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ORDINARY 23B

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A short act of worship for use in peoples homes

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Call to worship

Let us pray.

As we start our new Connexional year, O Lord,

May your priorities be ours
May your values be ours
May your challenges be ours,
May your love be ours

That we might dedicate this year
to you and your service.

Amen.¹

Hymn: 255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy - [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

In January, at the start of a new year,
we look back and we look forward.

We think back over the year that has passed,
all that took place, the good and the bad.
We think ahead to the year yet to come,
make resolutions of how things will be different,
and make fresh starts.

Today, on the first Sunday of a new Connexional year,
We do the same.

So we praise God:
For all in the last year that brought joy,
For all moments when we felt close to God,

For times we glimpsed God working in our world,
For opportunities seized and new initiatives started.

We take time, in silence, to bring before God
all from the last year for which we give thanks and praise.

Silence

Thank you Lord, that as the mountains surround Jerusalem,
you surround your people forever more.

¹ Call to Worship written by Melissa Quinn

But we also recognize that there were times in the last year that we lament,
both things that happened to us or around us,
and our own behaviours and attitudes.

So we bring before God:

The times when our actions did not glorify you,
The words we said that were harmful or unnecessary,
All in the last year that cause pain and anguish to ourselves or others,
Opportunities wasted and moments lost.

We take time, in silence, to bring before God
all from the last year for which we ask forgiveness and lament.

Silence

Thank you Lord, that as the mountains surround Jerusalem,
you surround your people forever more.

Lord hear our thanksgiving and praise,
our confessions and lamentations,
and help us to hear your forgiveness and start afresh.

In the year that is to come:

May we experience joy and bring joy to others,
May we feel your presence close to us,
May we glimpse you at work in our world,
May we seize opportunities to show your love to others.

May our actions glorify you
May our words talk of your love,
May we speak into the pain and anguish of others,

And may we trust in you to be beside us in ours.

Lord we give to you the year that is passed,
and the year that is to come,
and offer it to you.

In the name of Jesus,
Amen.²

Readings: Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23 – [Click for reading](#)

James 2:1-10, 14-17 – [Click for reading](#)

Mark 7:24-37 – [Click for reading](#)

² Opening prayers written by Melissa Quinn

Reflections on the reading

To read the full reflection for today, written by Jill Baker, find out if your circuit is subscribed to *The Vine* by emailing thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk

For our time of reflection, make space to bring our answers to a question Jill Baker poses in her longer piece for *The Vine* this week. Jill writes:

Has anyone ever said to you, 'I wish I had your faith'? How did that make you feel? Or perhaps you have looked at someone else in the church, or online, or on Songs of Praise and thought to yourself, 'If only I had faith like that'?

For the next few minutes, let's discuss stories like these, and how your attitude to 'faith' is changed by reflecting on today's readings, perhaps in particular thinking about the Syrophenician woman and her interaction with Jesus.

[Discussion in groups or as a whole congregation].

Let us pray.

God of all grace, we give you thanks that we are always accepted and loved, no matter what our story, no matter how strong we feel our faith is.

Move amongst us, by your grace, today, Lord God.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

As the Syrophenician woman challenged Jesus,
May we also to challenge the priorities of the world...

Help us not to accept how things are,
but to fight for Jesus' Kingdom values.

- Fight for a fairer distribution of the world's resources,
- Fight for a world without hunger and need,
- Fight for the most marginalized and desperate,
- Fight for an end to actual fighting and war.

Challenging God,

Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.

May we not jealously guard what we have,
but budge up and make space at the table.

- Space for the oppressed and persecuted,
- Space for this discriminated against,
- Space for all who have been excluded,
- Space for all who may not have felt welcome.

Challenging God,

Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.

Change our judgmental natures,
that our split-second judgements and internalized prejudices
might not govern our behaviours.

- Change the hearts of those who govern or have power,
- Change the attitudes of people towards each other,
- Change the priorities of the world,
- Change us, that we might influence others.

Challenging God,

Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.

Speak words of healing to those who most need to hear them,
we pray particularly for those known to us, for:

- Healing for all coping with grief,
- Healing for issues of physical and mental wellbeing,
- Healing for relationships and difficult situations,
- Healing for hearts and minds and souls.

Challenging God,

Help us to be the change we want to see in the world.

May we never grow complacent in our mission,
to make your priorities the worlds priorities,
and as we seek to bring that change,
may we start with ourselves.

Amen.³

Hymn: 696 STF – For the healing of the nations - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Go out to make space at the table,
for those who are fighting to find room at it,
for those who gather crumbs underneath it,
for those still trying to get into the room the table is in,
for those who don't even know the table exists...

Go out to make space at the table,
And may all be invited.

Amen.⁴

³ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁴ Additional prayers by Tim Baker