



# Morning Worship

January 2022

**We all stand together**

## Opening Prayer:

Today, Lord God, we come before you as is our custom;  
as was the custom of Jesus growing up in Nazareth.  
We seek your Word to us now, just like those who waited  
while he spoke in the synagogue after his ministry had begun.

**May we hear your call and stand with him and with one another.**

**To serve freely in the work you have given us.**

**Amen.**

## Reading - Luke 4.14-21

<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup> He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

<sup>16</sup> When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup> 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,

<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the

synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

### **Reading - 1 Corinthians 12.12-31a**

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.<sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup>If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'<sup>22</sup>On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; <sup>24</sup>whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.<sup>28</sup>And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?<sup>30</sup>Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

### **Reflection**

The scene in Luke's Gospel we witness today has sometimes been called Jesus' 'mission statement' or 'manifesto'. Using lines from Isaiah that place the poor and the oppressed front and centre, Jesus declares to the people in the synagogue at his home village, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' (v.21).

Two things leap out of this 'starting point' for Jesus' adult ministry. Firstly, Jesus' declaration that God's reign is to be fulfilled as the prophets said it would. The second thing is related: Jesus' declaration of purpose was a call to his hearers to join a new community. Just as Isaiah, of old, had been speaking to people in need of new hope and promise, so was Jesus. The work of God's kingdom was not simply about the Messiah, but it is an invitation to all to stand together and get involved.

Jesus would then gather his disciples, and the disciples would go out and gather more followers. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples and later the apostles, such as Paul would continue to build this new community of faith. A community focussed on sharing God's grace. Standing together as one in Christ.

Paul tells us in the letter to the Corinthians, that we "are the body of Christ and individually members of it". Paul is telling us that we each have our part to play in the work of God's kingdom – each a different part but nonetheless crucial one.

The context of Paul's writing to the church in Corinth is that he was responding to growing divisions amongst them in terms of theology, worship, religious practice and spiritual practice. It is a reminder to us of the challenges we often face when we think about unity and standing together as one. Like the Corinthians there is a risk that we start to think along the lines of unity being the same as uniformity, being in agreement or having the same views or common practices.

Paul sees something much richer in unity. A richness that builds on diversity and recognises differences. We are one in Christ but we are individual members and we have different gifts of the Spirit which we use for the good of the whole community. We stand together as individuals, but together we have one purpose. Through our different gifts and our diverse backgrounds we each contribute to the work of God's kingdom.

Paul does not see differences in the way that faith is lived as being a threat to unity but the foundation on which the church is built and central to Christ's message. It is what he describes as a "more excellent way" (v31). A way that allows us to explore deeply and unfold the meaning of Isaiah's words and accept Christ's invitation.

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

**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**

**Closing prayer:**

**Just as we are, Lord, we come;  
we gather to learn more of your ways.  
Help us to go out and be the body of Christ;  
to stand together with our neighbours;  
to bring the good news to the poor;  
to help set the oppressed free.  
In your strength and in your name, we pray.  
Amen.**

**Grace:**

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