

1st February 2026 – Morning Service

Jesus Presented in the Temple

Megan Ashmore

Call to Worship

The Psalmist writes:

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. (Psalm 95: 1 – 2)

StF 44 – Come on and celebrate

Come on and celebrate

His gift of love, we will celebrate

The Son of God who loved us and gave us life.

We'll shout Your praise, O King,

You give us joy nothing else can bring,

We'll give to You our offering in celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate,

Celebrate, celebrate and sing,

Celebrate and sing to the King.

Come on and celebrate,

Celebrate, celebrate and sing,

Celebrate and sing to the King.

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StF 2 – Come let us sing to the One

1) Come, let us sing to the One,

To the Father of life,

Whose light fills the earth like the sun;

Come, tell of the wonders he's done.

Great is the world he has made,

Are the myst'ries untold,

Is his measureless power of old;

Come, come let us sing to our God.

2) Come, let us sing to the One,

To the Saviour of life,

Find the fullness of God in the Son;

Come, tell of the wonders he's done.

Wild is the mercy of Christ,

Is the richness of grace,

Is the unending life we embrace;

Come, come let us sing to our God.

Ch) To our God, who is able

To strengthen us in his grace

Beyond all we imagine,

Be all glory and praise,

Be all praise.

3) Come, let us sing to the One, to the Spirit of life,

Leading us in the way of the Son;

Come, tell of the wonders he's done.

Strong is the Spirit within, is the boldness to speak,

Is the power to run when we're weak;

Come, come let us sing to our God.

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Prayer of Adoration and Thanks (prepared by Amanda Evans – Worship Leader at Overend)

Beloved God, we worship you, for you are powerful and worthy of all our praises. You are the only God, the one who first loved us. Even before we were born you gave us life, and through Jesus Christ today we have life in abundance, for you have forgiven our sins. You did not hide your face when we suffered but had compassion and poured out your grace on us. You are wonderful, holy and perfect.

We take pleasure in your word and in knowing you are always at our side. We praise you, for you are worthy of all the honour and glory. We deserve nothing but still you take care of us in the smallest details and our hearts overflow with joy in knowing your love for us. Father, we praise you for your perfect creation, the sea, the trees, the animals and the sky. You created everything with such perfection.

We have so much to thank you for in our daily lives - our families, Church, jobs, health and homes. We see your care in the smallest of details and when we are in a situation where we think there is no way out, then you bring us the solution. Our trust is in you, and our desire is to be able to dwell in your house and

worship you day and night. There is no other like you, there is no one who is worthy of praise but you, for you are our God and we will trust in you.

O God, yours is the power, the glory and the honour forever. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray, give thanks and ask that our words may reach the Lord like a sweet perfume. In your name we pray, **Amen.**

Reading: Luke 2: 22-40 (NIV)

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

Comment

“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.”

Jesus, the name above all names. The name at which every knee will bow, and the name that means “the Lord saves.” Both Mary and Joseph had been told they were to name the child Jesus, and in obedience, they responded accordingly. For them, it was more than just choosing a name out of a book, or a family name or a name that fits well with a surname. They recognised that it was a name that would convey a message of love, compassion, forgiveness and saving grace.

Listen to these thoughts of Mary as expressed by the writer Barbara Bennett:
What else could we call him? By what other name could he be known? Jesus – Jeshu. God is with us. It was as the angel said – was it such a short time ago?

How I have changed. I am no longer the girl I was. My body is that of a woman. In my womb, and now in my arms, I have carried God.

He will be a good Jew. He will be great. It is his destiny. And yet

His eyes search mine and hold them in wisdom. There is, within that baby face, all knowledge and power, and, at times, true sadness as if he knows already what his life will be. He is newborn and yet timeless. Tiny, but ageless.

His name is Jesus and he will be great. We have named him, dedicated him, made sacrifices for him. And I will protect him, kiss the sorrow from his eyes every day of his life. If I can protect him, nothing will ever harm him. No-one will ever hurt him.

I will give my life for him, Jesus, my son.

Jesus. That name is the name we honour. That name is the name we praise and the name we trust. That name is the holy name of Jesus. The name of the one who gave his life for us.

StF 354 – Jesus is the name we honour

1) Jesus is the name we honour; Jesus is the name we praise. Majestic name above all other names, The highest heaven and earth proclaim That Jesus is our God.	2) Jesus is the name we worship; Jesus is the name we trust. He is the King above all other kings, Let all creation stand and sing That Jesus is our God.
Ch) <i>We will glorify, we will lift Him high, We will give Him honour and praise. We will glorify, we will lift Him high, We will give Him honour and praise.</i>	3) Jesus is the Father's splendour; Jesus is the Father's joy. He will return to reign in majesty, And every eye at last will see That Jesus is our God.

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Reflection – Fulfilling the law of God

“Don’t think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I didn’t come to destroy, but to fulfill.” These are the words of Jesus himself, from the sermon on the Mount.

Thanks to his young mother and adoptive father, Jesus grew up steeped in the law of Moses. As the mother of a new baby boy Mary was required to be purified after forty days. She could go about her household and her daily business, but she could not enter the Temple or share in any religious ceremony. And so at the allotted time Mary, Joseph and Jesus went to the temple.

The requirements are clearly set out in Leviticus, where we read, *“When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. But if she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering.”*

Luke explains that Mary and Joseph took the offering of a poor couple. Parents of God’s own son they may be, but life was not going to be a bed of roses. They would not be exempt from hardship. And yet, this couple, chosen by God to rear and take care of His own son, the Saviour of the world, would continue to obey God’s word and do what was right before Him.

At the same time as the purification took place, Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to God. They didn’t need to – after all this was God’s own Son. But again, in doing so they acknowledged the Old Testament law of Moses, which said, *“The Lord said to Moses, “Consecrate to me every firstborn male.”*

From the beginning of his life, Jesus had his roots firmly planted in the way of God. Years later, when he went to John to be baptised, John tried to deter him, saying, *"I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*

Jesus replied, *"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."* (Matthew 3:15) If Jesus recognised the need to fulfil the righteousness of God, then how much more should we.

The Old Testament reading for today's set lectionary is from chapter five of the book of Micah and includes this verse:

*He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

Let's spend a few minutes unpacking this verse to see what insight it gives us to fulfilling the righteousness of God.

To act justly:

To act – to do. Not just to think or say something but live it out too. James in his letter to the early Christian churches writes

"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in the mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like".

I, for one, prefer to forget what I look like these days, but I get the point that James is making – we need to act upon what we hear and read, not walk away and dismiss it.

So, to act justly – acting with a sense of right and wrong; behaving with fairness; sticking up for those who are disadvantaged. Perhaps that means reconsidering our shopping habits – buying from traders who will receive a fair price for their goods; buying from outlets who ensure their goods are produced by people working in favourable conditions. Maybe we have treated someone unfairly, by not giving them the respect they deserve; the time we could afford. We pray that God will give us the opportunity to put things right and show us how else we might work for justice in this broken world.

To love mercy:

When Micah uses the word love, he is now suggesting that our behaviour takes on a more personal attitude – an element of sacrifice. It is possible to act justly without establishing any form of relationship, but to love mercy suggests that we respond to a situation with grace and goodness, a change of heart. Some versions of the bible use the word kindness in place of mercy. Both lead us into the realms of being forgiving, compassionate, loving to our neighbour, as we acknowledge and reflect on the mercies we have been shown through Jesus. Here, we are not called to just do it because it is right, we are called to do it because we want to, because we love to do the will of God.

In his letter to the church of Colossae, Paul writes:

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." (Colossians 3:12)

It's not an easy call to respond in such a way, particularly if you have been wronged. We enjoy watching rugby and one thing that really interests me is when they play the advantage. If a team is wronged by another in a game, the referee may choose to continue play rather than stop it, if it would be to the non-offending team's advantage. However, once the ball goes dead, the referee goes back to sort out the offence. How unlike football where players throw their arms up and start shouting at the slightest supposed infringement, disrupting the flow.

But how unlike us too – in a situation where we may have been wronged, don’t we like to sort it out straight away, in our own way? But we know that God works for the good of each one of us. We can trust God to look after us and do the best for us if we just take it to him. We pray that God will give us patience and humility to trust in him.

To walk humbly:

To walk – to move at a regular pace; A walk – an act of travelling.

Both definitions stress the idea of movement. Walking is not static. To walk with God therefore means to move with him; to travel with him. And in the act of walking with someone I suggest there is always an element of communication. Whether it be a full-blown conversation, polite discourse about the surroundings, or merely eye contact, a smile or a hello. The same is true with walking with God. Maybe God leads and we follow; maybe we question and God answers; maybe we simply rest in God’s company, knowing that God’s spirit indwells us and guides us.

But Micah includes an adverb in his writing of this phrase – humbly. We are required to walk humbly – in a way that shows a modest or low estimate of one’s importance. In other words, to recognise our dependence on God. How reassuring to know that God walks with us and that he is willing to communicate with us. But how scary too.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God – and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Paul continues a bit further on, “Where then is boasting? It is excluded”.

Pray that God will give you grace to boast only in His glory.

So now we’ve unpacked each phrase a little, how do we do it? How do we act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God? Well, through prayer and especially by looking to our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

While I was contemplating this, a hymn came into my head which seems to sum it up nicely. It is the hymn, written by Kate Barclay Wilkinson, which begins, *“May the mind of Christ my Saviour dwell in me from day to day.”* In a sequence of simple petitions, each verse draws upon the life of Jesus as sole guide and example for the spiritual and practical Christian life.

StF 504 – May the mind of Christ my Saviour

1) May the mind of Christ my Saviour

Live in me from day to day,
By his love and power controlling
All I do or say.

4) May the love of Jesus fill me,

As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing –
This is victory.

2) May the word of God dwell richly

In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through his power.

5) May I run the race before me,

Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

3) May the peace of God my Father

Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson

We can’t leave today’s gospel reading without acknowledging Simeon and Anna. Both were faithful servants of God who trusted in His word and believed the promise that the Messiah would come. In the Message version two particular phrases jumped out at me. About Simeon it says: *In Jerusalem at the time, there was a man, Simeon by name, a good man, a man who lived in the prayerful expectancy of help for Israel.*

And of Anna it is written: *At the very time Simeon was praying, she showed up, broke into an anthem of praise to God, and talked about the child to all who were waiting expectantly for the freeing of Jerusalem.* What a wonderful picture of worship: Living life in prayerful expectancy which results in breaking into anthems of praise and proclamations of Christ.

Prayers

Let us pray. We bring our prayers to God in the name of Jesus, and as we pray, we will use some of the different meanings and characteristics portrayed by the name Jesus:

Jesus, our brother;

Through your love for us we are all united with brothers and sisters near and far. We pray for our families and friends and for the world-wide church and all its members joining their voices with ours in prayer and praise this day. We ask for a blessing on the Methodist Church and remember our president and vice-president, District chairs, Superintendent, ministers, local preachers, worship leaders and stewards who will lead us and encourage us this year, as we seek to enlarge your kingdom here on earth. Send your spirit upon them that they may be renewed in their work of serving you and filled with joy and enthusiasm to share the good news of the gospel.

Jesus, Prince of Peace;

We remember our brothers and sisters living in fear; those who are persecuted for their faith; those living in countries torn apart by war; and those struggling to survive in places where there is famine, disease, earthquakes, floods or droughts. Teach us, your children how to live in peace and with concern for others.

Jesus, King of Kings;

We pray for all those in positions of authority throughout the world. Guide the thoughts of all decision makers that your will may be done and your kingdom come. Jesus, we recall that you came as a servant king, willing to give all for our salvation and that we might know life in all its fulness. May we extend that same servitude to all we meet that others will come to know you as their Lord and king.

Jesus, Lamb of the world;

You know what it is to suffer; you know what it is to be despised and rejected, abandoned and alone. Hear all those who call out to you in distress. Comfort and strengthen them; calm them and protect them; and give them hope; that they might know your love and the peace and joy that brings.

Jesus, our Saviour and friend;

We confess that we so often forget to trust in the promises of your word; neglect to give you praise when the going is good or worse, deny you praise when the going is tough! But Lord, you never forget us. Nor do you neglect us when we turn from you. But in your love you continue to seek us to draw us back to you. Through your love our sins.

Bless each one of us here. Grant us your peace and fill us with your spirit, that this coming week, we can proclaim your name abroad.

And in a moment of silence we bring before God the concerns of our own hearts, knowing that when we pray in the name of Jesus, God will hear us and respond. Amen.

As Jesus the Teacher taught his disciples to pray so we say together The Lord's Prayer:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

StF 706 – Longing for light

- 1) Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
Light for the world to see.

- Ch) *Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.*

- 2) Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Bernadette Farrell © 1993 Bernadette Farrell

Offertory Prayer

Lord God, as we offer these gifts of money to you, we pray that you will bless them and, in your love and power, use them to further the work of your kingdom in this place. As Simeon and Anna proclaimed the good news of Jesus so may we speak aloud to all the message of your love revealed in Jesus Christ, your son and our saviour. **Amen.**

Blessing

We look at our candle – a reminder of Christ, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. **We go to carry his light.**

We look at the cross – a reminder of his love for us. **We go to carry his light.**

We look at our brothers and sisters in Christ – a fellowship of love and strength. **We go to carry his light.**
Heavenly Father, let us shine with the light of your love. **Amen.**

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. **Amen.**

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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

- 3) Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
Shared until all are fed.

- 4) Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
Walls made of living stone.

- 5) Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
Making your kingdom come.