

# Hope and Thanksgiving Service

21 October 2020 at 10.30 am  
or a time that works for you

**Theme:** Hope and Thanksgiving in a changing world



## How to get involved

Although we can't all be together physically or virtually, we hope you will set aside time at 10.30 on 21 October 2020 to worship wherever you are. If this time doesn't work for you, then please set aside a time that's more convenient. You may want to take part by yourself or with others in your household or 'bubble', or you may want to join or set up a Zoom call for your Storytelling team. This service has been written to enable as many Storytellers as possible to be able to be part of this time of worship.

If you are Zooming as a team, someone will need to host and send out the invitations. You will also need to know how to screen-share, including the audio.

You will need internet access to use all the links to listen to and watch the worship songs and videos. If you haven't got internet access we have included materials in the service for you to use. You will need a hymn book and your own Bible for the readings.

In addition to this information you will find some *instructions within the service written in italics*.

## Welcome

Good morning and welcome to this special time for us to gather together as Open the Book Storytellers. Although we may be far apart, we gather together as pilgrims on a journey with God. We gather together as the people of God, passionate about sharing the Bible with the next generation.

## Gathering

*After a moment of quiet say this prayer:*

We come into your presence, living God.

We come to worship you, knowing you accept us just as we are.

Help us to draw on the strength of your loving son Jesus Christ.

Encourage us and draw us together in love and hope.

Amen

## Sing

*Sing or listen to a song that helps you worship God.*

**Here are some suggestions for you to choose from or you can choose your own:**

### Worship songs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y2MzEbEBhA>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DN3\\_tSDhDpY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DN3_tSDhDpY)

### Traditional hymns

O worship the King

Now thank we all our God

## Share

Spend a moment thinking about your faith journey – who shared the Bible with you? Think about how you are passing on the Bible stories to the next generation – maybe you can recall a special moment from being in school or as part of your team. If you keep a journal you may like to write it down. or if you are on Zoom together you may like to share your memory.

## Bible readings

Today's Bible passages are from:

Psalm 78.1–7

Philippians 4.13

*If you are meeting as a team on Zoom or you have access to the internet then watch this new specially recorded version of Psalm 78.*

<https://vimeo.com/466514117/42502065b4>

*If you aren't online please read Psalm 78.1–7 and Philippians 4.13.*

## Explore

*If you are online you can access Words of Thanksgiving and hope from Head of Church Relations Nigel Langford here:*

<https://vimeo.com/467637573/598bc2f498>

*If you are at home you can read Nigel's reflection at the end of the service.*

## Pray

*Spend some time now praying for our schools, Open the Book teams and Bible Society. Use the parts of the prayer that best fit your circumstances.*

Dear Father God,

We find ourselves riding a roller coaster of emotions during this pandemic. Be with us when we feel disappointed and frustrated that we can't go into schools at the moment and share the Bible stories with the children as we usually do. Help us to listen for your voice to guide and encourage us and give us hope for the future, even when we can't see a way forward.

Thank you for the creative and new ways through technology that we have found to continue to share Bible stories with the children at [insert name of your school or schools]. Thank you for the Open the Book team and all their gifts and talents [include the names of your Open the Book team]. Bless all who hear and see the Bible stories, that they may continue to speak to our children and the school staff.

Be with the teachers, teaching assistants and headteacher. Give them the wisdom they need to lead the school and to support the children and their families. May they know your presence and put their trust in you, whatever they are facing. Be with all those who have worked so hard to keep the schools open, like the caretakers and cleaners. Thank you for all their hard work.

(If appropriate) Be with all those who are grieving for family, friends, loved ones and Storytellers who have been lost to the virus. Comfort and walk with [add names] through the tears of sadness and the memories of happy times gone by. Draw close to each and every one affected.

Lord Jesus, help us in our hour of need to cope with the challenges of uncertainty, and to put our trust in you, even when we have doubts and fears. Help us to see the part you have for us to play in sharing your love, joy, justice and peace in our communities.

Help our Open the Book team to be a support and encouragement for each other, their school,

churches and community. Help us to build one another up through the power of your Holy Spirit.  
We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen

*Bring your prayers together by saying the Lord's Prayer.*

## Sing

*Sing or listen to a song that helps you reflect on God's word to you.*

*Here are some suggestions:*

### **Jazz worship song**

Sing of the Lord's goodness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9fsAKZHq-w>

### **Traditional hymns**

All my hope on God is founded

To God be the glory

<https://www.godtube.com/news/5-amazing-hymns-perfect-for-thanksgiving-day.html>

## Closing prayer

*To bring your time of worship to an end, say this prayer:*

We go out today  
ready to serve you with open hearts and minds.

We go out with hope in our hearts  
to be your hands and feet in the world.

May we put our trust and hope in you,  
now and forever.

Amen

## Explore

### Our Changing World

#### **Introduction**

As you all know, telling a story is a really powerful way of bringing people into your world and explaining the drama that is working out in it. I am not sure what 2020 has been like for you all but no one really had lockdown and Covid-19 on their radars.

In many ways this has altered the story for so many of us. Who could have imagined such tough times that meant we weren't able to see friends and family in person, or that our way of life and working would be interrupted so abruptly? This last week has seen this reinforced. My mum and dad live in South Wales, and are isolated again. It brings up many fears and anxieties – can we really look to the future with confidence? Our reading for this theme is helpful as we think about the long haul of life. As the text of Philippians 4.13 states, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' This Bible verse speaks to me of two things: the power of hope, and thankfulness. If we are committed to such things then I believe the power of Christ will be seen through us: Christ in me, the hope of glory. I shall take both these themes and tell you a story that links them together.

## Hope

In Proverbs 13.12 it says, 'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.' I remember for many years how painful it was for us as we tried to start a family. There were many ups and downs, possibilities and disappointments. After we had given up all hope my wife fell pregnant. I can hear your shouts of celebration! Yet after three months we lost the child. It really felt like our hope was being deferred or even withering away with time. In those moments it is hard to see past the circumstance. No one is at the end of the story telling you the outcome; you live through each page. Fast-forwarding on ten years we find ourselves six months into the privilege of being adoptive parents to a three-year-old boy. All this unfolded as lockdown hit the country – we rushed to get back to our house as everything came to a halt! We literally got to know each other in the middle of a pandemic.

Little did we know that hope was deferred on both sides of this relationship. We longed for a child and he needed a safe environment with parents who could look after and love him fully. I remember bringing my son home for that first time, and even though it was a great change, you could see the joy on his face. Even though we have our challenges, he continues to develop and grow; he is definitely a tree of life blossoming. It is the same for us. I have never understood so clearly the Father's heart of love for me. God chose me, he brought me into his family and changed my identity. The same is true for this little boy – he has been rescued to live a new life with us! It is this hope that sustains. When things go well or seem to work against us, we can have that hope which brings strength to us.

Corrie ten Boom, a Holocaust survivor, wrote this: 'If you look at the world, you will be distressed. If you look within, you will be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you will be at rest.' Hope lies in the arms of Jesus; he can give us what we need. We lift our eyes to the hills; this is where our help comes from – the maker of heaven and earth.

## Thanksgiving

The attitude of giving thanks really does affect how we walk through difficult periods of our life. In an ever-changing world we know that God is faithful and for that we should be thankful. When I adopt this attitude it really does affect me in a positive way. I always remember a previous church leader of mine saying that, 'Your attitude affects your altitude.' How we deal with something often affects where we end up, how high we go in life and how we get there. I know that when I am ungrateful it really sours things in general. I can't seem to be happy or even allow God to give me strength to see things. 'I can do all things through Christ' literally means that I have to take on the attitude of Christ. In Philippians 2 it says that Jesus became a servant and humbled himself. Thankfulness takes humility; it means that your situation has changed due to someone or something else at work. We are so grateful to God for helping us through the challenges. As parents we are full of joy for all that God has done for us. It doesn't look like the vision we had for a family life when we got married, but we wouldn't change it for the world.

When we are thankful, we build an altar to the Lord. We're saying symbolically, 'We could not have done this without your intervention.' As we move into the future we can look back on these altars of thankfulness so that we can be full of hope for what lies ahead. If Jesus has come through for us before, he can do it again. The Children of Israel set a good example by doing this, yet they often forgot to remember. Let us not forget, but keep in mind the God we serve and worship. He has not forgotten you! The story is not yet complete, there are other chapters to be written. Join in the big story that is outworking through the ages. Christ will walk with you and give you the strength to do it!

## Conclusion

We can be in no doubt that we can do all things through Christ. We do our part and he does what only he can do. My prayer for you today, in these challenging times, in a changing world, is that you will be full of hope and thanks. Everything around us may change, on a daily basis, but the word of the Lord remains. Amen.