

Parish of Central Exeter
2nd Sunday of Epiphany
Morning worship and Spiritual Communion

17th January 2021

What do we see?

Welcome everyone.

*Our reflections this morning have been written by Sheila with the Intercessions by Richard.
Many thanks.*

Opening Sentences

O Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

Gathering Hymn

Immortal, Invisible, God only wise. From the St Michael Singers
Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oGuGzCFEWI>

Confession

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins.
For turning away from you,
and ignoring your will for our lives;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;



Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For failing you by what we do,
and think and say;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For living as if we were ashamed
to belong to your Son;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

We are forgiven

May almighty God,
who in Jesus Christ has given us
a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
forgive us our sins,
open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will
and give us the joy of his kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Psalm

The psalm appointed for today is Psalm 139: 1-6, 12-18 (New International version)

- 1 You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
- 5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.



12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!

18 Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

Collect for the second Sunday of Epiphany.

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

The Lord's prayer

Gathering our prayers and praises into one,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

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.**

Worship song

Will you come and follow me. Produced by the Melton Mowbray Team Parish. Words are on the screen. This hymn introduces us to the two readings.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-B5cso-L7JQ>

Old Testament Reading 1 Samuel 3:1-20

Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity

3 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

²At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the LORD called, 'Samuel!' Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. ⁶The LORD called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.



The Infant Samuel.

*Sir Joshua Reynolds. 1776
Musée Fabre, Montpellier*

¹⁰ Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' ¹¹ Then the LORD said to Samuel, 'See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹² On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.

¹⁴ Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering for ever.'

¹⁵ Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ But Eli called Samuel and said, 'Samuel, my son.' He said, 'Here I am.' ¹⁷ Eli said, 'What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.' ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, 'It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him.'

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

New Testament Reading John 1: 43-50

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

⁴⁶ "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

⁵⁰ Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." ⁵¹ He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

Reflection

'The question of what we see is an important and spiritual one'. That quote is in the introduction to the Epiphany section, 'Seeing', in 'Barefoot Ways', a book of daily prayers by Stephen Cherry. I will return to him later, but first I wish to consider the significance of 'seeing' in today's readings.

There is a contrast in the story of Eli and Samuel in relation to what the elderly blind priest Eli saw and did not see. He failed to 'see', or take any action over, the behaviour of his sons. Then after the young Samuel had come to him three times, he 'saw' or recognised that the Lord was calling the boy. He then accepted the word of the Lord given to Samuel, having now seen or understood that God was judging him and calling Samuel to replace him.

In the short gospel passage the verb 'to see' occurs six times, but there are also other related verbs, as well as some implicit occurrences. What did Jesus 'see' in Philip to find him and call him to 'follow me'? What did Philip 'see' in Jesus which motivated him to go and find Nathanael, and make his declaration about Jesus? There must have been something about Jesus' personality and his call that attracted him and led him to think about the fulfilment of prophecy. Nathanael is sceptical about a prophet or messiah coming from Nazareth since that was not in any of the accepted messianic texts. Philip does not question his assumption but just invites him with the simple phrase 'Come and see'. (The same phrase occurs in John 1:39, spoken by Jesus to Andrew and another disciple. These two come and see, and stay with Jesus, before finding others, including Andrew's brother Simon, to meet Jesus v40-42).

A conversation between Jesus and Nathanael follows where the role of 'seeing' is vital. Jesus perceives Nathanael's character, an Israelite without deceit or guile. This unnerves Nathanael: 'how does this man know him?'. Jesus' reply does not indicate 'how', but simply states that he had seen Nathanael. The phrase 'under the fig tree' could mean 'a true Israelite', in addition to its literal meaning. Such awareness leads Nathanael to make his statement of faith, and add another assertion about Jesus, 'Son of God', to those given previously in this introductory section of the gospel.

Jesus does not leave it there. He makes no comment about the title but rather queries a belief motivated by his mere 'seeing', or knowledge of Nathanael's character. Instead, he makes a dramatic statement introduced with the words 'Very truly', which translates an Aramaic word 'Amen' or 'verily', used repeatedly in John's gospel to preface solemn declarations. Now Jesus uses an image which links back to an ancient story in the formation of Israel found in Genesis 28:10-19. Here Jacob, a man full of deceit, who had tricked his brother Esau from his birth right and blessing, has a dream of a ladder with angels descending and ascending, and of being in the presence of God. (Commentators note how Nathanael is *not* full of deceit). Jesus goes on to make the claim that his followers will see the presence of God – the angels – upon the 'Son of Man'. This is his preferred self-description, a phrase that can mean simply 'human', but is given much greater significance in Daniel 7:1-14. It is a mysterious phrase and yet Jesus is claiming that those who come and see, who follow him, will see God's glory in and through his life and actions.

John's gospel continues to record such events as signs of God's presence and glory in Jesus. We come to the first of these next week. Now to conclude I will return to Stephen Cherry, to the conclusion of his introduction and the prayer he gives for 7 January.

'Our seeing matters, in both a real and a metaphorical sense. The visual world is God's world, and we can behold truth and glory, grace and peace in it.....If we believe that 'Epiphany' is more than just an unlikely word to describe the visit of three kings, we must surely seek the manifestation of the glory of God wherever our eyes might lead us. There is nothing in the Christian story to suggest that it is more propitious to look in one place than in another. Rather, the invitation is constantly made to seek and to look with the eyes of faith. These are new and different eyes: eyes that have already been transformed – like the magi's – by the experience of being let down by the humanly powerful and elevated by the extraordinary beauty of everyday holiness.'

A prayer for revelation

O hidden One
O ancient of days,
O Lord of time and space.
O countenance of mercy,
O face of justice,
O prince of peace.

Reveal this day the glimpse of your glory
that will nourish me in faith and hope.
Assure me kindly of your presence and love,
and fulfil your word, so that I can live
not only as your servant
but as your companion,
this day and all my days.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

(cf Ephesians 3)

Intercessions

Prayer for today's troubled times (rnfs)

In these troubled times, we call upon the God who is present everywhere and in all situations, however dire:

we hold in prayer before God those of our friends, family and fellow parishioners whom we know to be affected by the pandemic, naming them silently in God's presence

we hold in prayer before God those of our friends, family and fellow parishioners whom we know will be affected by the upheaval of our country's changing relationship with the rest of Europe and the rest of the world, naming them silently in God's presence ...

we hold in prayer before God any we know and the many we don't know in America during their tense and troubled times; in particular the president-elect, the vice-president-elect, and others with heavy responsibilities in the coming months, naming them silently in God's presence...

Gracious God, in the light of epiphany never to be quenched, strengthen us to face the future, whatever it holds. In the name of Christ, Amen.

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

*As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to 'Let us break Bread together'.
Words are on the screen.*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwdFOMeyFwc>



Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

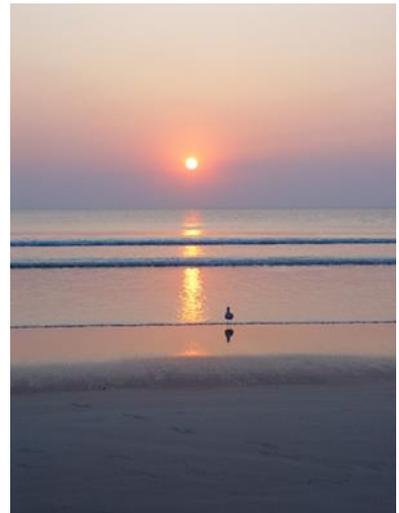
God of glory,
you nourish us with your Word
who is the bread of life:
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Commission

Lord, you are ever watchful
and bless us with your gifts;
as you provide for all our needs,
so help us to build only what pleases you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless us and watch over us,
the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us,
the Lord look kindly on us
and give us peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen.



Closing Music

We listen to a sung version of Psalm 139 (which we read earlier). O God You search me and You know me. This is a beautiful version by Bernadette Farrell. Words are on the screen.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEGc3_D19Vo

Scroll down for Coffee Break

Coffee Break

Nathaniel – call me Bartholomew!

Nathaniel is mentioned only in John's Gospel, where he appears twice: the first time was with Philip in our reading this morning, and the second time is during one of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances. The other three Gospels when discussing the apostles, list Philip together with Bartholomew. This has led many to consider that Bartholomew and Nathaniel are the same person, and that Nathaniel (meaning God has given) is his first name and Bartholomew – bar Tolmai (son of Tolmai), his patronymic.

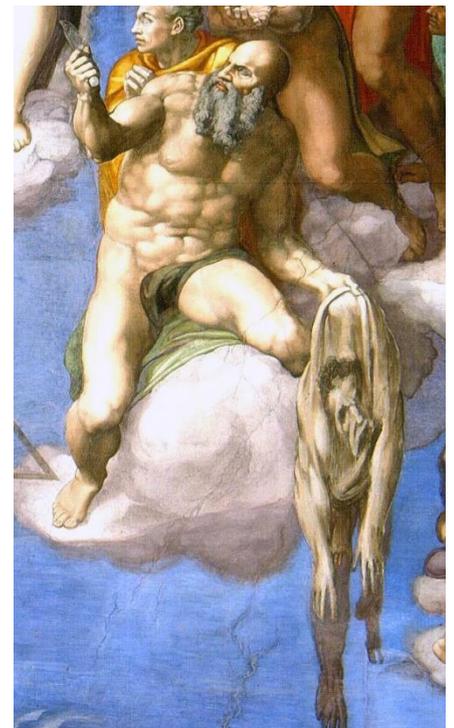
Bartholomew himself in the first three Gospels says nothing and does nothing. Yet because his calling together with Philip figures prominently in John's Gospel, and he is included among the important disciples who witness the Ascension, it is suggested that he and Philip should be considered as amongst one of Jesus's first and important followers.

But other than the lists of apostles and the two incidents mentioned above, Bartholomew is absent from Christian Scripture. This was a vacuum that early Christians soon wanted to fill.

So Bartholomew started to travel. One myth says that he went to India to evangelise its people. He is described when there as 'having black curly hair, white skin, large eyes, straight nose, his hair covers his ears, his beard long and grizzled.... His shoes have lasted twenty six years...He prays a hundred times a day and a hundred times a night. (*The Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine.*)

But the land to which Bartholomew is most frequently linked is Armenia, which is the first country to have made Christianity its official religion. Here he is allegedly martyred by being flayed alive then beheaded. His remains have had a bizarre existence. One story is that his body was flung into a leaden coffin and thrown into the sea, but was miraculously washed ashore on the Island of Lipari, near Sicily. (Miracle indeed since the sea in Armenia is the Caspian Sea which has no connection to the Mediterranean!)

From there his bones found their way to Rome and a church on an island in the middle of the River Tiber, where once had stood a temple to Asclepius, the god of medicine. Even today the island is home to a hospital. So Bartholomew became associated with medical matters, not least because images of his being flayed were used to instruct medical students! His bones too were also dismembered, and an arm given to Edward the Confessor who donated it to Canterbury Cathedral. His cult became important in England, and he is probably most widely remembered today through Bart's Hospital.



St Bartholomew displaying his flayed skin. The Last Judgement: Sistine Chapel: Michaelangelo

Scroll down for Night Prayer

Night Prayer

2nd Sunday of Epiphany
17th January 2021

This is a joint service held with other churches in Central Exeter.



Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit
(cf. John 15:5-9)

© Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Invitation to prayer

Entrance Hymn *A hymn invoking the Holy Spirit*

Words of welcome

Leader May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always!

Congregation And also with you.

Reader 1 Brothers and sisters in Christ, this year the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, chosen by the sisters of the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, is: "Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit".

Reader 2 It is the great desire of God, expressed by Jesus, that we might come to him and abide in him. He waits for us tirelessly, hoping that, united to him in love, we will bear fruit that will bring life to all, Faced with our differences, we risk withdrawing into ourselves and seeing only that which separates us. But let us listen to how Christ calls us to abide in his love, and so bear much fruit.

Reader 1 In the three moments of prayer that follow, we remember the call of Christ, we turn to his love, to him who is the centre of our life. For the path of unity begins in our intimate relationship with God. Abiding in God's love strengthens the desire to seek unity and reconciliation with others. God opens us up to those who are different from us. This is an important fruit, a gift of healing for the divisions within us, between us, and in the world.

Leader In peace let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, you are the vinedresser who cares for us with love.
You call on us to see the beauty of each branch united to the vine,
the beauty of each person.
And yet, too often the differences in others make us afraid.

We withdraw into ourselves.
Our trust in you is forsaken.
Enmity develops between us.
Come and direct our hearts toward you once again.
Grant us to live from your forgiveness
so that we may be together and praise your name.

Litany of praise

Congregation You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

Reader 1 We sing your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples,

Reader 2 We sing your praise in the midst of creation and among all creatures.

Congregation You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

Reader 1 We sing your praise among suffering and tears,

Reader 2 We sing your praise among promises and achievements.

Congregation You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

Reader 1 We sing your praise in the places of conflict and misunderstanding;

Reader 2 We sing your praise in the places of encounter and reconciliation.

Congregation You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

Reader 1 We sing your praise in the midst of rifts and divisions,

Reader 2 We sing your praise in the midst of life and death, the birth of a new heaven
and a new earth.

Congregation You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

First Vigil - Abiding in Christ: The unity of the whole person

Reading: John 15:1-17.

Response: Ubi caritas.

Intercessions

Reader God of love, through Christ you said to us: "You did not choose me but I chose you." You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and grow in a life that is ever more complete.

Congregation The joy of our heart is in God.

Reader God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of your grace. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are.

Congregation The joy of our heart is in God.

Reader God you who gather, you knit us together as one vine in your Son Jesus. May your loving Spirit abide in us at local church and community meetings and ecumenical gatherings. Grant that together we celebrate you with joy.

Congregation The joy of our heart is in God.

Reader God of the one vineyard, you call us to abide in your love in all we do and say. Touched by your goodness, grant us to be a reflection of that love in our homes and workplaces. May we bridge rivalries and overcome tensions.

Congregation The joy of our heart is in God.

Action: *A time of silence Very often we think of prayer as something we do, an activity of our own. In this short time we are invited to an interior silence, and to turn aside from all the noise and concerns of our lives and thoughts. In this silence the action belongs to God. We are simply called to abide and rest in God's love.*

Silence (approximately 5 minutes)

Hymn Lumière de Dieu (Light of God)

Second Vigil - The visible unity of Christians

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13a.

Response: There is One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism.

Intercessions

Reader Holy Spirit, you create and re-create the Church in all places. Come and whisper in our hearts the prayer which Jesus addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe".

Congregation Lord have mercy.

Reader Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, light the fire of your love in us so that suspicions, contempt and misunderstanding cease in the Church. May the walls that separate us fall.

Congregation Lord have mercy.

Reader Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back from our wanderings.

Congregation Lord have mercy.

Reader Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may welcome the unexpectedness of your grace.

Congregation Lord have mercy.

Reader Holy Spirit, you never abandon the men, women and children who are persecuted for their fidelity to the gospel. Give them strength and courage, and support those who help them.

Congregation Lord have mercy.

Hymn *Lumière de Dieu (Light of God)*

Third Vigil - The unity of all peoples with all creation

Psalm: 96.

Reading: Revelation 7: 9-12.

Response: O you who are beyond all things.

Intercessions

Reader God of life, you have created every human being in your image and likeness. We sing your praise for the gift of our many cultures, expressions of faith, traditions and ethnicities. Grant us the courage always to stand against injustice and hatred based on race, class, gender, religion, and fear of those not like ourselves.

Congregation God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Reader Merciful God, you have shown us in Christ that we are one in you. Teach us to use this gift in the world so that believers of all faiths in every country may be able to listen to each other and live in peace.

Congregation God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Reader O Jesus, you came into the world and shared fully in our humanity. You know the hardships of life for people who suffer in so many different ways. May the Spirit of compassion move us to share our time, life and goods with all those in need.

Congregation God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Reader Holy Spirit, you hear the fury of your wounded creation and the cries of those already suffering from climate change. Guide us toward new behaviours. May we learn to live in harmony as part of your creation.

Congregation God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Action: *Moving to the centre... and out to the world (inspired by a text of Dorotheus of Gaza)*

Reader Jesus calls us to abide in him, as branches of the true vine. He calls us to bear the fruit of God's healing and reconciling love. He calls us to draw closer to God and to one another as we offer this love to the world.

Short Silence (approximately 1 minute)

The Lord's Prayer

Leader With the words that Jesus taught us, let us now pray together:

Congregation Our Father...

Hymn *Lumière de Dieu (Light of God)*

Leader Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Prayer and action belong together. When we abide in Christ, we receive the Spirit of courage and wisdom to act against all injustice and oppression. We say together:

Congregation Pray and work that God may reign.
Throughout your day
let the Word of God breathe life into work and rest.
Maintain inner silence in all things
so as to dwell in Christ.
Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes:
joy, simplicity, mercy.

These words are recited daily by the Sisters of the Grandchamp Community.

Blessing

Leader Be one, so that the world may believe! Abide in God's love, go into the world and bear the fruits of this love.

Congregation May the God of hope fill us with all joy and all peace in faith, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Final Hymn

(to be chosen locally)

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