**Transcript**

**Welcome**

I welcome you to this act of worship. Though dispersed, we are yet gathered to offer praise and thanksgiving. My name is Nick Bird, and I'm a parish priest serving on the edge of York. This service has been created by many people, for which I give thanks, and will also be shared with many people. So whether you are local or far from here, whether you have been busy at work or confined to your house, whether you are in the middle of things or feel pushed to the edge, you are most welcome to this service. Indeed, welcome is the theme of today's act of worship, and, sometimes, to be deeply and sincerely welcomed is just the balm our souls need.

**Introduction**

From the beginning of the universe, God has been mysteriously at work. This conviction is at the heart of the poetic stories of creation at the beginning of the Bible. God contemplates what he brings into being and blesses it: God sees how the whole of creation is good. The entire universe is deeply loved by God.

Sometimes we understand so little about God, but we can go forward in the confidence that God desires our happiness and welcomes us all, with no preconditions. God is the source of hospitality.

Still more, through Christ, God went to the point of becoming one of us, in order to draw humanity to himself and to welcome us. This hospitality of God towards us touches the depths of our souls: it overflows and goes beyond all human frontiers.

**Prayer**

Father God,

In the face of the perils which weigh on our time, help us not to be seized with discouragement. Help us to keep our hope alive and practice a spirit of wonder. Help us look around with our eyes and discern everything that can be admired. Help us to approach this service as a spring of living water that will help us grow in our trust of you.

Amen.

**Prayer from Iona**

You are the peace

of all things calm,

to hide from harm,

You are the light

that shines in the dark,

You are the heart’s

eternal spark.

You are the door

that’s open wide,

You are the guest

who waits inside,

You are the stranger

at the door,

You are the calling

of the poor.

You are my Lord

and with me still,

You are my love,

keep me from ill.

You are the light,

the truth, the way.

You are my Saviour

this very day

# **Hymn**

# **How Great Thou Art**

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder

consider all the works thy hand has made

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,

thy power throughout the universe displayed

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:*

*how great thou art, how great thou art.*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:*

*how great thou art, how great thou art.*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander

and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;

when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,

and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.

*Then sings my soul...*

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing

sent him to die, I scarce can take it in

that on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing

he bled and died to take away my sin

*Then sings my soul...*

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation

and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart;

when I shall bow in humble adoration,

And then proclaim: my God, how great thou art

*Then sings my soul...*

**Reflections**

God offers us hospitality, but it is by our free responses that it becomes a true communion with him.

Jesus shows us that God is love, offering us friendship. Humbly, Christ stands at our door and knocks. Like a poor man, he hopes for and awaits our hospitality in return. If someone opens the door for him, he will enter.

By a simple prayer, we give him access to our hearts. And even when we hardly sense his presence, Christ comes to dwell within us.

**Kyrie**

Lord Jesus, we have been slow to recognise your works

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, we have been slow to open our hearts to you

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, we have been slow to offer hospitality

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of love

bring us back to himself,

forgive us our sins,

and assure us of his eternal love

in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**.

**Collect:**

Almighty God,

you have broken the tyranny of sin

and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts

whereby we call you Father:

give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service,

that we and all creation may be brought

to the glorious liberty of the children of God;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.

**Readings:**

**Jeremiah 28:5-9**

5 Then the prophet Jeremiah replied to the prophet Hananiah before the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord. 6 He said, “Amen! May the Lord do so! May the Lord fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the Lord’s house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon. 7 Nevertheless, listen to what I have to say in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: 8 From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. 9 But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true.”

**Matthew 10: 40-42**

40 “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

**Reflection**

God’s hospitality to us is an appeal. Can we receive others, not as we would like them to be, but as they are? Can we let ourselves be welcomed by them in their own way, not in ours?

**Gwen Raines**

Before the impact of the coronavirus, offering a welcome was shaking hands or saying good morning etc. as this helps to emphasize that people mattered. However for me, I always preferred hugs. So during the last few months I have seen welcoming take on new significance, via a telephone call or technology, contact with others has been possible. And the initial reaching out has been a choice which has allowed us to welcome each other into our lives not only to share news, concerns, anxieties or fears but also to give a reassurance of love, care and compassion. We've evidenced this love in so many ways, from small but thoughtful deeds, to some amazing efforts and sacrifices willingly made to meet needs and to encourage and show care. Personally it's been a glimpse of how God’s new commandment to love one another as He loves us is being lived out and is truly love in action. In fact it is God's welcome being extended to us and through us. There is a line of a hymn which says there is a wideness in God’s mercy, but for me this can also translate to a wideness in God’s welcome. For it encompasses all that God is, creator, redeemer, friend, faithful, forgiving, willing to accept and receive us to listen and to bring us peace.

**Nicky Gladstone** - Carecent

One of the loveliest things about working at Carecent is the sense of welcome hospitality and community that just grows up from just about everybody there from the customers and the volunteers, there is a lovely atmosphere between people and a real shared welcome between us, so it has been quite a sad thing in lockdown because we haven’t been able to do that. We have doing what we can and we have been delivering packed lunches and giving out a few packed lunches to people at the gate to the people that have still come, and to be honest those times at the gate, the chats of the gate those have been the little bits of community that has remained, I do not know how we are going to get back to normal but it will be good to properly open the doors and share that hospitality between us again.

**David Safhill**

A friend of ours in Nottingham has suffered more than other people we know during this current pandemic. His wife was in the advanced stages of motor neurone disease when it started and they were both aware that she may no longer be able to hold and touch her grandchildren again. We rang them often at this time. On May 11 his wife died leaving him in a very isolated and dark place. We still call him regularly and we still laugh together as we always have, lifting both his and our collective spirits. We have received many texts from him saying how welcome our calls were. Often received by him at one of his lowest moments. For Margaret and I experiencing welcome during lockdown... it’s all about contact. During this sustained period of shielding we have welcomed the regular delivery of supermarket supplies from our son and his partner. The loan of jigsaw puzzles, giving us some mental stability and we have welcomed attention from each other that may in the past to be taken for granted. The cup of tea in bed, the cold drink together after a spell of gardening, but it is a few special things that have been most welcomed by us. A handwritten letter from our youngest granddaughter saying that she missed us and asking what we have been doing during lockdown. And finding on the doorstep a lovely hand-written coloured drawing by the little girl who used to live next door but now lives at the other end to the village saying that they too as a family all miss us. The cord held down on the steps by a bottle of wine for us to share. The unexpected arrival of our son and his fiance who had cycled over from York to see bringing cream cakes to share with them over a socially distanced coffee on the patio. A delivery van pulling up and dropping off a surprise gift. And finally we welcome the sight of Nick's face on youtube each Sunday morning inviting us to join him in an act of worship reminding us all that God is with us through all these difficult times. God wants to make contact with us. All we need to do is welcome him, and say thank you, to me that is really special.

**Homily**

For me, hospitality lies at the heart of the gospel story, it is the heart of the practice of Jesus of Nazareth, and is the heart of our understanding of what the 'Kingdom of God' is like – in essence, I think hospitality defines the nature of God. 'Welcome' is the character of God, it's the nature of grace, it is the practice of those who know they are loved.

Matthew 22.2, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a banquet', Jesus says in Matthew 22. A banquet which is hospitality on a grand scale.

Matthew 13.31. 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed'. Small and insignificant to begin with, easily falling into cracks and sewing itself into inconvenient places, but then growing and growing until 'the birds of the air make nests in its branches'. The kingdom provides shelter, creates a home and a community. More than that, according to Jewish law, some birds are clean and some are unclean. Jesus doesn't differentiate here, and all gather together.

In so many social situations, Jesus plays at being the host, even when he should really be acting the role of guest. Simon the Pharisee welcomed Jesus into his home, but the welcome was provisional and lacking. Luke 7 tells the story of how the roles get all switched around, and where Simon failed to greet this rabbi with a kiss, or provide water for washing or oil for anointing, it is the intruding woman of dubious virtue who supplants Simon as host, and with outrageous, sensual lavishness, washes the feet of Jesus with her tears, anoints and kisses them. And in by turns, Jesus welcomes, and indeed honours, this woman, becoming the host to both the hungry and the lost.

We never have to look far to see that gospel hospitality is the mark of both the kingdom and those who profess belief in its presence. To make someone unwelcome in the worshipping community is to perhaps imperil their immortal soul, it is to contradict the nature of God, and it is to forget the grace-filled hospitality with which we ourselves have been received.

To welcome the smallest and least in this world is to welcome the one who came into this world. And to welcome the god-man who took on our own flesh is to welcome the one who exists beyond time and space – the one whose very intent is to welcome us home.

**Song**

**Love Incarnate**

With a prayer You fed the hungry,

with a cry You stilled the storm;

with a look You had compassion

on the desperate and forlorn.

With a touch You healed the leper,

with a shout You raised the dead;

with a word expelled the demons,

with a blessing broke the bread.

Love incarnate, love divine,

captivate this heart of mine

till all I do

speaks of You.

As a sheep before the shearer

You were silent in Your pain;

You endured humiliation

at the hands of those You’d made.

And as hell unleashed its fury

You were lifted on a tree,

crying “Father God, forgive them,

place their punishment on me.”

Love incarnate...

I will feed the poor and hungry,

I will stand up for the truth;

I will take my cross and follow

to the corners of the earth.

And I ask that You so fill me

with Your peace, Your power, Your breath,

that I never love my life so much

to shrink from facing death.

Love incarnate...

**Intercessions**

Let us Pray

God of welcome and generosity,, you invite us into your family. to sit at your table and receive from you. Generous God, your love for us was so great that you sent your son to die in our place in order to redeem us. What generosity, what a welcome into a relationship with you

Lord let us all respond to your generosity and welcome

Father we pray for your guidance to leaders and those in authority as tentative releasing of measures take place. Let leaders unashamedly listen to your promptings as to the right way to proceed. Father, we pray for the people in countries that have little or no medical guidance ,let them know you never leave nor forsake them . We pray for the vulnerable, the refugee, the homeless, the poor and needy. Let us all open our hands and hearts in a willing and welcoming acceptance of their situation and where possible to help in whatever way we can.

Father in our communities and church families may we be more open to welcoming the generosity of one another. Let us be pleased to see and meet together in fellowship, let us encourage each other, especially our young church members.We remember the sick and bereaved in our communities and offer them to you for healing. Father, we pray we may be generous with our time in the service of others. May that service be non judgemental and freely given, taking care not only in what we say, but how we say it.

Give us discernment in when to listen rather than speak.

Generous God, clothe us with compassion to see need, clothe us with kindness in our service yet remaining humble, give us your gentleness or fearlessness as your mission demands..Let us forgive when wronged and be enveloped by your love .

**An individual prayer**

Father help me to live my life to the full, being true to you in every way. Help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet. Help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.

Amen

**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.

**Hymn**

**Come down, O Love divine**

recorded remotely by the Choral Scholars of St Martin-in-the-Fields in their homes, and edited together

1 Come down, O Love divine,

Seek thou this soul of mine,

And visit it with thine own ardour glowing;

O comforter, draw near,

Within my heart appear,

And kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

2 O let it freely burn,

Till earthly passions turn

To dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;

And let thy glorious light

Shine ever on my sight,

And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

3 Let holy charity

Mine outward vesture be,

And lowliness become mine inner clothing;

True lowliness of heart,

Which takes the humbler part,

And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong,

With which the soul will long,

Shall far outpass the power of human telling;

For none can guess its grace,

Till he become the place

Wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Discendi, amor santo Bianco da Siena (died 1434) translated Richard Frederick Littledale (1833-1890)

**Blessing and dismissal**

Creator God,

you give seed for us to sow,

and bread for us to eat;

make us thankful for what we have received

and generous in supplying the needs of others

so all the world may give you thanks and glory,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Blessing**

Creator God, you give seed for us to sow, and bread for us to eat; make us thankful for what we have received and generous in supplying the needs of others so all the world may give you thanks and glory,

**End with the grace**