

Worship Service

BY MICHAEL M. MASSAR

The Inklings shared a sense of awe before our Creator, though they fleshed out their reverence in different ways. For instance, C. S. Lewis was a member of the Church of England and worshiped with the little congregation in Headington Quarry. With his brother Warnie, he shared a pew at the early service, for he disliked a lot of organ music. J. R. R. Tolkien, a thoroughly committed Catholic, attended Mass with his wife in the Catholic churches in Oxford. Charles Williams seems to have had a lover's quarrel with the Church of England, dedicated to God but at odds with some of the forced discipline of church practices. Whatever their communion, the Inklings were devoted disciples who worshiped regularly.



JOYFUL, JOYFUL, WE ADORE THEE, GOD OF GLORY, LORD OF LOVE

Prelude:

"Trumpet Voluntary in D," Jeremiah Clarke

Meditation of Preparation:

O God,
 we come this day
 grateful for the gift of friendship
 and the grace it confers
 and the grace it inspires.

We thank You especially
 for the friendship of the Inklings,
 whose brotherhood seemed to enlarge
 their most amazing individual gifts.

Thank You for the agility
 of their minds and hearts
 that challenges us even today
 to look within and without
 for new means of seeing and believing.

We are indeed grateful
for their ways with words, thoughts, and deeds;
for their ways of expressing encouragement to each other
as well as initiating insights for improvement;
for their ways with You in commitment and care.

Dear Lord,
thank You for those Inklings' lives
whose coming together grants a model
by which brothers and sisters
can come together in reverent awe and unabashed praise.

In our gathering this day
grant to us the anticipation
of having our hearts and minds stretched
in the experience of Your Grace.

This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Expression of Fellowship

Choral Introit:

"I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes," John Rutter



HEARTS UNFOLD LIKE FLOWERS BEFORE THEE, OPENING TO THE SUN ABOVE

Hymn of Calling:

"The Triune God Our Safeguard Is"

The triune God our safeguard is
when evil foes assail;
no power can be compared with his,
nor demon powers prevail.

When scheming Satan's spiteful ire
burns hot against the saints,
He flings them in a furnace fire
till human courage faints.

But lo, in that distressful hour
One walks beside us there,
a righteous One whose Heavenly power
makes flame an Eden fair.

Thus God transforms the fire indeed
our natures to refine,
His loved ones from defeat are freed,
and crowned with joys divine.

J. Sidlow Baxter (1998)
Suggested Tunes: IRISH or ST. COLUMBA

Written in commemoration of the Centenary of C. S. Lewis's birth.
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Invocation:

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
we gather in this holy place seeking the inspiration
of your Holy Spirit.
We thank you for the Inklings,
those reminders of grace who lived among us,
who relied on your creative impulses to fashion images of grace
that still turn our hearts and heads toward you
and your Kingdom.
In that gratitude there stirs up within us the great desire
that we, too, might offer ourselves as vessels for your grace.
Grant to us your divine prompting we pray,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



MELT THE CLOUDS OF SIN AND SADNESS, DRIVE THE DARK OF DOUBT AWAY

Hymn of Confession:

“Before Thy Throne, O God, We Kneel”

Before Thy throne, O God, we kneel;
give us a conscience quick to feel,
a ready mind to understand
the meaning of Thy chastening hand;
whate'er the pain and shame may be,
bring us, O Father, nearer Thee.

Search out our hearts and make us true,
wishful to give to all their due;
from love of pleasure, lust of gold,
from sins which make the heart grow cold,
wean us and train us with Thy rod;
teach us to know our faults, O God.

For sins of heedless word and deed,
for pride ambitious to succeed;
for crafty trade and subtle snare
to catch the simple unaware;
for lives bereft of purpose high,
forgive, forgive, O Lord, we cry.

Let the fierce fires, which burn and try,
our inmost spirits purify:
consume the ill; purge out the shame;
O God! be with us in the flame;
a newborn people may we rise,
more pure, more true, more nobly wise.

William B. Carpenter (1841-1918)
Suggested Tune: SUSSEX CAROL

Meditation of Confession:

Every contrition for sin is apt to encourage a not quite charitable wish that other people should exhibit a similar contrition.

Charles Williams

Assurance of Pardon

Offering of Gifts

In Prayer

O God, take the offerings we bring and work a miracle with them.

Like bread and loaves, multiply their potential for grace.

In like fashion, dear Lord, work a miracle on those who share
their offerings.

Like Zacchaeus of old, who in his giving received
the redemption of grace,

may our giving infuse us with the joy of your salvation.

This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Meditation

The Christian way is different: harder and easier. Christ says, "Give Me all. I don't want so much of your money and so much of your work. I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to fill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will becomes yours."

C. S. Lewis¹

In Music:

"Air" from *Two Pieces*, Samuel Wesley

Witness of Scripture: Romans 8:20-25

Choral Worship:

"The Lord Is My Shepherd," John Rutter

Sermon:

"The Weight of Glory," C. S. Lewis²



GIVER OF IMMORTAL GLADNESS, FILL US WITH THE LIGHT OF DAY!³

Meditation of Commitment:

Frodo: I can't do this, Sam.

Sam: I know. It's all wrong. By rights we shouldn't even be here. But we are. It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were. And sometimes you didn't want to know the end. Because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened. But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines it will shine out the clearer. Those were the stories that stayed with you. That meant some-

thing. Even if you were too small to understand why. But I think, Mr. Frodo, I do understand. I know now. Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back only they didn't. Because they were holding on to something.

Frodo: What are we holding on to, Sam?

Sam: That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo. And it's worth fighting for.

*J. R. R. Tolkien*⁴

Hymn of Commitment:

"Imagination's Stream"

Do we think our minds can form
a world you do not know?
Is imagination's stream
an unknown river's flow?
God, you are the fountainhead,
you bid us stoop and drink.
We've just cupped our hands and dipped
when we begin to think.

In our minds we walk with you
through gardens yet unseen.
Caves on unknown planets wait
the light our thoughts will bring.
In the pages of your Word
we humbly place our feet,
wond'ring what our words would be
when face to face we meet.

Let our faith and thinking soar,
alive with hope and prayer.
Insights that the Spirit brings
illumine life's despair.
Deepest thoughts and highest hopes
in story and in rhyme;
inklings glimmer: heav'n on earth,
eternity in time.

Terry W. York

Tune: RANTON (pp. 52-53 of this volume)

*Benediction*⁵

God's blessing be yours,
and well may it befall you;
Christ's blessing be yours,
and well be you entreated;
Spirit's blessing be yours,
and well spend your lives,
each day that you rise up,
each night that you lie down.

Postlude:

"Allegro Maestoso" from *The Water Music*, George Frederic Handel

NOTES

1 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1943), 167.

2 C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Harper SanFrancisco, 2001), 25-46.

3 "Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee," by Henry J. van Dyke (1907).

4 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (*The Lord of the Rings*, part 2), 2nd edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 321.

5 From *Carmina Gadelica*, an anthology of prayers from the Scottish Highlands gathered in the nineteenth century by Alexander Carmichael.



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