**

*This prayer was originally published in 2021.*