

Sunday 4th Jan '26

(Epiphany)

(prayers from Roots)

A blessed New Year to you all.

Call to worship

Whether we are wide awake or half asleep,

let's arise and shine.

Whether we are feeling upbeat or gloomy,

let's arise and shine.

Whether we are feeling warm or cold,

let's arise and shine.

For God is with us today and every day.

Hymn StF227 Brightest and best

Brightest and best are the sons of the morning!

Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid!

Star of the East, the horizon adorning,

guide where our infant Redeemer is laid!

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shinning,

low lies his head with the beasts of the stall,

angels adore him in slumber reclining,

Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all!

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,

odours of Edom and offerings divine.

Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,

Myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?

Vanily we offer each ample oblation;

vanily with gifts would his favour secure:

richer by far is the heart's adoration;

dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best are the sons of the morning!

Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid!

Star of the East, the horizon adorning,

guide where our infant Redeemer is laid!

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

Prayers

A prayer of adoration

Living God, you shine your grace on us as we journey in faith towards your kingdom and we celebrate you as creator and guide. Lord Jesus, you shine your light of hope in our lives and we celebrate you as friend and teacher. Holy Spirit, you shine your discernment in our hearts and we celebrate you as comforter and guide.

A prayer of confession

Abundant God, forgive us when we are jealous of the gifts of others and fear being deemed less important:

shine your light of reassurance on us, we pray.

Forgive us when we do not shine our light to others and do not rise up and confront the dark corners of our world:

shine your light of challenge on us, we pray.

Forgive us when the treasures you have entrusted to us stay in our treasure chests and are not shared:

shine your light of generosity on us, we pray.

Assurance of forgiveness

May the God of light and healing lift up our eyes and help us see where we can share our gifts; lift up our hearts and help us to feel the pain of others; lift up our lives and help us to give where there is need; that with sins forgiven and confidence restored, we may serve you and those around us, in the name of Jesus.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

God of all ages and all nations, we praise you for giving different gifts to each community, each fellowship and each family. Help us to use them for the good of all and to your glory.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Matthew 2 1-12

Reflection Arise, shine



Isaiah 60 begins with the author calling the Israelites to 'Arise, shine'. They are to be given a light, which is the glory of the Lord. But they are also told that this light will be theirs, one that nations and kings will come to. In Matthew, the wise men are drawn by a shining star to Jesus, the light of the world.

But what does it mean for us to arise and shine in our communities, how we might reflect God's light, which is revealed most fully in Jesus.

At this time of Epiphany we think not only about the wise men but also of our own journey with God as we come to the season of Covenant (which this year we celebrate with a circuit service). A time of re-dedication of ourselves to be disciples of Jesus and to be open to what is planned for us, even when this is not easy to hear or comprehend.

The wise men listened to the message to follow the star and also listened to the message to go home by another route as Herod was not what he may have seemed at first. The stories they had to tell when they got home and those listening may well of thought they had got it wrong somehow when they told of a King

born in a stable. But one thing is sure that those stories would have entered the narrative of their people and when the disciples of Jesus reached those lands the words spoken would have reminded them of those stories. The road had been laid for believers to follow.

Have you ever been somewhere you didn't know and had to ask directions to somewhere? You choose someone who looks like they know the area and ask directions. Sometimes following those directions can seem difficult and the road may not lead where we expect but if we persevere we find ourselves just where we need to be. Sometimes the directions can seem really clear but we end up being more lost than before we started. So it is as a disciple of Jesus. In the covenant prayer we say 'put me to what you will, send me where you want me to go'. We put our trust not only in God but also in ourselves that we will have the courage to say yes to the things that are offered to us even if the road appears to be one that leads in an odd direction. That trust is rewarded with the companionship along the way of the friend who will never leave us, Jesus. And as the 'Footprints' poem states.

'When there is one set of footprints that is when I (Jesus) carried you'

Prayers for others

Eternal God, whose birth in human form we have celebrated and welcomed, we gather our thoughts and prayers for those in need at the dawning of this new year; as the old year passes we embrace the new.

This New Year. This is our prayer

We pray for those with no family to turn to, no friends to support them, no neighbours who care; may they find inner strength for the day ahead and companionship in knowing you.

This New Year. This is our prayer

We pray for those whose larders are as empty as their purses, whose hunger makes them as cold as their homes. **This New Year. This is our prayer**

We pray for those who have no homes to heat and who feel helpless and hopeless and rootless.

This New Year. This is our prayer

We pray for peacekeepers around the world who strive to bring order out of chaos; who strive to turn spears into plough shares; who strive to bring civility to cruelty and abuse.

This New Year. This is our prayer

We pray for those areas of the world in crisis either natural or manmade as this new year unfolds:

This New Year. This is our prayer

There is a time and there is a season, for us now may this be the time to reach out in thought and word and deed to those for whom we have prayed. **Amen.**

While sitting in a short time of quiet bring your own thoughts and concerns to the Lord.

Hymn MP178 Go forth and tell

Go forth and tell! O Church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take:
proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,
that all the world his worthy praise may sing.

Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
he will in grace respond to all who call:
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of his word?

Go forth and tell! Where still the darkness lies
in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like yours which cares for all mankind.

Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts- let no one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

Go forth and tell! O Church of God, arise!
Go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
go till all nations his great name adore
and serve him, Lord and King for evermore.

Closing prayer

May we see God's light shining in dark places this week. May we have the confidence and energy to arise and to shine God's light to those we see and meet, so that all people might know Jesus who is the light of the world.

Amen.

As we come to the grace, cup your hands together and imagine all those you hold dear cradled there, then bring them close to your heart as you say the words:

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen

Extra resources

Other hymns

StF 447 Jesus be the centre

StF 547 Beyond these walls

StF 558 Lord you have come to the seashore

StF 565 Only by grace can we enter

Readings

Isaiah 60 1-6, Ephesians 3 1-12, Psalm 72