

Worship at Home – 6th September 2026

Call to Worship:

Let's get ready!

Let's get ready to meet God here together.

Let's get ready to listen to God's Word.

Let's get ready to explore God's message.

Let's get ready to pray for ourselves and the world.

Let's get ready to worship!

Amen

Hymn STF 137

1 Morning has broken like the first morning;
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

2 Sweet the rain's new fall
sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness where his feet pass.

3 Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
born of the one light
Eden saw play!
Praise with elation,
praise every morning,
God's re-creation of the new day!

A gathering prayer

Lord, help us to sing a new song:

a song of love, not quarrelling;

a song of light, not darkness;

a song of joy, not sorrow.

Help us to remember your love for us,

as we praise you with music and dancing.

Amen.

Bible Readings:

Exodus 12:1-14 New International Version

The Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ²“This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb^[a] for his family, one for each household. ⁴If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbour, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.

Matthew 18:15-20 New International Version

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even

to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Discussion

World-wide the news is dominated by renewed conflict between the USA and Iran and the floods in Nepal. Domestically we have the first appearances in Parliament of our new Prime Minister.

Although the British weather has now reverted to type, none of us can ignore the successive heatwaves over the summer or the temperature records which have been broken. No one weather event should be invoked to argue that climate change is happening or that it is caused by human activity; but much of what we are now witnessing matches the predictions which were being made 30 years ago.

At the Greenbelt Festival last Sunday I watched the National Emergency Briefing film. It is presented by Chris Packham and I strongly recommend that you find a screening in your local area and go and watch it. It is full of facts around climate change from military

and health experts as well as those with more obvious expertise.

The Exodus story is about how the children of Israel escaped from slavery in Egypt. What are the things which enslave us? Collectively are we in slavery to fossil fuels? What instructions might God now be giving us in our responsibility to care for creation? In what for many is now the Season of Creation, are these issues foremost in our minds? More controversially, are we (in the West at least) enslaved by an economic system which privileges freedom of choice above all else? Freedom is widely thought to be an important value and objective. But as a concept freedom is more controversial than one might expect. Elon Musk has criticised what he claims is a lack of free speech in the UK but he seems not to have noticed that the USA where he now lives is 64th in the World Press Freedom Index, well below the UK in 18th place.

The gospel is supposed to set us free (Galatians 5:1). But many people around the world live in societies where it is difficult, even illegal, to express some thoughts. Is freedom always and everywhere the most desirable thing? And what is the most important freedom - freedom from hunger, for example, or freedom from slavery, or freedom of thought and speech, or freedom of religion? The Universal Declaration on Human Rights is

a useful starting point for thinking about such issues.

The instructions in the Exodus and Matthew passages are remarkably precise. In the case of the Exodus passage we seem to be reading something like a liturgical text, especially as it ends with instructions about an annual festival of remembrance. Some commentators see Jesus' detailed instructions in the Matthew passage as reflecting issues in the churches for which the author is writing. If the passage is based on specific teaching from Jesus, I find that intriguing, given that so much of Jesus' teaching is more enigmatic. The story we call the Good Samaritan - and many of the other stories (parables) he told - are designed to make us think rather than offering precise answers like those in this gospel passage. Why might that be? And are precise rules compatible with freedom of thought and action?

Prayer

God of freedom and of new beginnings, you called your people to ready themselves for change, a walk from drudgery and oppression to a land of new hope. Not an easy walk, but a walk with you.

We bring to you now the things that weigh us down, that burden your creation, trusting in the promise that your plans for us are good.

We ready ourselves to hear your voice, to follow your call, to place our trust in you.

We pray for our world, your world, as we hear reports of war and conflict, natural disaster and human greed ravaging the land. We think of the continuing hostilities between America and Iran, Israel and Gaza, Russia and Ukraine and the civil war in Sudan. Strengthen and empower those working for peace and those bringing aid to innocent victims of oppression and violence.

We pray for the many people killed, injured and displaced by the glacial collapse and floods in Nepal, Tibet and China; for those affected by earthquakes and flash flooding in America; and for the disastrous effects of wildfires in Algeria, Indonesia and elsewhere.

Lord, break the chains of despair. **Lead your people into new hope.**

As parliament reconvenes under a new Prime Minister, we bring our prayers for our own country, asking that you bless all those in positions of power and leadership. Guide them into wise decisions and effective policies - fair and in the interests of all - not just the wealthy or influential. Where Pharaoh feared those of a different ethnicity, turning welcome into hostility, may we instead embrace the opportunity to cherish our neighbours, no matter how they may differ from us, sharing in the joy of knowing that all are your children and made in your image.

Lord, break the chains of poverty and intolerance. **Lead your people into new hope.**

Just as the Hebrew people prepared for upheaval, this is a time of transition for many experiencing major life changes. We think especially of children, young people and adults embarking on the next stage of their education or employment. We pray for those experiencing anxiety or other mental health difficulties brought about by change or fear of the unknown, and for those who support and mentor them, especially parents and grandparents and other carers. We pray for those relocating, retiring, or entering into new relationships.

Lord, break the chains of uncertainty. **Lead your people into new hope.**

Grant your love, strength and comfort to those whose life is not going smoothly. We think of those sick in mind, or body or spirit; or finding their independence or quality of life restricted in any way; those who are dealing with financial challenges such as unemployment or redundancy, homelessness or unsatisfactory accommodation, poverty or need; and those whose relationships are not running smoothly or who find themselves isolated and alone.

Lord, break the chains of insecurity. **Lead your people into new hope.**

In a moment of quiet, we bring to you the things that are particularly on our hearts today.

Lord, break the chains that bind us. **Lead your people into new hope.**

Amen

Hymn Stf 186

1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word;
in God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age to same;
his holy Name--the Lord, the Mighty One.

3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
to children's children and for evermore!