

## **Local Arrangement Service – Faith in Crisis**

Opening prayer

**Hymn StF 116** “Sing for God’s glory”

Prayers of adoration and confession

**Hymn StF 779 (repeated)** “Holy, holy, holy”

*Optional simple all-age Part with prayer of thanks*

*Optional Hymn StF 76 “Give me joy in my heart”*

*Offering/children leave*

Hymn StF 159 Verse 1 READ OR SUNG BY CONGREGATION

**Isaiah 43:1-7**

Hymn StF 159 Verse 2 READ OR SUNG BY CONGREGATION

**John 15:1-12**

Hymn StF 159 Verse 3 READ OR SUNG BY CONGREGATION

**Hebrews 11:29—12:2**

Hymn StF 159 Verse 1 READ OR SUNG BY CONGREGATION

**Hymn StF 466 (to either melody or 370ii)** “Have faith in God, my heart”

Reflection

**Hymn StF 485** “When we are living, we are in the Lord”

Selected verses from Psalm 91 (with a response)

Prayers for others and the Lord’s Prayer

Offering, if not taken previously

**Hymn STF 465** “Guide me O thou great Jehovah”

Blessing

Opening prayer

God

who is always near,  
in the stillness of this moment,  
we tune our hearts to yours.

Submerge us

in the wonder of your love  
and draw us  
to worship you  
from the depths of our being.

Amen.

**Hymn StF 116** “Sing for God’s glory”

Prayers of adoration and confession

*When I say “we worship you”, please repeat “we worship you”*

God of living colour,  
of sunshine,  
dance and joy;  
God of glittering salt waves,  
the cat’s whisker,  
the beat of each heart’s rhythm;  
God of truth and beauty,  
the raw and the real,  
the passion and the energy,  
we worship you!  
**WE WORSHIP YOU!**

God of dazzling transparency,  
enabling each encounter,  
divine glory shining  
in the ordinary and every day;  
God of the purest love,  
no hidden agenda  
or subtle manipulation,  
who truly designs and desires  
the best for us,  
we worship you!  
**WE WORSHIP YOU!**

God of the grey areas,  
the gaps and the gashes,  
understanding our confusion,  
feeling our pain,  
healing our wounds,  
holding opposites together,  
straddling the divide,  
lavishing the same love  
upon us all,  
we worship you.  
**WE WORSHIP YOU!**

Amazing God  
you touched the earth in Jesus,  
embraced the mess and muddle of humanity,  
blew the wind of your Spirit  
through our stagnant world  
and released us into Life.

Lift high our hearts,  
give us tongues to sing your praise,  
and fix our souls on you,  
that through our worship  
we might encounter you  
and be strengthened in our faith  
to follow and to serve you,  
that we might know true joy and fulfilment,  
now and always, Amen.

Living God,  
When our words wound,  
when our selfishness triumphs,  
when our thoughtlessness destroys;  
Forgive us.

When our faith falters,  
when our minds doubt,  
when our hearts fear;  
Renew us.

When our love weakens,  
when our hope dims,  
when our dreams shrivel;  
Hold us.

When our lives shatter,  
when our courage fails,  
when our energy ebbs;  
Remake us.

Living God  
we long for a life  
lived in you and for you.  
We want to please you  
and follow your life-giving paths.  
Help us to know  
that you are always beside us;  
as we fix our eyes on you,  
keep us as your people,  
and guide us on.  
Amen.

**Hymn StF 779 (repeated)** “Holy, holy, holy”

*Optional All-age Part*

*Encouraging the whole congregation to share something they are thankful for, or something which has encouraged them this week.*

A prayer of thanks:

Generous God  
for unexpected blessings,  
of kindness and thoughtfulness,  
the joy of good news,  
laughter and song,  
and for the wonder of life  
touched by your love  
and filled to overflowing,  
we give our thanks and praise.  
Amen.

**Hymn StF 76** “Give me joy in my heart”

*Offering/children leave*

Hymn used as read or sung response (**Hymn StF 159**)

Verse 1

Not far beyond the sea or high  
above the heavens, but very nigh  
your voice, O God, is heard.  
For each new step of faith we take  
you have more truth and light to break  
forth from your holy word.

**Isaiah 43:1-7**

Pause

Verse 2

The babes in Christ your Scriptures feed  
with milk sufficient for their need,  
the nurture of the Lord.  
Beneath life's burden and its heat  
the fully grown find stronger meat  
in your unfailing word.

**John 15:1-12**

Pause

Verse 3

Rooted and grounded in your love,  
with saints on earth and saints above  
we join in full accord,  
to grasp the breadth, length, depth and height,  
the crucified and risen might  
of Christ, the incarnate Word.

**Hebrews 11:29—12:2**

Pause

Verse 4

Help us to press towards that mark

and, though our vision now is dark,  
to live by what we see;  
so, when we see you face to face,  
your truth and light our dwelling place  
for evermore shall be.

**Hymn StF 466 (to either melody or 370ii)** “Have faith in God, my heart”

### Reflection

How do we hold onto our faith in times of crisis?

The three passages we heard this morning all come out of crisis situations.

The Prophet Isaiah has a message for people who were in crisis. He was active after the Exile, when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, and so many people were carried away from home to Babylon. It was an utter catastrophe. Did the Exile mean that God had abandoned them? This was their fear. Isaiah speaks to reassure them that just had God had saved them when God led them through the waters of the Red Sea to escape Egypt, God would once more lead them and remain faithful. The people are assured of God’s love, and the on-going presence of God, who promises to be with them always and to bring them home.

The part we heard from John’s gospel comes from Jesus’ farewell speech to his disciples. He’s preparing them for the time when he’s no longer going to be with them in person – the horrors of the cross lie ahead. Jesus tells them that through this crisis, they are to remain in his love. It’s also significant that there are many branches on the vine which is Jesus – Jesus’ people are not alone, but are called to remain faithful to Jesus together. Through all that follows, they are to remain in God’s love and love one another.

The letter to the Hebrews is written to encourage Christians to hold on to their faith when they are under pressure and opposition. Chapter 11 is a great catalogue of those who have gone before, suffered hardships and remained faithful. Jesus’ followers are encouraged to do the same – and the key is to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.

When we hear of crises in the news, when our own lives are in crisis, we can know that God loves us, that God remains by our side through the trials. We’re encouraged to remain in God’s love, and to strengthen one another; and we are

urged to keep ourselves fixed on Jesus, who is always beside us and ahead of us.

May God bless us and sustain us in our daily lives, and help us to retain our hope and faith when we and the world face so many challenges.

The truth is, no matter what happens, nothing can separate us from God's love which is ours in Jesus. Ultimately, we belong to God.

**Hymn StF 485** "When we are living, we are in the Lord"

Psalm 91 (verses from the GNB with a response)

Whoever goes to the Lord for safety,  
whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty  
can say to him,  
"You are my defender and protector.  
You are my God; in you I trust."  
KEEP ME, GOD, IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WING.

He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers.  
He will cover you with his wings;  
You will be safe in his care;  
His faithfulness will protect and defend you.  
KEEP ME, GOD, IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WING.

You need not fear any dangers at night  
or sudden attacks during the day  
or the plagues that strike in the dark  
or the evils that kill in daylight.  
KEEP ME, GOD, IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WING.

God will put his angels in charge of you  
to protect you wherever you go.  
They will hold you up with their hands  
to keep you from hurting your feet on the stones.  
You will trample down lions and snakes,  
fierce lions and poisonous snakes.  
KEEP ME, GOD, IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WING.

God says, "I will save those who love me.  
When they call to me, I will answer them.  
When they are in trouble, I will be with them.

I will rescue them and honour them.  
I will reward them with long life;  
I will save them.”  
**KEEP ME, GOD, IN THE SHADOW OF YOUR WING.**

### Prayers for others

It says in Psalm 91 that no matter what we go through, God will cover us with wings. That means that we’re surrounded by feathers!

Let us pray:

God our rock and our shelter,  
who walked our path in Jesus  
and suffered fear and pain,  
you know how it feels when times are hard,  
when life feels overwhelming.  
You know the fears that we harbour  
for our loved ones, ourselves, our world.  
When we are beset with worry,  
when we feel anxious or afraid,  
when we lose the ability to enjoy life,  
carry us through the storms  
and rest us in the comfort of your presence,  
safe in the warm feathers of your wing.

We bring our prayers for our world,  
for the insecurity of our times,  
for those who make decisions that affect many,  
for those who misunderstand religion and use it as a means to foster division;  
for those who believe they are driven to desperate measures,  
for those living in the wastelands of war.

We pray that they might know peace  
and the warm feathers of your wing.

We bring our prayers for our church  
as we seek to worship you and serve you.

We pray for... (*particular groups, events in the life of the church/circuit/local area*)

We pray that we might support each other through times of difficulty,  
and be a community of love and light to all who are in need.

We pray that your church might enable all to know your love and peace  
and the warm feathers of your wing.

We bring our prayers for our loved ones,  
and those we are concerned about,  
in a moment of quiet naming them in our hearts before you...

We pray that they might know peace  
and the warm feathers of your wing.

Thank you God  
for your indestructible love  
which can carry us through the darkest night;  
you are with us all the way,  
and wait to comfort us,  
to give us your peace  
and wrap us in the warm feathers of your wing.  
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Offering, if not taken previously

**Hymn STF 465** “Guide me O thou great Jehovah”

**Blessing**

May our God of strength and comfort,  
bless us and uphold us  
in our journey of faith.  
May the Christ of compassion and grace,  
inspire in us renewed discipleship  
that we might share our hope.  
May the Spirit of freedom and joy  
crown us with delight  
as we remain in divine love,  
now and for eternity,  
Amen.

(Louise Gough 2016)

