

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Concepts of Darkness and Light in Church of England Advent Liturgy: Examining  
Anti-Blackness in the present cultural and liturgical context.

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MA in Theology, Imagination and Culture

SARUM COLLEGE

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This Independent Study has been completed as a requirement for a higher degree

of

The University of Winchester

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ABSTRACT

Racism has been acknowledged and increasingly challenged within society and the Church. The increasing prominence of anti-racism movements and a report highlighting institutional racism in the Church of England has led to calls for action. The Report, *From Lament to Action*, published in 2021 by the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Task Force, made recommendations covering all aspects of church life including worship and liturgy. Racism, white privilege, and colonialism are potential barriers to participation and this practical theology project was undertaken to investigate anti-blackness in Church of England Advent Sunday liturgy. This liturgy was selected because it contains the metaphoric use of the binary of darkness and light, which can be perceived as signifying black and white. Autoethnography indicated that the contrast between light and dark gave the strong impression that light was positive and good, joyful, and associated with the coming of Christ and dark was associated with evil, sin, death and despair and defeat. Six phrases of liturgy containing dark, and light were analysed using a postcolonial optic, which suggested the liturgy was re-enforcing white privilege and giving a negative view of blackness. The concepts behind the metaphors were provisionally identified and Bible references, associated with each liturgical phrase, were also subject to a postcolonial hermeneutic. The data accumulated were analysed using a corporate theological reflection model, to suggest new metaphors of relevance to the gathered church. This enabled alternatives for racist light/dark metaphors to be proposed including replacing darkness with gloom or shadow or only using light. The significance of light for Advent was acknowledged but use of gleaming, dawn, illumination may be helpful. Alternative metaphors for Advent were discussed including womb and soil. Changing the traditional theme of light/dark in Advent could enhance worship, make it more widely accessible and less racist but would require considerable further work to verify reception and reconstruct Advent liturgy appropriately.

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## Introduction

Sadly, racism is an ongoing issue of concern in society and the church but is currently being addressed by researchers and campaigners for equality and justice. The Church of England (CofE) is an organisation, along with many others, which has recognised that it not only harbours those who are racist but is itself racist. In recent years there have been published works highlighting racism and making recommendations for action including the most recent *From Lament to Action*<sup>1</sup> which identifies institutional racism and how to combat it in all areas of church life. Two years after this was published, the situation remains ongoing as Guy Hewitt, Racial Justice Director, acknowledged recently<sup>2</sup>. The report highlighted the need for urgent action in all areas of the CofE and one of the recommendations was to 'identify cultural barriers in worship and liturgical culture'<sup>3</sup>. The church is lacking the involvement of Global Majority Heritage<sup>4</sup> (GMH) people at all levels of responsibility<sup>5</sup>, which appears unlikely to change until racism is addressed. The premise of this research is that changes to liturgy could help increase GMH attendance, change church culture and diversify leadership.

Liturgy is a key component of Anglican worship, but a review of the literature described in chapter one of this dissertation indicated little had been published about

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<sup>1</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action. The Report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce' (Church of England, 2021), 1, <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/FromLamentToAction-report.pdf>. Accessed on 28th July 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Hattie Williams, 'Institutional Racism Is Still Very Pervasive Says CofE's Racial Justice Director', *The Church Times*, 12 May 2023, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/12-may/news/uk/institutional-racism-is-still-very-pervasive-says-c-of-e-s-racial-justice-director>. Accessed 28th July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 55.

<sup>4</sup> The term Global Majority Heritage abbreviated to GMH has been used throughout this work for consistency, rather than other terms such as UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) unless found in quotations, where the author's terminology will be used. The term encompasses all who would identify as non-white, including but not exclusively those who are black.

<sup>5</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 11.

liturgy presenting as anti-black and a barrier to participation. Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns<sup>6</sup> highlighted the lack of critical examination of the liturgy using a postcolonial hermeneutic and drew attention to the dark/light binary found in liturgy<sup>7</sup>. This binary has been linked to anti-blackness, where dark is perceived as black and light as white as described in chapter one of this study. Jagessar and Burns were the first to highlight postcolonial perspectives in Christian worship in 2014 and little further work has since been published. This project will address this paucity of research.

The most appropriate liturgy to investigate was found to be for Advent where the light/dark binary is frequently used. The liturgy selected was that for Advent Sunday and two distinct types of service, a morning Eucharist, and an evening carol service, were chosen and viewed online.

Methodology was crucial to the project and the overall approach used was practical theology, giving consistency throughout. I have therefore focussed on practice, experience, and reflection rather than on detailed interrogation of texts. The intended outcome was to provide data which could lead to proposing action(s). Practical theology was appropriate for this project, being principally concerned with people; their actions, their speech and their feelings and is organic and responsive<sup>8</sup>, potentially producing change in behaviour or thinking or faith practice. The two main practical theological methods used were autoethnography and theological reflection.

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<sup>6</sup> Michael N. Jagessar and Stephen Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial perspectives*, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Miller-McLemore, 'General Introduction,' in *The Wiley Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie.J. Miller-McLemore (Hoboken and Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2019), 2.

Practical theologians have grappled with racism, which is a complex field involving issues of whiteness, power, justice, race itself and discussion around ‘ontological reality’<sup>9</sup>. Phillis Sheppard asks a key question; ‘what do raced bodies require of our practical theology?’<sup>10</sup>. This question is relevant to this practical theological research on liturgy and will inform the conclusions drawn. An example of a practical theologian in the field of anti-racism is Anthony Reddie, who describes himself as ‘a participative black theologian’<sup>11</sup> with an activity orientated approach, where reflection and learning within the Christian community leads to new insights relating to black theology<sup>12</sup>, inspiring action.

Autoethnography, which combines ethnography and autobiography, has been described as a qualitative research tool which ‘seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)’ and is a ‘socially-just and socially-conscious act’<sup>13</sup>. An analytical approach to autoethnography can ‘investigate and theorize about the social world’<sup>14</sup>, providing data which has the potential to instigate change in the Church. This method therefore appeared suited to investigating anti-blackness in liturgy where the analysis would provide material for theological reflection giving a practical outcome. There are published examples of this method being used in a theological context to analyse personal experiences e.g., Cathy Ross and James Butler looked at

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<sup>9</sup> Phillis, Isabella Sheppard, ‘Raced Bodies,’ in *The Wiley Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie.J. Miller-McLemore (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2019), 144.

<sup>10</sup> Sheppard, ‘Raced Bodies’, 153.

<sup>11</sup> Anthony G. Reddie, *Is God Colour Blind? Insights from Black Theology for Christian Faith and Ministry*, Rev. ed. (London: SPCK, 2020), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Reddie, *Is God Colour Blind?*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, ‘Autoethnography: An Overview’, *Forum Qualitative Sozial Forschung/Forum Qualitative Social Research*, 12: 1. Article 10 (January 2011).

<https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/yppt20>. Accessed 10th November 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2014), 6–7.



'whiteness'<sup>15</sup>. Their research involved analysis of a conversation about an experience but illustrates the potential of the method.

The autoethnography process and findings have been described in chapter two. The main observation was that in the liturgy, darkness was always portrayed in a negative way and light was always positive and opposed to darkness. Six liturgical phrases containing the binary were identified and examined using a postcolonial hermeneutic. This hermeneutic was later applied to relevant Biblical texts as described in chapter three.

The term postcolonial was initially applied to literature but some theologians, notably Rasiah Sugirtharajah, recognised the value of applying it in Biblical studies where 'it seeks to uncover colonial designs in both biblical texts and their interpretations'<sup>16</sup>. This approach could be understood as a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' after Paul Ricour<sup>17</sup>. It is eclectic in nature, incorporating various theological approaches<sup>18</sup>, including that of black liberation theology<sup>19</sup>, with which it has a common aim of deconstructing white Eurocentric approaches which have historically dominated theology<sup>20</sup>. This was selected over other methods e.g., Critical Discourse

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<sup>15</sup> Cathy Ross and James Butler, 'Encountering Our Own Whiteness: An Autoethnographic Conversation on the Experience of Putting Together a Journal Issue around Mission, Race and Colonialism', *Practical Theology*, 15:1-2 (2022), 148–59.

<sup>16</sup> R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM, 2003), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009) 233.

<sup>18</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 71.

<sup>19</sup> Black liberation theology is described by Jagessar and Burns in *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 70-7, as broadly biblio-centric with a focus on contextualisation of the Bible. Prominent black theologian James Cone in *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990), 5, has noted the aim is 'to interpret the religious dimensions of the forces of liberation'. Anthony Carter in *Black and Reformed* (Phillipsburg: P and R Publishing Company, 2016), 36, claimed that black liberation theology is the theological expression of black power. He believes that it needs to be updated for today's world as in many Western countries the concern is more about equality than liberation but the need for the gospel to be accessible to all has never been greater.

<sup>20</sup> Anthony G. Reddie, *Working against the Grain: Re-Imagining Black Theology in the 21st Century* (London: Equinox, 2008), 50.

Analysis<sup>21</sup>, as there was a focus on metaphors, the liturgy was likely to reflect imperialistic and racist world views and the aim was to provide material for theological reflection.

Sugirtharajah described several advantages of postcolonial methodology with relevance to this project, including drawing 'attention to the effects of colonisation and the colonial ideals on interpretative works' and 'engaging in reconstructive reading'<sup>22</sup>. Lazare Rukunda found postcolonial biblical criticism could counter the silencing of the voice of the *Other*, meaning any marginalised group, as well as considering the context of the coloniser<sup>23</sup>.

Jagessar and Burns outlined three more advantages of a postcolonial theological perspective; upholding the equal dignity of all people, exposing 'imperial dynamics', and offering 'resistance to dominant supposed norms'<sup>24</sup>. They noted postcolonial studies had not been extended to worship texts, as most ongoing work in this area was in the field of 'inculturation'. This provides a sound foundation but leaves more to be researched<sup>25</sup>. They concluded that cultural appropriation became racist when a dominant group imposed its own cultural practices, as it assumes superiority over other practices. A postcolonial lens could expose this racism<sup>26</sup>. The use of postcolonial hermeneutics enables identification of anti-black sentiment in

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<sup>21</sup> Postcolonial criticism is not dissimilar to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of texts. Terry Locke in *Critical Discourse Analysis (London and New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 2004)*, 2, has said that CDA is a way to 'view the systematic analysis and interpretation of texts as potentially revelatory of ways in which discourses consolidate power and colonize human subjects'.

<sup>22</sup> Sugirtharajah, *Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology*, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Lazare S. Rukundwa, 'Postcolonial Theory as a Hermeneutical Tool for Biblical Reading', *HTS Theological Studies* 64:1, (2008): 340.

<sup>24</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 32.

biblical texts but can be applied more extensively<sup>27</sup>. This project used postcolonial hermeneutics to challenge conservative interpretations of liturgical and biblical texts and Eurocentric approaches and highlight discrimination and prejudice with the hope expressed by Jione Havea that this can help free liturgy from the control of imperialism<sup>28</sup>.

Randy Woodley defined white privilege as ‘a modern expression of white supremacy’<sup>29</sup>, involving control and power over structures, knowledge, and resources<sup>30</sup>, causing racist attitudes. Some authors have critiqued white privilege or whiteness from a white perspective. Cathy Ross and James Butler in an autoethnographic article recognised that whiteness is a ‘way of being in’ and ‘of seeing the world’<sup>31</sup> and is more than skin colour. They also cautioned about the influence of white fragility on feelings when reflecting on their experience of encountering structural racism<sup>32</sup>. Willie Jennings, writing from a black perspective on theological education in the USA, claimed whiteness is a way of thinking which restricts people from other cultures from expressing their views and understanding of God for themselves<sup>33</sup>. These authors suggest that regardless of skin colour, whiteness has dominated church life and culture and inhibited the diversity of expression and practice that could enrich churches. I am a white, European female and while it could be considered inappropriate for me to conduct this research, the

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<sup>27</sup> R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World. Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 259–65.

<sup>28</sup> Jione Havea, ‘Foreword,’ in Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*.

<sup>29</sup> Randy S. Woodley, *Indigenous Theology and The Western Worldview. A Decolonized Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 102.

<sup>30</sup> Woodley, *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview*, 101.

<sup>31</sup> Ross and Butler, ‘Encountering Our Own Whiteness: An Autoethnographic Conversation on the Experience of Putting Together a Journal Issue around Mission, Race and Colonialism’, 151.

<sup>32</sup> Ross and Butler, ‘Encountering our own whiteness’, 151.

<sup>33</sup> Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2020), 8–9.

recognition and consideration of how this could influence the results will enable this work to make a significant contribution in the field. The influence of whiteness and white privilege<sup>34</sup> has been considered where appropriate.

The results from the autoethnography and the postcolonial hermeneutical analysis were subject to reflection from a theological perspective which facilitates living out belief and communicating faith in ways which are relevant to culture<sup>35</sup>. The aim was to discern where the light/dark binary was supporting racism and suggest changes including the use of different metaphors. Anglican liturgy is based on Scripture and the postcolonial analysis of the associated Scriptures and metaphors was valuable in the reflective process. The reflection informed a practical response to the investigation of anti-blackness in Advent liturgy within the current context and is described in chapter three.

There are various methods for theological reflection, two of which were of particular interest: contextual and corporate. Contextual reflection involves recognition that culture can shape the reception and transmission of faith. It has a focus on the vernacular and using the language and idioms of a culture<sup>36</sup>. This has been used for liturgy but lacks universality and cohesion<sup>37</sup>, which limits its value in this project where suggested changes to liturgy require further investigation and eventually wide acceptance. Corporate reflection involves identifying and interpreting narratives that inform about community and its sense of purpose<sup>38</sup>, and the

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<sup>34</sup> White privilege has been described in detail by Peggy McIntosh in her 1989 essay 'White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible Knapsack'. <https://psychology.umbc.edu/files>. Accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

<sup>35</sup> Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2019), xi.

<sup>36</sup> Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 217.

<sup>37</sup> Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 235.

<sup>38</sup> Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, xx.

researcher working alone can produce an outcome for the Body of Christ<sup>39</sup>.

Corporate identity can emerge from narrative, symbolism, and rituals, as illustrated by work on increasing diversity, building the church community, and communicating faith<sup>40</sup>. The corporate reflection approach appeared suited to research centred on the corporate act of worship which can shape identity with the researcher immersed in the culture being observed<sup>41</sup>.

The work of corporate theological reflection within this project involved transforming the Body of Christ by identifying potential liturgical changes which could nurture the community of faith and more effectively communicate the gospel, similar to the aims outlined by Graham et al<sup>42</sup>. Mary McClintock Fulkerson has studied a multiracial congregation to examine issues of power and identity, using ethnography to observe the relationships between congregation members and her own position within it. She then reflected theologically on the experience using a corporate model. She suggests that this can become an ongoing, situational, and dialectical process<sup>43</sup>. Autoethnography, could therefore produce helpful material for reflection when used in a comparable way, exposing liturgy which represents the identity and the power of the dominant culture.

The corporate reflective process, described in chapter three, has drawn on selected liturgical phrases, Biblical texts, relevant literature, and key personal experiences from the autoethnography. It was shown that the repeated use of the metaphors of light and darkness in the Advent liturgy can reinforce stereotypes,

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<sup>39</sup> Graham, Walton and Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 119.

<sup>40</sup> Graham, Walton and Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 120–21.

<sup>41</sup> Graham, Walton and Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 147.

<sup>42</sup> Graham, Walton and Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 119.

<sup>43</sup> Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 234.

based on literature reports of darkness being associated with blackness and light being associated with whiteness.

Liturgy could encourage conformity to the false 'whiteness ideal'. It appears probable that the metaphors, now embedded in the liturgy and forming Anglican tradition, were originally chosen from Scripture with a biased/white privileged perspective, identifiable by postcolonial analysis.

There are relevant metaphors in the Bible which could avoid the repeated use of dark in a negative way and offer some alternatives including gloom, twilight and shadow/death-like shadow. The metaphor of light is potentially more difficult to change but suggestions have been made such as dawn, brightness, and illumination. When viewed from a postcolonial perspective these metaphors appeared less racist but require further evaluation by a wider group of people from diverse backgrounds. Metaphors were also identified which could convey the concepts of Advent e.g., womb or soil but would involve a fuller revision of the liturgy.

This project has highlighted that Advent Sunday liturgy containing the light/dark binary can be received as anti-black. Liturgical revision is needed to change the metaphors and convey more positives about dark/black and colour difference<sup>44</sup>. This could help dismantle white privilege and racism. While tradition may be an issue in changing established seasonal liturgy, worshippers could benefit from the enrichment of expanding the metaphors used during Advent. Jesus challenged tradition which was not honouring to God and caring for people<sup>45</sup>, as

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<sup>44</sup> Delroy Hall, *A Redemption Song: Illuminations on Black British Pastoral Theology and Culture* (London: SCM, 2021), 101.

<sup>45</sup> Mark 7:9-13.

should the church. The need for further research to progress this was also identified and suggestions made.

## Chapter One- Background and Context

A review of the available literature was undertaken to establish the background and context for the research reported in this dissertation. One significant area of investigation was the extent of racism in the CofE, and a key document was the recent CofE Report, *From Lament to Action*<sup>46</sup>, which identified institutional racism and made many recommendations including examining liturgical culture. The literature review also explored the significance of liturgy in church culture, liturgical language and the light/ dark dichotomy and links between liturgy and anti-black sentiment. The connection between light and white and darkness and black was also established. The most prominent authors in the field of critiquing liturgy and raising anti-black concerns were identified including Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns<sup>47</sup>, who have highlighted the lack of use of a postcolonial hermeneutic in liturgical studies. Finally, the choice of liturgy to critique for anti-blackness was investigated and the use of Advent Liturgy was proposed.

### ***Racism in the Church of England***

My concern about anti-black sentiment in liturgy began with reading *From Lament to Action*<sup>48</sup> produced by the Archbishop's Anti-Racism Task Force. This group was set up to implement 'significant cultural and structural change'<sup>49</sup> following the 2020 General Synod of the CofE which formally apologised for racism and the CofE's treatment of the Windrush generation. The Archbishop of Canterbury also

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<sup>46</sup>The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action'.

<sup>47</sup>Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 1.

<sup>48</sup>The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action'.

<sup>49</sup>The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 4.



acknowledged that the church was deeply institutionally racist<sup>50</sup>. The death of African American George Floyd at the hands of the police in the USA in May 2020 sparked international outrage, provoked many protests, and highlighted the Black Lives Matter Movement which had originated some years before in the USA<sup>51</sup>. The demonstrations and depth of feeling expressed, emphasised the need for the church to speak and act on racism and acknowledge its historic links to the slave trade if it was to be a 'credible voice to our nation'<sup>52</sup>.

Racism has been present in our society for very many years and the CofE has reflected this rather than opposed it, as illustrated by the treatment of the immigrant workers of the Windrush generation<sup>53</sup>. Churches rejected rather than welcomed those who came from the Anglican tradition overseas. There persists a sense that black people are not welcome<sup>54</sup> and the CofE desperately needs a culture change if it is to fulfil its mission 'to transform unjust structures'<sup>55</sup>, honour the marginalised and proclaim the good news of justice for all<sup>56</sup>.

Arguably today racism is less overt and more covert<sup>57</sup>, but remains deep rooted and pervasive. Over the last four decades several reports have been written about racism but there has been little structural change in the church. The tragic

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<sup>50</sup> Church of England, 'General Synod Votes to Apologise over Racism', 11 February 2020, 1, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/policy-and-thinking/our-views/anti-racism-taskforce>. Accessed 15th February 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Jermaine J. Marshall, *Christianity Corrupted: The Scandal of White Supremacy* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2021), 228–32.

<sup>52</sup> Carlton Turner, 'Could You Be Loved? BAME Presence and the Witness of Diversity and Inclusion,' in *Bearing Witness in Hope. Christian Engagement in Challenging Times.*, ed. Cathy Ross and Humphrey Southern (London: SCM Press, 2020), 101.

<sup>53</sup> Glynne Gordon-Carter, 'An Amazing Journey. The C of E's Response to Institutional Racism' (Church of England, 2003), 10, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/policy-and-thinking/our-views/anti-racism-taskforce>. Accessed 15th February 2023.

<sup>54</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 15.

<sup>55</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 8.

<sup>56</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 8.

<sup>57</sup> Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggen and Travis T. Judkins, 'African American Liberative Theologies,' in *Introducing Liberative Theologies*, ed. Miguel A. De La Torre (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 113.

death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 prompted a greater awareness of institutional racism within organisations including the CofE and many recommendations have been made. *From Lament to Action* adopts the definition of institutional racism from the Macpherson report<sup>58</sup> and lists 25 previous reports and 161 recommendations concerning racism<sup>59</sup>, mostly institutional racism. Those reports and their recommendations, published between 1985 and 2020, which were examined by the Task Force, are listed in the Appendices of the *From Lament to Action* Report<sup>60</sup>.

*From Lament to Action* references 'institutional racism' as being concerned with 'structures, systems, and processes'<sup>61</sup> and is embedded such that it is evident in various areas of the church's life including participation and representation<sup>62</sup>. There is recognition that racism is a sin, that the church is called to establish justice, confront evils in society, work towards establishing a 'forgiven and reconciled community of grace' and be enriched through diversity<sup>63</sup>.

This report has been broadly welcomed including by GMH clergy<sup>64</sup> and laity such as Chine McDonald who expressed the strong desire to see action as a result<sup>65</sup>. The Dioceses have begun to look at the issues e.g., a Racial Justice Focus Group was set up in Guildford Diocese and some actions have been taken but much

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<sup>58</sup> William MacPherson, 'The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry' (London: Home Office, 1999), 6.4, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-stephen-lawrence-inquiry>. Accessed 2nd February 2023. The definition given: 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.'

<sup>59</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 59.

<sup>60</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 59–69.

<sup>61</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 51.

<sup>62</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 11.

<sup>63</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 7.

<sup>64</sup> E.g., Revd. Narinder Tagelly, quoted on the Bath and Wells Diocesan website [From Lament to Action - Bath and Wells Diocese](#). Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023.

<sup>65</sup> Chine McDonald, 'From Lament to Action-Antiracism in the Church of England', 21 April 2021, <https://www.chinemcdonald.com/blog/from-lament-to-action-anti-racism-in-the-c-of-e>. Accessed 2nd February 2023.

remains to be done. There has also been criticism of aspects of the report e.g., by Ian Paul<sup>66</sup> but not of the fact that change is needed. Criticism tends to be about terminology, the issues around favouring and promoting GMH individuals over other ethnic groups and the logistical challenges of implementation. The impact of institutional racism in the CofE is clear from other publications, including *Beyond the Lych-gate*<sup>67</sup>, which show that GMH Christians avoid the CofE and attend church elsewhere and other reports note the lack of GMH clergy in senior positions<sup>68</sup>. The more personal impact of racism on CofE priests from a GMH background has been described in e.g., *Rejection, Resistance, Resurrection: Speaking out on Racism in Church*<sup>69</sup> and *Ghost Ship*<sup>70</sup>. Unsurprisingly most of those writing about racism in the CofE are black British Christians who are rightly arguing for transformation. As a recent report suggests GMH clergy still experience exploitation and exclusion and suffer from the impact of white power on the culture of the church<sup>71</sup>. *We need to talk about Race*, has articulated the extent to which racism in church mirrors that in society rather than confronts it<sup>72</sup>. The black theologian James Cone, amongst others,

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<sup>66</sup> Ian Paul, 'How Should the Church Respond to Race?' *Psephizo*, 30 April 2021, <https://www.psephizo.com/life-ministry/how-should-the-church-respond-to-race/>. Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Sanjee Perera, 'Beyond the Lych-Gate; a Strategic Diagnostic of Church Culture and Practices That Marginalise and Disenfranchise Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic People in the Church of England' (Parts 1 and 2) *Anglicanism.Org. 2020 [Online Paper]*, <https://Anglicanism.Org/Wp-Content/Uploads/2020/07/Sanjee-Perera-Part-2-Edited1.Pdf>. Accessed 29th January 2023.

<sup>68</sup> The Archbishop's Council, *I too am CofE: A follow-up to unfinished business matching words with action* (London: Church House Publishing), 2016, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> Mukti Barton, *Rejection, Resistance and Resurrection: Speaking Out on Racism in the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2005).

<sup>70</sup> A.D.A. France-Williams, *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 190.

<sup>71</sup> Selina Stone, 'If It Wasn't for God: A Report on The Wellbeing of Global Majority Heritage Clergy in the Church of England', Living Ministry Focussed Study 3 (Church of England, 2022), 66. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/202210/Focussed%20Study%203%20GMH%20Clergy%20Wellbeing.pdf>. Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023.

<sup>72</sup> Ben Lindsay, *We Need to Talk about Race. Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches* (London: SPCK, 2019), 5.

maintains that racism affects communities and needs addressing in that way<sup>73</sup>.

Encouragingly, in 2022, Emma Ineson, a white CofE bishop, mentioned racism in her book 'Failure' and wrote 'it is insufficient simply to be not racist myself' and recognised that she along with our society has benefitted from 'colonialism, racism and oppression'<sup>74</sup>.

*From Lament to Action* acknowledges that a key barrier to full inclusion has been 'cultural assimilation'<sup>75</sup>, leaving little opportunity for cultural expression other than that of the white middle class. This can cause failure to recognise and express where anti-blackness is present in the normal practices of the church, including in worship. The desire to fit in by those engaging with the CofE means loss of cultural enrichment.

### ***The Significance of Liturgy***

One of the recommendations in *From Lament to Action* was to 'identify cultural barriers in worship and liturgical culture which act as disincentives to participation'<sup>76</sup>. This small section of the report highlights a significant area where work is needed to facilitate worship being accessible for all and it is implicit within the report that liturgy may support institutional racism. Liturgy is not neutral and that of the CofE originated in white European culture.

Liturgy is described in various ways as is the significance it can have. From an Anglican perspective Michael Perham has written that liturgy includes all aspects

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<sup>73</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990), 113.

<sup>74</sup> Emma Ineson, *Failure: What Jesus Said about Sin, Mistakes and Messing Stuff Up* (London: SPCK, 2022), 82.

<sup>75</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 54.

<sup>76</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 55.

of worship, and its purpose is to 'enable the people of God to worship together'<sup>77</sup> which is a foretaste of heaven e.g., described in Revelation 7.9<sup>78</sup>. This broader description of liturgy is not universally accepted and for the purpose of this dissertation hymns, anthems, Bible readings and intercessions will only be mentioned to provide context. These have been excluded for reasons of simplicity, brevity and they will vary more between services in different churches and in subsequent years than the written texts which are intended to be spoken and delivered consistently. Gail Ramshaw has used the term liturgy in a similar more restricted way and has used the term 'liturgical language' to focus on the words used in corporate Christian gatherings<sup>79</sup>. This is a helpful precedent which I have followed. When using the term liturgy, I am primarily referencing written text. When analysing texts using autoethnography, the context of the liturgical words has been included; music, some symbolism and Bible readings are described where seemingly relevant. Ramshaw challenged churches to make liturgical language both 'metaphoric and inclusive' and to work towards her ideal that liturgy is the expression of all the people of God without silencing some voices<sup>80</sup>. This research is a response to this challenge.

Perham has a high regard for liturgy which, my experience suggests, reflects a traditional Anglican view. He contends that liturgy has a wider role than the primary one of enabling worship. It may teach<sup>81</sup>, draw people into a life of faith, grow

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<sup>77</sup> Michael Perham, *New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 2000), 3.

<sup>78</sup> Revelation 7.9-17 describes 'people from every nation, tribe, peoples and languages' worshipping God and his Son, the Lamb. This and all Bible References have been taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford: OUP. 1989).

<sup>79</sup> Gail Ramshaw, *Liturgical Language: Keeping It Metaphoric, Making It Inclusive*, American Essays in Liturgy (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>80</sup> Ramshaw, *Liturgical Language*, 10.

<sup>81</sup> Perham, *New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy*, 4.

community<sup>82</sup> and give a measure of self-understanding<sup>83</sup>. Other researchers have emphasised that liturgy can influence how oppressed groups perceive themselves<sup>84</sup>. Sheppard has described liturgy as the work of the people of God aiming for transformation and has movingly compared the ritual of liturgy with lynching; the work of white people to transform a black body<sup>85</sup>. This points towards the power of ritual to normalize racialised behaviour and hence the power of liturgy to normalize perceptions. These insights I believe apply to the written text as well as the broader liturgical context and suggest that the significance of seeking to understand whether liturgy is perceived as anti-black is considerable<sup>86</sup>.

Liturgy has come under some scrutiny by theologians such as Jagessar and Burns who have been critical that liturgy and practice do not reflect the newer theologies including black and postcolonial<sup>87</sup>. They have bemoaned the fact that liturgical studies and postcolonial criticism seem to have been regarded as separate strands and have set out to put the two into conversation which they claimed was ground-breaking<sup>88</sup>. This has provided significant insights. They suggested a complex relationship between church, empire, and worship, such that Anglican liturgy contains imperialistic and Eurocentric influence<sup>89</sup>. There is therefore a bias towards

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<sup>82</sup> Claudio Carvalhaes, 'Liturgy and Postcolonialism: An Introduction,' in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives. Only One Is Holy*, ed. Claudio Carvalhaes (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

<sup>83</sup> Perham, *New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Ruth Edmonds, 'How Might Church of England Liturgies in Advent reinforce or undermine Imperial-Colonial or White Supremacist Discourses?: A Critical Discourse Analysis Using St Martin-in-the-Fields Broadcast Morning Prayer Service for the Third Monday in Advent (14 December 2020) as a Case Study.' (MA Dissertation, unpublished, The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, 2021), 11.

<sup>85</sup> Sheppard, 'Raced Bodies', 147.

<sup>86</sup> Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*, 8–9.

<sup>87</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 3.

<sup>89</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 22-23.

whiteness in liturgy, and postcolonial research is essential for showing where this is the case, but limited further work has been published.

Liturgical studies have focussed on a range of areas including theology and ecclesiology. For the purposes of this research the principal areas of interest are the ways in which liturgy can shape the church community and how church congregations respond to liturgy. The need for more inclusive language in liturgy was initially recognised by white feminists including Ramshaw, who also noted the issues around the use of black for the devil or evil<sup>90</sup> and comments that while skin colour is labelled black and white, the church should not use these labels to denote 'divine displeasure or the opposite'. Ramshaw is arguably the first scholar to explore issues of light and darkness in liturgy.

The importance of accessible liturgy has been stressed by Jagessar and Burns who make the case that worship should be inclusive to help all feel that they belong in the church<sup>91</sup>. Possibly multiple metaphors<sup>92</sup> used in a variety of ways may be needed to achieve that. Another idea which has been tried to make liturgy more accessible is inculturation, which enables liturgy to reflect a non-white-European understanding, at least to some extent. Anscar Chupungco has discussed cultural adaptation and inculturation and has explored this in both Roman Catholic and Lutheran liturgy<sup>93</sup>. He has suggested two methods by which this has occurred; Creative Assimilation, involving what can be added to liturgy from culture, and Dynamic Equivalence where the existing liturgy is the starting point and culture can

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<sup>90</sup> Ramshaw, *Liturgical Language*, 42.

<sup>91</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 50.

<sup>92</sup> Ramshaw, *Liturgical Language*, 33.

<sup>93</sup> Anscar J. Chupungco, 'Liturgical Inculturation: The Future That Awaits Us,' *Valpo.Edu*, 2016, <https://www.valpo.edu/institute-of-liturgical-studies/files/2016/09/chupungco2.pdf>. Accessed 10th February 2023.

further develop it<sup>94</sup>. Jagessar and Burns recognise the importance of inculturation but suggest that it is not sufficient alone and a postcolonial approach is needed to produce 'reconfigurations'<sup>95</sup>, which seems to be more in keeping with the aspirations of the Archbishop's Task Force<sup>96</sup>. Canon Mark Poulson has also recently promoted 'interculturalism' rather than multiculturalism<sup>97</sup>, as this is the ideal whereby the church benefits from and is enriched by all cultures.

More widely in society, there has been an ongoing debate about integration, assimilation, and the expectations upon GMH communities to abandon their own cultural heritage and current expression in favour of traditional host approaches. Outside of the CofE, GMH communities have enriched and influenced church culture in a way that has not happened in CofE churches, possibly because of white domination of the hierarchical structures. Other churches have produced liturgies which are 'pursuing more authentic cultural and liturgical contextualisation'<sup>98</sup> but many continue to rely on 'spelt binaries' including light and darkness linked to the 'history of oppression'<sup>99</sup>. Awareness of post-colonial influences on liturgy will be a key area to pursue in reflecting on the outcome of the autoethnographic report.

### ***Tradition and the Scriptures***

Jagessar and Burns have reflected on the impact of Anglican tradition on liturgical development, which is not inconsiderable. They have recognised that this is

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<sup>94</sup> Chupungco, 'Liturgical inculturation: The Future that awaits us'.

<sup>95</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 36.

<sup>96</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 54.

<sup>97</sup> Williams, 'Institutional Racism Is Still Very Pervasive Says CofE's Racial Justice Director'.

<sup>98</sup> Stephen Burns and Bryan Cones, 'Introduction: The Vivid Richness of God's Image.' in *Liturgy with a Difference. Beyond Inclusion in the Christian Assembly*, ed. Stephen Burns and Bryan Cones (London: SCM Press, 2019), xiii.

<sup>99</sup> Burns and Cones, 'Introduction: The Vivid Richness of God's Image' in *Liturgy with a Difference*, xiv.



rooted in *The Book of Common Prayer*<sup>100</sup>, (BCP), first produced in 1549 and updated in 1662, and which has ‘imageries of light and darkness’. Their claim, which requires further investigation, is that this can ‘marginalise dark-skinned people and create false stereotypes’<sup>101</sup>. The BCP was written by people with a particular world view, which could include white imperialistic attitudes and an acceptance of slavery. All theology is done within a context<sup>102</sup> and it therefore follows that this will also be true for the creation of liturgical text.

Tradition is regarded by many adherents as important to CofE practice and self-understanding and plays a significant part in determining what is deemed acceptable for worship. Liturgy can be seen as integral to the tradition of a church. As an Anglican priest who leads liturgical worship regularly, I relate to the challenge expressed by Jagessar and Burns that the tradition used to critique newer liturgy should itself be examined in the light of postcolonial and other contemporary concerns to create more awareness of the sources of that tradition<sup>103</sup>. Tradition cannot be merely pushed aside but needs careful critique with a view to transformation. It is important to recognise that ‘tradition has always played a determining role in theological understanding and liturgical practices’<sup>104</sup>. Tradition is handed down through the generations and is a strong influence. This can mean that liturgical theologians often act as ‘keepers of tradition’ instead of ‘organic theologians’<sup>105</sup> who recognise that liturgy should be malleable, subject to scrutiny and not used by one group as a tool of power to control what is regarded as

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<sup>100</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, Standard edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.).

<sup>101</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 22.

<sup>102</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 22-23.

<sup>103</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 5.

<sup>104</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 133.

<sup>105</sup> Claudio Carvalhaes, *What’s Worship Got to Do with It? Interpreting Life Liturgically* (Eugene, Origen: Cascade Books, 2018), 7.

orthodoxy and to silence dissenting voices<sup>106</sup>. Christianity has long been Eurocentric in thought, theology has taken a Eurocentric perspective<sup>107</sup> and more radical postcolonial theologians have suggested that Western Christianity has made Africans worship a 'European crafted idol'<sup>108</sup> rather than the true God. There are calls to widen our vision of God and enrich our worship by valuing the contributions of all. Claudio Carvalhaes has produced liturgies 'from the bottom up' after immersing himself in marginalised communities of faith around the world<sup>109</sup>. This may suggest that CofE liturgies might be better revised by local, diverse faith communities than a Liturgical Commission.

The CofE is a church rooted in Scripture and much of the liturgy is based on passages from the Bible. Different ways of interpreting Scripture are found within the Anglican church and time will not permit a detailed critique of these or how they have influenced the understanding of passages which support the use of dark and light in liturgy. However, the use of a postcolonial optic, as described in the Introduction, will assist in identifying some key points about appropriate use of the metaphors and possible changes which might be consistent with this.

### ***The Light and Dark Binary***

There is a prevalent linguistic dichotomy between good/positive represented by white and bad/negative represented by black or dark. This dialectic is an issue because it is pervasive and covers the ontological where 'light is being and darkness

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<sup>106</sup> Carvalhaes, *What's Worship Got to Do with It?*, 7.

<sup>107</sup> Miguel A. De La Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 56.

<sup>108</sup> Emmanuel Yartekwei Lartey, *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 125.

<sup>109</sup> Claudio Carvalhaes, *Liturgies from Below. 462 Acts of Worship. Praying with People at the Ends of the World* (Nashville: Abingdon press, 2020), 8.

nothing'<sup>110</sup>, descriptive e.g., white clouds are good and black clouds are threatening, emotive e.g., black mood or light mood and the spiritual e.g., white magic and black magic. The colours reflect character or nature so the black sheep is a metaphor for a bad person, the black market is illegal, black magic is evil, the devil is often depicted as black, while white is linked to purity, perfection, cleanliness and can be associated with holiness e.g., white altar cloths. There are also links to power in the use of white e.g., The White House in the USA. Language is powerful and the black/white colour binary 'favours whiteness and condemns blackness'<sup>111</sup> and hence light and dark skin can be judged accordingly. People are often afraid of the dark, being unable to see what or who is around them. Light is felt to be needed to reassure or protect under some circumstances. Jagessar and Burns contend that white imagination has transferred this fear of the dark to ethnic groups. Language has been used to control and oppress. Hence language can be used to create 'representations' but these are not value free and convey messages that can be harmful<sup>112</sup>. Andrew Prevot rightly maintains that it is necessary to critique the use of light in expressions of faith and challenge where there are risks of turning lightness into an idol or a support for white supremacy<sup>113</sup> but light imagery is Biblical, well received by some black faith communities and deeply entrenched in tradition and is not therefore easily changed. Prevot believes that darkness as a symbol of the demonic is avoidable though and that neither Scripture nor theology give reason to 'vilify darkly coloured embodiment'<sup>114</sup>. Lawrence Rodgers also pointed to the need for black people to 'let

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<sup>110</sup> Andrew Prevot, 'Divine Opacity: Mystical Theology, Black Theology, and the Problem of Light-Dark Aesthetics,' *Spiritus* 16 (2016): 166.

<sup>111</sup> Marshall, *Christianity Corrupted: The Scandal of White Supremacy*, 237.

<sup>112</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 40–41.

<sup>113</sup> Prevot, 'Divine Opacity: 'Mystical Theology, Black Theology, and the Problem of Light-Dark Aesthetics', 166.

<sup>114</sup> Prevot, 'Divine Opacity,' 166.

go of the false dichotomy of goodness and evil based on whiteness and darkness as it relates to skin colour<sup>115</sup>. This necessitates the scrutiny of liturgy as it can potentially enforce whiteness, white privilege and the false dichotomy described.

Jagessar and Burns affirm the views of Mukti Barton who contends racism is undergirded when black is used negatively and white positively, which arises from a European interpretation of the Scriptural images of light and dark<sup>116</sup>. Barton argues that in English blackness and darkness are not used in a distinctive way, unlike in some other languages<sup>117</sup>. Gay Byron highlights that ancient Christian writing which influenced early liturgy has 'ethno-political rhetoric' to link darkness and blackness with threat to the dominant culture and then darkness became strongly associated with sin and light with being freed from sin<sup>118</sup>. Consequently, Jagessar and Burns conclude that this imagery is still influential and because signifying is not neutral, it can be used by the signifier to express power and 'otherness'<sup>119</sup>.

Jagessar and Burns describe an experience of an act of worship which they found uncomfortable. It was trans-denominational; the Women's World Day of Prayer (2005) where there was extensive use of light imagery, both in the liturgical text and in the symbolism<sup>120</sup>. They have examined this in subsequent discussions using a postcolonial theological optic which they found illuminating and helpful for critiquing the use of light in contrast to dark in liturgy.

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<sup>115</sup> Lawrence W. Rodgers, 'Consequence of Language: Resisting the Linguistic Assault on Darkness', 2018. <https://btpbase.org/consequence-of-language-resisting-the-linguistic-assault-on-darkness>. Accessed 10th June 2023.

<sup>116</sup> Mukti Barton, 'I Am Black and Beautiful', *Black Theology: An International Journal* 2.2 (2004): 167.

<sup>117</sup> Barton, 'I am Black and Beautiful', 168.

<sup>118</sup> Gay L. Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 50.

<sup>119</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 39.

<sup>120</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives* 37.

Joelle Kidd<sup>121</sup> has reported the experiences of a black Canadian church leader, Adele Halliday who has experienced liturgy as anti-black. Halliday described a church she attended where phrases such as ‘washed white from blackness of sin’ were often used which she found alienating, with potential to perpetuate prejudice, damage self-image and harm her spiritually, yet she felt she lacked power to speak out. Halliday is now working to discourage the use of dark and black as synonyms for evil and words like white or light as equivalent to goodness. Halliday comments that society has internalised notions of light and dark as good and evil and this dichotomy supports racism, prejudice etc., which can be unconscious rather than conscious<sup>122</sup> but clearly liturgy can feed into that. She supports the view that liberation theology should involve the elimination of anti-blackness in the church’s liturgy. She suggests more diversity of use of black and light e.g., use darkness in positive ways, while recognising that liturgical phrases often originate with Scripture. This view is supported by John Hull who, while primarily writing about being blind, has described God as beyond light and darkness<sup>123</sup> and so has challenged the association of God with light against darkness. This can clearly be applied to the liturgical use of light to depict God and dark as his absence.

### ***Why Advent Liturgy?***

As mentioned previously Jagessar and Burns experienced an ecumenical service involving the symbolism of light<sup>124</sup>. Some of their insights are pertinent to the Advent liturgy and show how the use of the symbolism was received at a personal

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<sup>121</sup> Joelle Kidd, ‘Rethinking Darkness and Light,’ *Anglican Journal*, 10 February 2021, 1, <https://anglicanjournal.com/rethinking-darkness-and-light/>. Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

<sup>122</sup> Adele Halliday, ‘Speaking of Darkness in Advent’ (25 November 2020), 1. <https://united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/speaking-darkness-advent25>. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

<sup>123</sup> John M. Hull, *In the Beginning There Was Darkness* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 132.

<sup>124</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 38.

level. The use of candles, light and dark in liturgy and passages of Scripture, along with the hymns, gave them the impression that the light was positive and dark negative. When seen through an understanding that light is white, and dark is black it caused concern<sup>125</sup>.

Advent Liturgy is used for the four Sundays before Christmas and for Morning and Evening Prayer during this period. Advent in England comes when the days are getting shorter and the nights longer, when the church looks forward to and is preparing for the celebration of the coming of the 'Light of the World' at Christmas, which corresponds to the days beginning to lengthen. One or two others have looked at Advent liturgy e.g., Ruth Edmonds who looked at imperial-colonial and white supremacist discourses in CofE Advent Morning Prayer Liturgy<sup>126</sup>. Halliday has addressed Advent Liturgy used by the United Church of Canada<sup>127</sup> and expressed concerns that binary notions of darkness and light within it are projected onto people, so that congregations see white people as good and black people as evil. The accompanying symbolism of candles representing the coming of Jesus who disperses darkness<sup>128</sup> can add to this perception.

A scarcity of published material suggests that the Sunday Advent liturgy used in CofE worship has not been critiqued to any great extent and so I have selected services used on Advent Sunday<sup>129</sup>. Although there are a range of services held on this day, the Eucharist and the Advent carol service were chosen as using standard liturgy unlike e.g., Christingle services.

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<sup>125</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives* 38.

<sup>126</sup> Edmonds. Unpublished MA Dissertation, The Queens Foundation, Birmingham, 2021.

<sup>127</sup> Halliday, 'Speaking of Darkness in Advent', 1.

<sup>128</sup> Halliday, 'Speaking of Darkness in Advent', 1.

<sup>129</sup> Advent Sunday is also known as the First Sunday of Advent.

## **Summary**

This brief review of the available literature has established that the current church context is one with a prevalence of institutional racism, also common in other organisations, and the recognition of the need to act. The social context is one where anti-racism movements and lobbying have been making an impact. The witness and voice of the Church is being silenced by the existence of racism in various forms.

The language and metaphors used in liturgy appear to reinforce bias and anti-blackness, which could prevent participation for some and exclude a rich diversity of cultural heritage. The issue that has been raised by Jagessar and Burns and some other authors relates to the use of light and dark in liturgy signifying good/holy and evil/bad as this dichotomy supports anti-black sentiment and white privilege. Advent liturgy and symbolism features light and dark and although some work has been done on this, no publications report a detailed scrutiny of Advent Sunday liturgy. This was the focus of this project, with a view to examining how I received the Advent liturgy using autoethnography as described in chapter two and then data from this analysis along with other material was subjected to theological reflection as described in chapter three.

## Chapter Two- Analysis of Advent Sunday Liturgy

### *Autoethnography: The Approach*

In the previous chapter, the review of published literature showed that institutional racism has persisted in the CofE and established the need for a project of this nature to investigate anti-blackness in Advent liturgy. In the Introduction a case was made for the use of an autoethnographic approach to critically examine the reception of liturgy and in this chapter the process has been described. Two different Advent services were chosen and those parts of the liturgy referring to both dark and light were critically evaluated.

The method involved recording and analysing my personal feelings and reception of Advent Liturgy through watching two services online. Both services were recorded and available on YouTube for some time, which was a practical necessity. While reception of services online differs from when physically present, evidence suggests that it can be a valid worship experience, as suggested by earlier personal experience of worship mediated by technology and by authors such as Teresa Berger who has argued the case for this<sup>130</sup>. This approach could be complimented by research into the reception of Advent Liturgy by those attending services in person.

The selected services were publicised as Advent Sunday Services and were held by two different CofE settings, Holy Trinity Guildford, and Truro Cathedral. The services were of two distinct types, one a morning service which included a celebration of the Eucharist and one an evening service which was advertised as an Advent carol service. These were chosen as being the most common types of

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<sup>130</sup> Teresa Berger, *@Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds.*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2018).



service available for that Sunday. They also used published liturgy online for Advent Sunday which I previewed to ascertain that these services had reference to light and dark and in such a way as to contrast them. As outlined in the previous chapter light and dark can be seen to symbolise white and black which will have significance in understanding the reception of these services.

The term liturgy could cover every part of the worship including hymns<sup>131</sup>, but for the purposes of this research it has been taken to be the published non-musical texts, in agreement with Ramshaw<sup>132</sup> and to provide greater consistency. In reporting my personal reactions to the services, I paid particular attention to the texts such as prayers, collects, introductions and formal sentences which comprise the liturgy, but I have also described the context in more general terms as is appropriate for an autoethnographic method of responding to the experiences of the services. The method enabled a description and analysis of my feelings and thoughts experienced while watching the services, followed by consideration of the experience in the light of context and with reference to published research. Phrases which were identified as anti-black were those with the light/dark binary and these were then examined using a postcolonial optic, as previously described.

All the material of relevance was examined using a theological reflection method, which will be reported on in the next chapter, although inevitably some theological reflection has informed the analysis reported here. Chapter three will also report on an examination of relevant Bible texts using a postcolonial hermeneutic, which will assist in the reflection process.

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<sup>131</sup> Perham, *New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy*, 4.

<sup>132</sup> Ramshaw, *Liturgical Language: Keeping It Metaphoric, Making It Inclusive*, 5.

Autoethnography is regarded by Heather Walton as a way of using experience as a lens through which to examine a concern of 'wider cultural or religious significance'<sup>133</sup>, and is a useful resource for theological reflection. Therefore, it is well suited to this practical theological investigation. The method can involve various approaches, some broader than others, but in this instance, it was used to research a particular personal experience within a church context to supply material for reflection. Self is the basis of this research and data source and hence is 'the guarantor of authenticity'<sup>134</sup>.

There are some potential problems with this approach including the fact that it cannot be overgeneralized as the researcher's background, ethnicity and role will influence the experience. Validation is therefore difficult and cannot be conceived of in a strictly scientific way, being more subjective in nature. Careful investigation of relevant literature and cultural influences can help ascertain whether it could be applicable more widely. Further investigation through interviews and group discussion, could produce results capable of triangulation which would provide a measure of verification, but this was not possible within the constraints of this project.

This research into CofE liturgy and anti-blackness was prompted by an increased awareness of institutional racism in the CofE. I had identified that racism in liturgy was a potential problem from belonging to the Racial Justice Focus Group in Guildford Diocese. The group was set up in anticipation of the publication of the Archbishops Taskforce Report in 2021 and began by prioritising the 47 recommendations. Issues around clergy, leadership and education dominated but it

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<sup>133</sup> Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, xxxi-ii.

<sup>134</sup> Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, 3.

was clear that we were not engaging with church culture in all its dimensions. There are many barriers to full participation for GMH communities and these include liturgy<sup>135</sup> and its reception as well as 'cultural assimilation'. This can exclude cultural expression outside of the dominant culture which is predominantly white and middle class. The liturgical culture of the church was potentially preventing GMH communities from feeling welcome, included, and able to fully contribute. This called for investigation.

I came to this research as a white, middle-class female, and hence I recognise that there could be both cultural and personal biases. There are people of mixed race in my family which has alerted me to some issues around discrimination and I have also become increasingly aware of white privilege and how this has benefitted and shaped me. History at school was taught from a colonial perspective highlighting the benefits the Empire had brought to the countries subsumed within it in a non-critical manner as described by Sugirtharajah<sup>136</sup>, and our atlases displayed swathes of pink on political maps indicating areas belonging to the British Empire. Living in Uganda for five weeks in 2017, increased my awareness of some issues arising from colonisation and I experienced being an obvious minority in church settings. Another epiphany moment came in November 2021 when a power cut during Sunday worship, plunged us into semi-darkness. During the confession<sup>137</sup> as we said 'lead us out of darkness' all the lights came back on. Power was restored.

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<sup>135</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action', 55.

<sup>136</sup> R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology*, 99.

<sup>137</sup> Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour, in what we have thought, in what we have said and done, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have wounded your love and marred your image in us. We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past, and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen.

This experience highlighted the words and emphasised the contrast between light and dark, grace and sin in the liturgy.

I approached this study then with biases of various kinds including those from earlier experiences and those associated with white privilege. The decision to look at light and dark within the selected services means that my perspective cannot be neutral for I approached this with a particular focus. However, neutrality is not attainable. All research is approached with bias, which is significant in qualitative research and needs to be acknowledged<sup>138</sup>. Recognition of this is important, and I believe this research can supply helpful information concerning the racist potential of liturgy but will require verification.

### ***The Advent Sunday Services***

As outlined previously two services were selected: a Eucharistic morning service at Holy Trinity Guildford<sup>139</sup> and an evening Advent carol service at Truro Cathedral<sup>140</sup>. These were both accessed by YouTube the following day and then revisited as necessary to confirm facts. The orders of service were downloadable. The link for the Truro cathedral service enables the liturgy to be accessed but at the time of writing the liturgy from Holy Trinity Guildford was no longer available online and has been provided as an Appendix. The autoethnographic report has been prepared from notes taken during the first viewing. The emphasis was on the

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<sup>138</sup> Valerie J. Janesick, 'The Dance of Qualitative Research Design,' in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage Publications Ltd, 1994), 212.

<sup>139</sup> [10am Advent Eucharist - Sunday 27th November 2022 \(Holy Trinity Church, Guildford\) - YouTube](#). Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

<sup>140</sup> [Truro Cathedral - Advent Carol Service](#). Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

experience of light and dark in liturgy and on symbolism which helped provide the context.

### ***Autoethnography: Holy Trinity Guildford-10 am Eucharist***

This service is available on YouTube (see footnote<sup>139</sup>) and the text is in the Appendix.

The setting for the service was a traditional Anglican Church, which was dimly lit but not dark with a bright star positioned over the altar and small 'fairy' lights decorating the chancel entrance. Those leading the service processed in behind the cross and then sat in the chancel area. They were white skinned and wore either white surpluses (choir) or cassock albs (servers, crucifer, clergy) although one of the clergy had the purple cope over the white. They were seated in front of an altar with a white cloth on top of the purple altar covering and as usual in Anglican churches, the Communion linen was all white. The others taking a prominent part in the service were all white people apart from one black reader and from what could be seen of the congregation there were four non-white faces. Visually the context was of white being linked to holiness and leadership. The hymns were seasonal with a greater emphasis on the second coming of Christ than on light and dark and the words were not clear in the recording. I felt they didn't influence my reception of the liturgy and as mentioned in chapter one, I have restricted the research to liturgical text following the work of Ramshaw<sup>141</sup>.

Towards the beginning of the service the Advent candle was lit, and the accompanying liturgy mentioned living 'by the light of faith' and 'Christ, a lamp to our

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<sup>141</sup> Ramshaw, *Liturgical Language: Keeping It Metaphoric, Making It Inclusive*, 5.

feet and a light to our path'<sup>142</sup>. The implication for me of the first phrase was that faith gives light and of the second that we walk in darkness without Christ and need him/his light to see to walk safely and well. However, darkness was not explicitly mentioned. The setting added to the impression that darkness causes us to falter and stumble but light draws us towards it and the safety it/Christ offers. I felt the appropriate response was not to stay in darkness but to seek light, especially as the words and setting drew my attention to light and it felt more attractive than dark. The final line of the prayer brought in a link between light, salvation, and God and this was re-enforced by the next part of the liturgy which mentioned God's anger and our sin.

The opening liturgy seemed to indicate our need to be rescued from sin and the implication was that sin, like darkness can be dispelled by light. This theme continued in the Introduction to the Confession and contrasted light and darkness<sup>143</sup>. I felt it expressed that darkness hid sin while light revealed it, and the sinless Christ was the light which overcame the darkness. There was also a sense that light was associated with truth, purity, and holiness. The Confession and Absolution did not mention light or darkness but mentioned sin.

The Collect followed, which encouraged the idea that we need to 'cast off darkness' and 'put on the armour of light'<sup>144</sup>. This again suggested darkness was

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<sup>142</sup> Advent Candle Liturgy. Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever! You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path: for you are our light and our salvation. Advent Service booklet, 1.

<sup>143</sup> Introduction to Confession. 'When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness; and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.' Advent Service booklet, 6.

<sup>144</sup> Collect for the First Sunday of Advent. 'Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility: that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to life immortal: through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever'. Advent Service booklet. 14.

bad/evil and that it would trap us. Light however was good, protected us from evil and from judgement and led to eternal life. The same phrasing was also found in the Epistle reading<sup>145</sup> which immediately followed and so it was re-enforced. The Gospel reading<sup>146</sup> continued the idea by suggesting the darkness of night was dangerous as it concealed those who have evil intent i.e., the thief. Without the liturgy before this, as previously described, I doubt I would have felt so strongly, but I was left with the overall impression that the liturgy and readings pointed to both God and goodness being in the light or being light, while darkness was evil or harboured evil. The Collect was also repeated after the Intercessions with the congregation saying it, giving further emphasis.

The Intercessions kept to the theme of Jesus being light and dispelling darkness and the Introduction to the Peace<sup>147</sup>, which followed, again had reference to light and darkness. Jesus was described as the 'dayspring from on high' which seemed a more general reference describing Jesus as the dawn and so associated with the coming of light but also gave a sense of new beginning and fresh start. This was then narrowed down in the next phrase to Jesus being 'light to those who dwell in darkness'. There was also a link between darkness and the shadow of death suggesting to me the possibility that where light is blocked to form shadow there cannot be life. Shadow though seemed less about blackness and more about absence of light, which might be worthy of further consideration. There was also the statement about light guiding us into peace which seemed to suggest that darkness

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<sup>145</sup> Romans 13:11-14.

<sup>146</sup> Matthew 24:36-44.

<sup>147</sup> Introduction to the Peace. 'In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high shall break upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace.' Advent Service booklet, 16.

leads us away from peace and might be suggestive of fear or conflict or chaos. Light, not dark, brings peace.

The Eucharistic Prayer which followed contained little reference to light or dark. There was a phrase coming just after the Sanctus depicting God as being holy and 'enthroned in splendour and light'<sup>148</sup>, which again made light seem holy and pure. Later in the prayer as is usual in Anglican Liturgy the betrayal of Jesus is described as happening at night<sup>149</sup> which again could suggest darkness enables evil.

Jesus is also referred to as the 'Light that is coming into the world' in the Post Communion Prayer<sup>150</sup> and that context suggested that light is associated with the great positives of love, celebration, and the Holy Spirit. We are waiting for light and hence are in darkness.

The final referencing of light and dark came in the Blessing<sup>151</sup> where Christ is described as the 'Sun of Righteousness' which seemed to make Christ the source of light and of righteousness. He is the one who can disperse the darkness. We need to come out of darkness and leave it behind to enter the light and meet with Christ in his glory. It seemed we cannot meet Christ in darkness.

The overall impression given, reinforced at the end of this service, was that light is good, holy, powerful, and victorious while darkness is the opposite i.e., bad, sinful, lacking power and can be/needs to be defeated. Christ is not present in darkness. The impact of the words was made greater by the context, the lighting,

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<sup>148</sup> Excerpt from Eucharistic Prayer; 'Lord God, you are the most holy one, enthroned in splendour and light'. Advent Service booklet p20.

<sup>149</sup> Advent Service booklet, 22.

<sup>150</sup> Post Communion Prayer. 'God of Abraham and Sarah, and all the patriarchs of old, you are our Father too. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Son of David. Help us in preparing to celebrate his birth make our hearts ready for your Holy Spirit to make his home among us. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Light who is coming into this world.' Advent Service booklet, 29.

<sup>151</sup> The Blessing. 'Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing..' Advent booklet, 32



and the repetition of some phrases as well as the gradual addition of more concepts e.g., towards the end of the service, the Post Communion Prayer and the Blessing held out hope that the light is coming to get rid of darkness and bring righteousness.

### ***Postcolonial Hermeneutic: Holy Trinity Guildford Eucharistic Liturgy***

Four phrases were identified where the contrast between light and dark had the potential to support racist attitudes and these are given below along with a brief outline of the results of the autoethnography and comments from a post-colonial perspective. A postcolonial approach was suggested by Jagessar and Burns<sup>152</sup>, to help find where there was or had been a colonial influence on the formation of liturgy and how this might affect its reception. More detail about this method and the rationale for the use of this hermeneutic can be found in the Introduction.

#### *Invitation to Confession*

When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness; and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins<sup>153</sup>.

This was experienced, as described in the autoethnographic analysis, as darkness concealing or covering sin, which was revealed by light. The sinless Christ was the light who overcame the darkness and revealed the truth. The light was also associated with purity and holiness, which was consistent within all the liturgy used. The concept which the light /dark metaphors appeared to be conveying, was the hiddenness of sin, revealed by Christ.

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<sup>152</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 1.

<sup>153</sup> The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), 300. The Advent Service Booklet,6.

A postcolonial lens suggests 'Lord' has colonial 'master' connotations and reflection indicates that because the Lord/master has authority to expose the things of darkness, it could be inferred that this applies to the purposes of hearts hidden under black skin. This could be seen as light and hence white judging the hearts of non-whites. Judging others is contrary to the teaching of Christ<sup>154</sup> and as Ineson noted, summarising the views of James Cone, 'white people are not able to comment on the sins and experiences of black people'<sup>155</sup>. This phrase, when seen in this way, supports white moral and spiritual control.

### *The Collect*

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life<sup>156</sup>.

These words, implied to me that darkness is bad/evil and can trap us. Light can protect us from evil and from judgement and is more powerful than darkness. The concept was taken as the need to be freed and then protected from evil/sinful deeds. Darkness could be seen as holding us in its grip and light as being our protection after we have been freed through God's grace.

A postcolonial perspective on the use of 'Almighty' links power to overcoming dark deeds, whereby light/white has power over dark/black, which affirms white power. The reference to casting away the works of the darkness suggests that the customs, cultures, and religious expressions of black people need to be put aside and replaced with those of white. The use of 'armour of light' suggests that white

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<sup>154</sup> Matthew 7:1

<sup>155</sup> Ineson, *Failure: What Jesus Said about Sin, Mistakes and Messing Stuff Up*, 84.

<sup>156</sup> The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, 376. The Advent Liturgy Booklet, 14. The words of the Collect for the First Sunday in Advent are as in footnote 143.

needs defending from black. As this mirrors the phrase from the Epistle reading<sup>157</sup> used in the service it could be taken as referencing the Roman army, a colonial and oppressive force and so could potentially justify colonial armed aggression and oppression. It could also encourage the inculturation of people groups, as it suggests Indigenous culture belongs to the dark and is inferior to that of the light, and could devalue black identity.

This is therefore a sentence of liturgy which could be received in such a way as to promote white supremacy and anti-black sentiment.

### *The Introduction to the Peace*

In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high shall break upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace<sup>158</sup>.

This section of liturgy indicated the coming of light will bring a new beginning to those in darkness. The association between darkness and the shadow of death could suggest that where light is blocked to form shadow there cannot be life, although light is needed to produce shadow. When in the light, not in the shadow there is peace but, in the shadow/dark there can be fear or dread or chaos. The concept portrayed could be summarised as the beginning of a new era in which evil/sin and death or disaster will be overcome, and peace or wellbeing will prevail. Light is associated with hope, new life and peace, while darkness is depicted as undesirable, a place of waiting, without life, peace or God.

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<sup>157</sup> Romans 13:12. 'The night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light;'

<sup>158</sup> The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, 300. Advent Service Booklet, 16.

A postcolonial lens suggests that sitting in darkness, in the fear of death, while waiting for light to guide us towards a better way could portray waiting for the supposed benefits of colonisation e.g., freedom from the darkness of ignorance, protection from death, an imposed peace. This resonates with the claim by Kwok Pui-Lan that ‘imperial logics’ have ‘sustained theology’<sup>159</sup> and should be exposed. This also suggests that darkness is associated with those without Christ and condemns black culture(s) and religion.

### *The Blessing*

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and ....<sup>160</sup>.

This is the final sentence of liturgy having light and darkness where Christ is described as the ‘Sun of Righteousness, the source of light and of righteousness. Christ is/gives the light to disperse the darkness which prevents us meeting with Christ. Light is associated with Christ, with righteousness and being ready to meet Christ and darkness is portrayed as blocking being with Christ.

A postcolonial lens suggests that white is right/right with God and black is in error. Darkness could be seen as an obstacle or problem which cannot withstand the light of Christ. This could give the perception that black is not good enough for encountering God in Christ and black cannot resist white. White has power over black, giving victory, again supporting white supremacy, and portraying black and

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<sup>159</sup> Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Politics and Theology: Unravelling Empire for a Global World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2021), 14.

<sup>160</sup> The Archbishops’ Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, 301. Advent Service booklet, 32.

black culture(s) as inferior or not worthy to meet with Christ or unworthy in other ways, supporting racism.

***Autoethnography: Truro Cathedral- 6pm Advent Carol Service.***

This service and the liturgy can be accessed on YouTube (see footnote 140).

Although not part of the liturgy the downloadable order of service had an explanation of Advent and highlighted 'light amidst darkness' as the first of three themes listed<sup>161</sup>. Reading this before the service may have sensitised me/congregation members to light and dark in the service. This could influence the experience of the liturgy giving the expectation that Christ is light and that light is associated with divinity and hope while darkness is associated with worldly sin, despair, and tragedy. This was my expectation as the service began, based on the pre-service information, my earlier reading, and experiences but I would not have been unique in this.

The visual setting of the cathedral included very low lighting and extensive use of candles in the processions and amongst the congregation. The light was brighter for the choir, service leader and readers for obvious reasons but did give the impression that you were in the light if in leadership or chosen for a role. This could convey a link between superiority and light and white, with white people deciding what everyone received and delivering it. The congregation though had chosen to be there and receive what was being offered and seemed complicit. The camera often focussed on a candle again emphasising light. There was also an impression of

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<sup>161</sup> Extract from the Introduction. **Light amidst darkness.** The service is held in candlelight. Although most people assume that candlelit services produce a certain atmosphere, nevertheless the use of candles liturgically has ancient Christian origins. In St John's Gospel Jesus refers to himself as 'the Light of the world' (8: 12) and this theme is developed further as the divine light of Christ banishes the darkness of worldly sin. It has also become a widespread tradition for vigils to be observed with the use of candles, the light symbolising hope for the future amidst the darkness of despair and tragedy. The other themes were Prophecy and Expectation and Procession and Movement. Advent Carol Service, 2.

white near the altar, suggesting holiness as the choir and clergy surpluses were white and the background to the altar was white. As far as could be seen those wearing white or reading were all also white. It was hard to tell the ethnic composition of the congregation, but they appeared predominantly white and wearing darker winter clothing. This latter gave the impression that dark was kept at a distance from the sanctuary and holiness.

This service mostly consisted of music, principally choir pieces and hymns. There were also Bible readings<sup>162</sup> which drew on both Old and New Testaments and essentially described the promised salvation which was to come in Christ. These and the setting were the primary influence on reception, with the words of the liturgy being minimal and seemingly of lesser significance.

The hymns sung, as in the order of service, contained positive references to light and the need to dispel darkness. *Come thou Redeemer of the Earth*, had the lines 'Thy cradle here shall glitter bright, and darkness breathe a newer light, where endless faith shall shine serene and twilight never intervene', and *O come O come Emmanuel* had the verse 'O come o come thou Dayspring bright! Pour on our souls thy healing light; Dispel the long night's lingering gloom and pierce the shadows of the tomb'.

There were also references to dark and light in some choir pieces and so the context in which the liturgy was heard was suggestive of light being associated with the coming of Christ and with faith, healing, and life while dark and gloom were to be banished or transformed and were inferior to light.

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<sup>162</sup> Genesis 3:1-15, Isaiah 6:1-8, Isaiah 52:7-10, Haggai 2:6-9, Isaiah 35:1-6, Luke 1:26-28, Mark 1:1-15.

The words of the liturgy complemented the hymn words and choir pieces and seemed to echo them on occasion. Parts of the Bidding Prayer, said towards the start of the service, contained some lines of note<sup>163</sup>, in particular the two phrases 'those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death', and 'freed from all evil and fear' were in stark contrast to 'in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God'.

It suggested to me that good things such as healing and restoration, joy and love were associated with the light and darkness was linked to death, despair, fear and evil. Mentally referring to the Advent theme of dark and light, I felt that waiting for the coming of Christ, was waiting for the light whilst being in darkness and/or gloom. Gloom was how I would describe the dark of the cathedral and sombre nature of the service. Gloom seems a more neutral word than darkness, implying lack of/inadequate light but not blackness. This use of gloom rather than darkness could be helpful for further reflection. The music that followed, although not joyful was uplifting and seemed to highlight the need for gloom to recede.

The Collect did not reference dark or light but part of the Blessing<sup>164</sup> pronounced towards the end of the service had these words; 'May God the Son, .... reveal to you the path from darkness to light.' This implied to me that Jesus came to reveal to those in darkness the path of light. Hence being in darkness is undesirable and a way out is needed. A more detailed description of the impact of these words has been given for the Eucharistic service, where similar words were used.

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<sup>163</sup> Extract from Bidding prayer. Let us celebrate the promise that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will bring all people and things into the glory of God's eternal kingdom. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. But first, let us pray for the world which God so loves, for those who have not heard the good news of God, or who do not believe it; for those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death; and for the church in this place and everywhere, that it may be freed from all evil and fear, and may in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God. Advent Carol Service p4.

<sup>164</sup> Extract from the Blessing. May God the Son, who comes to us as Redeemer and Judge, reveal to you the path from darkness to light. Advent Carol Service, 18.

As in the previous service the impression I was given was that light is good, holy, and superior and was associated with faith, healing, restoration, joy and life while dark and gloom were to be banished or renewed and were markedly inferior to light. The use of gloom rather than dark was potentially of value and seemed to fit the environment of the cathedral.

### ***Postcolonial Hermeneutic: Truro Cathedral Carol Service Liturgy***

Two liturgical texts were identified where the contrast between light and dark had the potential to support racist attitudes and these are given below along with a brief outline of the issue and comments arising from the post-colonial examination.

#### *Text from the Bidding Prayer*

for those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death; and for the church in this place and everywhere, that it may be freed from all evil and fear and may in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God<sup>165</sup>.

It was noted previously that there is a marked contrast between ‘those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death’, and those ‘freed from all evil and fear’ who ‘in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God’.

The text of this section of the prayer, describes the time of waiting for Christ, the light, whilst in darkness, living with sickness, incapacity, poverty and in fear of death. As mentioned earlier the setting was one of gloom, as was the mood set by the earlier phrases of this prayer and in this context the church was seeking to be

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<sup>165</sup> Extract from the Bidding prayer. Let us celebrate the promise that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will bring all people and things into the glory of God’s eternal kingdom. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. But first, let us pray for the world which God so loves, for those who have not heard the good news of God, or who do not believe it; for those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death; and for the church in this place and everywhere, that it may be freed from all evil and fear, and may in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God. Advent Carol Service p4.



free to respond in joy to the coming of Christ and be a light in the world. This would make the church the holder of the light. The main concepts here seem to be concern for those who have not believed the gospel, and so live in or are trapped in a world of evil and fear and the contrast with those who are set free, the church, who will know the joy of the love of God. Hence darkness is depicted as evil and apart from God, while light is joyful and is linked with the love of God.

From a postcolonial perspective the marked contrast between light and dark was suggestive of a power dynamic whereby dark and its hold on people is vanquished by light. Light is depicted as dominant over dark as described previously but here the church is involved. The church, with a history of colluding with slavery and as a self-confessed institutionally racist organisation, is promoting light/white, praying against, and wishing to be freed from darkness/blackness rather than embracing diversity.

### *The Blessing*

May God the Son, who comes to us as Redeemer and Judge, reveal to you the path from darkness to light<sup>166</sup>.

The blessing suggested that Jesus came to reveal to those in darkness the path of light. Hence darkness is negative and needs to be left behind with the help of Christ. Similar words were used in the 10am Eucharistic Service about the path from darkness to light. The concept here could be of the need for revelation from Christ to save us from judgement. Darkness obscures the way to redemption and light is the revelation of that way.

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<sup>166</sup> The Archbishop's Council, *New Patterns for Worship*, 2nd ed. (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 304. Advent Carol Service, 18.

As mentioned earlier colonialism could be envisaged as showing people the path from dark to light, from an inferior to a superior way of living and threatening judgement on black lifestyles. Christianity in this way could be seen as encouraging white supremacy.

The use of Redeemer has overtones of slavery and of buying freedom, but it is a common descriptor of Christ as redeeming us from slavery to sin and death. It could be avoided in this liturgy where darkness has been portrayed in such a negative way.

### **Summary**

The contrast between light and dark was a key theme within the liturgy in both services. The overall impression for light was positive; being good, joyful, desirable, and associated with the coming of Christ, whilst dark was negative; associated with evil, sin, death, and despair and to be left behind or defeated. The liturgy alone conveyed this, but when combined with the visual setting the message was more powerful.

The amount of liturgy in the Eucharistic service was greater, but there was more which did not include light and/or dark while in the carol service, liturgy was limited but only the Collect and Lord's prayer did not have the light/dark metaphors. The pre-reading for this service invited people to look for the light/dark theme and portrayed them as being in contrast. This suggested that people would be engaging with this service with a bias towards light.

The liturgy and the setting of both services seemed to be re-enforcing white privilege as well as giving a negative view of blackness. Those who were white and dressed in white were more in the light, seemed closer to God both spatially and spiritually and were in leadership roles. Those in the dark were recipients of what

was offered, lacked any control over proceedings, needing to be rescued as they were powerless themselves. They appeared to have been disempowered by being excluded from the light and by the prominence of white in positions of authority. This was a reminder that neither liturgy nor symbols are value free and can convey the concepts and reveal the power of dominant cultures<sup>167</sup>.

Darkness was clearly linked with negatives as described and this was emphasised by the contrast with light which was associated with all the opposites. Where only light or dark was mentioned alone the emphasis was diminished. Dark and light being negative and positive are familiar concepts and they are easily accepted as 'normal'. The significance of the binary had only impacted me once I had consciously linked dark with black or light with white, although I may previously have done so unconsciously. But now that I had made the link, I readily identified a major issue. The underlying message I received from the liturgy and context was that black is bad and white is good. In all the liturgy in the two services I experienced I did not note a single positive reference to dark or a negative reference to light. Gloom and shadow were mentioned as was dawn and dayspring and these metaphors came across as more neutral and would be important to reflect on.

The next chapter will examine these experiences and the results of analysing the text using theological reflection. The phrases will also be assessed in the light of any relevant Bible verses. In this way suggestions for changing potentially racist or imperialistic phrases using the light /dark metaphors can be made, while recognising that further research will be needed for validation.

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<sup>167</sup> Jagessar. and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 46.

## Chapter Three- Corporate Theological Reflection

### *The Process*

In this chapter the corporate model of theological reflection has been used to draw together the outcomes of the autoethnographic analysis described in chapter two, the literature review in chapter one and some relevant passages of Scripture. Much CofE liturgy is based on Scripture, which gives it authority<sup>168</sup>, and may incorporate phrases from it e.g., the Collects for Advent Sunday<sup>169</sup>. Hence Scripture is an important source of metaphor and concept for the liturgy. The Bible verses from which the metaphors may have originated were subject to postcolonial analysis prior to the exploration of alternative metaphors.

The autoethnographic analysis showed that the contrast between light and dark was a key theme within the liturgy in both services. This in addition to the context gave a strong impression that light was positive, good, joyful, and associated with the coming of Christ, while darkness harboured or represented evil, sin, death, and despair. Christians were encouraged to leave behind darkness in anticipation of Christ defeating it. Associating darkness with black, as evidenced from the literature cited in chapter one, suggested that black was associated with evil, inferiority and separation from God. Associating white with light seemed to reinforce white privilege. Use of either light or dark separately contributed to the impression made by the dichotomy but was less significant, hence the focus in this chapter on dark and light occurring together.

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<sup>168</sup> Jagessar, Michael N., 'Holy Crumbs, Table Habits and (Dis)Placing Conversations-beyond Only One Is Holy.', in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives. Only One Is Holy*, ed. Claudio Carvalhaes, Postcolonialism and Religions (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 228.

<sup>169</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 47-48 and *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, 449.

The overall impression that six key phrases of the liturgy made have been summarised from the data in chapter two. Metaphor is used to help in understanding abstract concepts and some of these were identified. In Scripture generally light is used as a metaphor in various ways e.g., referring to God<sup>170</sup>, to Jesus<sup>171</sup>, the people of God<sup>172</sup>, salvation<sup>173</sup> and judgment/revealing sin<sup>174</sup>. The Advent liturgy additionally uses Scriptural concepts of light or light coming into darkness for the incarnation<sup>175</sup> and/or second coming of Christ<sup>176</sup>. Darkness is used in opposition to light and is a metaphor representing many negative concepts such as sin<sup>177</sup>, Satan<sup>178</sup>, evil<sup>179</sup>, ignorance<sup>180</sup>, falsehood<sup>181</sup> and death<sup>182</sup>. Fernando Segovia, using a postcolonial hermeneutic, has suggested that darkness and light are used to refer to two contrasting and opposing kingdoms; that of God and that of Satan<sup>183</sup>, forming an underlying theme which may have supported colonial interests.

The six phrases identified from chapter two were linked with Bible texts which echoed the metaphor used and aided in identifying the concepts portrayed. Postcolonial aspects of these Bible texts were identified but they were not scrutinised in detail due to the limitations of the project. The corporate reflection model was then used to reflect on all these findings to show the impact on

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<sup>170</sup> Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 60:19.

<sup>171</sup> John 8:12.

<sup>172</sup> Isaiah 60:3, Matthew 5:14.

<sup>173</sup> Acts 26:23.

<sup>174</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:5

<sup>175</sup> Luke 1:79 & 2:32, John 1:5 & 9.

<sup>176</sup> E.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5.

<sup>177</sup> Romans 13:12-13.

<sup>178</sup> Acts 26:18.

<sup>179</sup> John 3:19.

<sup>180</sup> Ephesians 4:18.

<sup>181</sup> Ephesians 4:8-9.

<sup>182</sup> Matthew 4:16.

<sup>183</sup> Segovia, Fernando F., 'The Gospel of John,' in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 191.

community<sup>184</sup> and provide suggestions for alternatives. Although the narrative in this instance was primarily liturgical text, it has been shown that liturgy can shape a congregation and inform identity<sup>185</sup>.

The practical outcome of the reflective process involved identifying different metaphors which could potentially replace light and darkness, to change corporate reception of the liturgy, while maintaining a traditional Advent theme or proposing a new theme which was sympathetic to the season. The light/dark metaphors and the concepts they portrayed found in six phrases from the Advent Sunday Liturgy were used in the theological reflection process. Each of the phrases was examined individually, the outcomes summarised, and further reflection undertaken on possible new metaphors. In the reflective process account was taken of relevant church and cultural contexts.

The literature review had identified contextual information of relevance to the corporate reflection process including institutional racism within the CofE, which has been acknowledged and work to overcome this has begun. England has a racially diverse society where racism is acknowledged as an issue and the black population are finding a voice. Colonialism has shaped national institutions, including the church, and strongly influenced culture. White privilege is increasingly being recognised and black and white binaries are coming under scrutiny as it becomes clearer that light/darkness can be associated with white/black. The contexts of the services have been detailed in chapter two.

The reflection process described below has suggested that currently used Advent Sunday Liturgy supports racist and white privilege attitudes as well as

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<sup>184</sup> Graham, Walton, and Ward, *Theological Reflection Methods*, 119.

<sup>185</sup> Perham, *New Handbook of Pastoral Liturgy*, 4.

undermining the identity of those who are black. It is postulated that the liturgy was compiled by those of a white privilege background with their own biases leading to the tradition of extensive use of the binary of light and dark. Other metaphors conveying various concepts associated with Advent are underused and suggestions for change have been made.

### ***Theological Reflection: Experiences, Concepts, Scriptures, Suggestions***

*When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness; and will disclose the purposes of the heart.*<sup>186</sup>

This was experienced, as described in the autoethnographic analysis, as darkness concealing or covering sin, and light revealing sin. A key concept conveyed by the light /dark metaphors, was the hiddenness of sin, until revealed by Christ.

Common Worship<sup>185</sup> indicated the source of this liturgy as 1 Corinthians 4:5, although the preceding verses are significant<sup>187</sup>. Paul was writing to the Corinthian church about being judged, concluding that only the Lord can judge, we can neither judge ourselves nor others. It is primarily the link between light, disclosure, judgement, and Lord which can support racial oppression and black inferiority from a postcolonial perspective. While the things 'now hidden in darkness' could be good or bad<sup>188</sup>, the use in the liturgy leading into confession, is suggestive of darkness hiding sin/evil and being complicit with it. Other Biblical references appear to support this

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<sup>186</sup> Invitation to Confession. The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), 300. Advent Service Booklet,14.

<sup>187</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:1-5. Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God.

<sup>188</sup> Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Revised, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: IVP, 1985), 74.

view e.g., Ephesians 5:8-12<sup>189</sup> which describes the deeds of darkness as unfruitful and needing exposure. John's Gospel links darkness with evil and presents light as exposing evil deeds e.g., John 3:19-20<sup>190</sup>. In the Old Testament God is described as knowing what is in darkness e.g., Daniel 2:22<sup>191</sup> and Psalm 139:11-12<sup>192</sup>, which suggests God alone can reveal it. Darkness appears to harbour evil, which can lead to an anti-black reception by the congregation when dark is thought of as black.

This liturgical phrasing is derived from Bible references but conveys negative images of darkness and hence positive images of colonialism bringing light. Other Bible verses counter this with statements such as darkness is as light to God suggesting that God does not distinguish between dark and light and hence white and black, as noted by Hull<sup>193</sup>. While black and white are of equal worth, they are distinct which is important if both are to enrich and diversify the culture of the church<sup>194</sup>.

Reflection suggests the liturgy could be rephrased without losing the Advent concept of the coming of Christ as the judge who will reveal sin. There may not be an obvious equivalent metaphor for hidden in darkness, but the liturgy could be changed without loss of meaning to describe exposure of concealed/hidden sin.

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<sup>189</sup> Ephesians 5:8-12. For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

<sup>190</sup> John 3:19-20. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.

<sup>191</sup> Daniel 2:22. He (God) reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him.

<sup>192</sup> Psalm 139:11-12. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night', even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

<sup>193</sup> Hull, *In the Beginning There Was Darkness*, 132.

<sup>194</sup> Reddie, *Is God Colour Blind? Insights from Black Theology for Christian Faith and Ministry*, 3.



Light seems less obviously linked to white when used alone to refer to Christ, the 'Light of the World'<sup>195</sup>.

*Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life*<sup>196</sup>.

This phrase from the Collect<sup>197</sup>, implies that the evil deeds of darkness trap us while the power of light protects us from evil. White power and supremacy are thereby affirmed. A key concept here is the outworking of grace and the protection offered by Christ.

The Epistle reading<sup>198</sup> has similar phrasing and was reinforced by the Gospel reading<sup>199</sup>, which suggested that the darkness<sup>199</sup> of night is dangerous. The overlap of phrasing has meant the postcolonial analysis of chapter two applies to the Epistle reading. This has been supplemented by incorporating other New Testament passages with relevant wording.

As described in chapter two the metaphor 'armour of light' used by Paul may have been referring to the Roman army, a colonial and oppressive force, supplied with effective armour. This phrase could be seen to justify colonial armed aggression and oppression and encourage the inculturation of people groups by indicating Indigenous culture belongs to the dark. This could devalue black culture and identity. Christianity, based on white Eurocentric Biblical interpretation, was portrayed by

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<sup>195</sup> John 8:12.

<sup>196</sup> The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, 376.

<sup>197</sup> The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent. Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility: that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to life immortal: through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Advent Service booklet, 14.

<sup>198</sup> Romans 13:12. The night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

<sup>199</sup> Matthew 24:36-44.

colonisers as superior to Indigenous religion and culture<sup>200</sup>, which harboured various evils<sup>201</sup>. The works of darkness by implication include revelling, drunkenness, debauchery, licentiousness, quarrelling and jealousy<sup>202</sup>, which could be attributed to dark skinned people unconsciously if not consciously.

References to armour are also found in 1Thessalonians 5:8<sup>203</sup>, where the armour is associated with the day and sobriety, and is made up of faith, hope and love. The armour described in Ephesians 6:11-17<sup>204</sup> is more comprehensive and although comprised of various positives, the context is of standing against the devil/evil, summed up as the cosmic powers of darkness. Armour in these passages relates to spiritual warfare but could justify an imperialistic or political agenda. It has been suggested e.g., by Jennifer Bird that the armour signifies a counter-empire, encouraging Christians to physically resist the power of Rome<sup>205</sup>. Even armour as spiritual imagery leaves open the possibility of advocating violence and the justification of domination. The inclusion of armour in the liturgy may reflect the

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<sup>200</sup> David Joy, 'Images of Ministry: A Postcolonial Rereading,' in *Postcolonial Black British Theology: New Textures and Themes.*, ed. Michael N. Jagessar and Anthony G. Reddie (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2007), 52.

<sup>201</sup> Joy, 'Images of Ministry: A Postcolonial Reading', 56.

<sup>202</sup> Romans 13:13

<sup>203</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:8. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

<sup>204</sup> Ephesians 6:11-17. Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

<sup>205</sup> Jennifer G. Bird, 'The Letter to the Ephesians,' in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 276–77.

colonialist past and institutional racism which have shaped the identity of the CofE<sup>206</sup>.

This liturgy requires changing to end the perception of white supremacy and anti-black sentiment. Different metaphors could be used for the concepts described, so the liturgy can be more inclusive and less associated with colonialism. Armour could be replaced with clothing and so gleaming clothing could replace 'armour of light'. Gleaming implies purity and power to reflect/deflect evil and could be associated with the power of grace liberating and protecting. 'Throwing off works of darkness' could be said to be like taking off grubby clothing, where grubby can mean sordid and is the opposite of gleaming. Grubby does not directly link with works of darkness, although it could be said to cause contamination for us/our actions and needs removing.

*In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high shall break upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace<sup>207</sup>.*

This describes the coming of light which will bring a new beginning to those in darkness. Light comes in power to overcome darkness and bring the dawn of the new era, one of peace. Darkness is depicted as an undesirable place of waiting. It was suggested in chapter two that light/white could represent colonial powers overcoming the undesirable Indigenous culture.

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<sup>206</sup> David Isiorho, 'Black Theology, Englishness and the Church of England,' in *Postcolonial Black British Theology. New Textures and Themes*, ed. Michael N. Jaggessar and Anthony G. Reddie (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2007), 62.

<sup>207</sup> Introduction to the Peace. The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, 300. Advent Service Booklet p16.

In Common Worship<sup>206</sup> this phrase is referenced to Luke 1:78-79<sup>208</sup>. The translation of the word here given as 'dayspring' varies, e.g., it can be 'dawn' as in the NRSV footnote or 'a sunrise out of heaven'<sup>209</sup>. The emphasis is on the light/dark and hence positive/negative contrast. A postcolonial viewpoint would again highlight the white colonisers bringing in a positive new era and disregarding as worthless all that was originally there.

One way to eliminate racism from this piece of liturgy is to remove darkness which does not significantly enhance the meaning or concept and leave shadow. The concept appears to be the inevitable and unmistakable coming of a new era where evil cannot exist.

The use of dayspring/dawn with the contrasting shadow appears less anti-black although darkness is linked to the shadow of death and light to dawn. The shadow of death is mentioned in Scripture such as in Matthew 4:16<sup>210</sup>, quoting from Isaiah 9:2 and in Psalm 23:4<sup>211</sup>, but the word is translated differently in various versions due to the ambiguity of the Hebrew. Stephen Dawes suggests the best translation for Psalm 23 is 'the death-shadow valley'<sup>212</sup> while Alec Motyer suggests for Isaiah 'such trouble as casts a death-like shadow'<sup>213</sup> Hence 'shadow' by itself may not be Biblically accurate in the liturgy but use of death-like shadow is realistic when context suggests the darkness refers to significant trouble/danger. Jagessar

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<sup>208</sup> Luke 1:78-79. Because of the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

<sup>209</sup> John Nolland, *Word Biblical Commentary 35A. Luke 1-9:20*, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glen W. Barker, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 82.

<sup>210</sup> Matthew 4:16. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.

<sup>211</sup> Psalm 23:4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil.

<sup>212</sup> Stephen B. Dawes, *The Psalms* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 58.

<sup>213</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah. An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 100.

and Burns found shadow to be colour free and so not racist<sup>214</sup> and is a metaphor to consider.

There are other references in Isaiah to dawn or sunrise or similar<sup>215</sup>, where the light is depicted as erupting to bring a new beginning. This would appear to be a metaphor which could be helpfully used on occasion, instead of light, to convey a suitable concept.

Although the liturgy is taken from Luke 1:78-79, this is not a lectionary reading for Advent Sunday and could be challenged and changed. Jagessar and Burns have suggested a re-examination of the selection of Bible passages more generally<sup>216</sup>, and revision of the use of Bible references in liturgy would help an anti-racism agenda. Other Bible references for Advent liturgy, without the dark/light binary, are available as will be discussed shortly.

*Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory*<sup>217</sup>.

Christ is here described as the 'Sun of Righteousness', the source of light and of righteousness and will come in glory, while by implication darkness is portrayed as blocking life with Christ and will be eliminated/removed. While the concept is about getting ready to meet with Christ when he returns as judge, the phrase suggests that white is right/right with God and black is not good enough for Christ, promoting white supremacy and black inferiority.

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<sup>214</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 41.

<sup>215</sup> Isaiah 58:8. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

<sup>216</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 69.

<sup>217</sup> The Blessing. The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, 301. Advent Service Booklet p32.

The description 'sun of righteousness' can be found in Malachi 4:2<sup>218</sup> referring to the day of judgement and promising light and healing for the faithful. A postcolonial reading suggests those of the light/the white are favoured.

While light illuminating the road ahead as the sun rises, is a great illustration, it may promote anti-black attitudes. This could perhaps be avoided by removing reference to darkness or replacing it with gloom e.g., illuminate your path, dispersing the gloom. Sun is possibly better than light but the context, including the use of light in the preceding liturgy, can convey the image of light.

*For those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death; and for the church in this place and everywhere, that it may be freed from all evil and fear and may in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God<sup>219</sup>.*

There is a marked contrast here; darkness seems extremely negative and light very positive as described in chapter two and again enhanced by the setting. The concept concerns the church needing to be set free from evil, sin, and fear to find joy in, and share the love of, God.

Also as described previously this suggests a colonial power dynamic making white dominant over black. The church, an institutionally racist organisation with a colonialist background appears here to support white people and be against black rather than embracing diversity.

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<sup>218</sup> Malachi 4:2. But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

<sup>219</sup> Extract from The Bidding Prayer. Let us celebrate the promise that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will bring all people and things into the glory of God's eternal kingdom. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. But first, let us pray for the world which God so loves, for those who have not heard the good news of God, or who do not believe it; for those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death; and for the church in this place and everywhere, that it may be freed from all evil and fear, and may in pure joy lift up the light of the love of God. Advent Carol Service, 4.

This prayer seems to reference several Biblical phrases/verses previously mentioned including Isaiah 9:2<sup>220</sup>. There is no clear distinction between worldly and spiritual darkness in the liturgy and most references indicate a broad range of bad/evil/trouble. Advent though is a reminder that Jesus will return as judge and some references suggest he will then cast sinners into darkness<sup>221</sup>, implying hell<sup>222</sup> or the realm of Satan. This could be linked with the shadow of death; for the fear of death could be understood as fear of judgement and hell. The link between darkness and hell or Satan could be perceived as a threat, with dark powers opposing the church and/or white people and so justifying oppression. There is no obvious Bible verse for 'the light of the love of God' but Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world'<sup>223</sup> and God is described as love<sup>224</sup>. Again, light is being used in a positive way associated with God.

The liturgy mirrors some Biblical usage of darkness and light and conveys the concept of light either being or conveying love and joy, and the hope that the darkness will be ended by Christ. With a postcolonial optic, good conquering evil, suggests white conquering black.

This liturgy could be amended to replace darkness with gloom, and light with illumination as one way of making it more accessible. This may not exactly match biblical wording, but is not at great variance either with the meaning of the texts on

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<sup>220</sup> Isaiah 9:2. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.

<sup>221</sup> Matthew 25:30. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Parable of the Talents).

<sup>222</sup> Darkness is linked to hell in some Bible verses e.g., 2 Peter 2:4-6 referring to sinful angels being in chains of darkness waiting judgment and to Satan in others e.g., Acts 26:16-18 where Paul has been sent to 'turn them (Gentiles) from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.'

<sup>223</sup> John 8:12. Again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

<sup>224</sup> 1 John 4:8. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

which the liturgy appears to have been based, or the concepts that it seeks to convey.

*May God the Son, who comes to us as Redeemer and Judge, reveal to you the path from darkness to light*<sup>225</sup>.

This blessing again highlighted that Jesus came to reveal to those in darkness the path to light. Darkness obscures the way to salvation and light is the revelation of that way. The concept conveyed could be the way of salvation.

As mentioned earlier colonialism could be envisaged as showing people the path from dark to light, from the inferior blackness to the superior whiteness and threatening judgement on black lifestyles. Christianity in this way could be seen as encouraging white supremacy, aided by describing Christ as Redeemer.

The Bible has references to walking in the light, having once been in darkness<sup>226</sup> or being lost in darkness<sup>227</sup>, and links light and life<sup>228</sup> and light with a relationship with God<sup>229</sup>. The declaration of Jesus 'I am the way and the truth and the life'<sup>230</sup> seems to summarise the relevant Biblical references. When the way becomes associated with the way of light, it shows that Jesus is the path from dark to light, from falsehood to truth, from death to life and from alienation to closeness to the

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<sup>225</sup> The Blessing. The Archbishop's Council, *New Patterns for Worship*, 304. Advent Carol Service booklet, 18.

<sup>226</sup> Ephesians 5:8-9. For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light.

<sup>227</sup> John 12:35. Jesus said to them, 'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going.'

<sup>228</sup> John 8:12. Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'

<sup>229</sup> 1 John 1:5-7. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

<sup>230</sup> John 14:6.



Father. These verses all suggest that walking in the light is about walking with God, bearing good fruit, and being set free from ignorance and sin. Being in the dark appears to mean the opposite. When white is associated with good and black with bad, this expression of the concept of salvation is detrimental to black identity.

One suggestion might be to use the phrase 'illuminate for you the path of salvation and wholeness', but a new metaphor for salvation could also be added. Turning to St Paul, the term reconciliation<sup>231</sup> is a neutral metaphor and leaves behind images of slavery (e.g., redemption<sup>232</sup> points to Christ as Redeemer). Redeemer and Judge could be replaced with the 'One who reconciles God and humanity' and this could be followed by 'illuminate for you the path from judgement to welcome', where darkness could represent the judgement from which we need to be rescued and salvation could be seen as the welcome of God into his presence.

The above and the earlier proposals are tentative, particularly where they represent significant changes and would require considerable further investigation into theological understanding, Biblical interpretation, and reception.

### ***Summary of the Outcomes***

The theological reflection highlighted that in all six of the selected pieces of liturgy darkness was associated with negative concepts, accentuated by the contrast with light as noted in the autoethnography. These are traditional and familiar metaphors, but the significance lies in the link between dark and black. Although this was made obvious in some publications as described in chapter one, I had not consciously linked dark with black or light with white until recently, although there

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<sup>231</sup> 2 Corinthians 5.19. (In) in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself

<sup>232</sup> Alistair E. McGrath, *Christian Theology. An Introduction.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford & Malden: Blackwell Publishers Limited, 2001), 431.

may have been an unconscious association. This was likely to have been because I am white but further investigation could reveal the extent of this 'blindness' and the degree to which it influences reception of liturgy. It is also possible that a white researcher could overcompensate when considering the reception of the liturgy by black worshippers and again further investigation would help resolve this.

The light/dark dichotomy results in black being understood as bad, while white is good which could re-enforce white privilege and racist attitudes. As Jione Havea asserts in the foreword to Jagessar and Burn's book; cultures 'sanitize scriptures'<sup>233</sup> and silence different perspectives, which seems to have occurred in Advent liturgy. This project has shown the significance of the use of dark and light as a binary and enabled greater understanding of the problems it can present for those who identify as black and has made clear a need for change.

The liturgy was shown to echo verses of Scripture which contained or alluded to the binary, and Advent liturgy only used this one set of metaphors drawn from a restricted selection of Biblical passages. The use of the light/dark binary in Advent is a tradition, which could be further investigated to support the claims of theologians such as Jagessar<sup>234</sup> and Isiorho<sup>235</sup> that it has originated from a racist/colonial hermeneutical perspective, heavily influenced by white privilege.

The liturgy used in the Advent services was authorised and/or produced by the Archbishop's Council, apart from the Bidding Prayer which I was unable to source but it seems to reflect those provided by the Church of England<sup>236</sup>. Given the

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<sup>233</sup> Havea, 'Foreword,' in *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*.

<sup>234</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 22.

<sup>235</sup> Isiorho, 'Black Theology, Englishness and the Church of England', 64.

<sup>236</sup> The Archbishop's Council, 'Advent,' in *Common Worship. Times and Seasons* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), 9–33.

composition of the leadership and clergy of the Church England it is probable that the liturgy was produced and authorised by predominately white people. The historic links with Empire, which has shaped English identity and rendered the Anglican Church 'a repository of oppression'<sup>237</sup>, will have influenced the culture and hence the liturgy. The liturgy is therefore not value free and when seen through a critical lens it can reveal the power of the dominant culture<sup>238</sup>. As white theologian, James Perkinson, notes racial domination can be determined by social conditioning and lies in the assumptions underlying the words of text<sup>239</sup>, and so the impact of whiteness on theology and on culture is not necessarily clear to those who are white<sup>240</sup>. White privilege could also result in a defensive attitude towards liturgy for several reasons including an inability or unwillingness to understand the feelings of black people, an unconscious or conscious desire for superiority and domination, feelings of discomfort, guilt, and insecurity as well as the bias towards what is familiar<sup>241</sup>.

### ***Exploring Different Metaphors***

Evaluation of the Advent Liturgy and associated Biblical references suggested that there were possibilities for change, with the simplest being omitting the word darkness which with a little rephrasing could disrupt the binary without having significant impact on worship. This seemed worthy of further investigation.

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<sup>237</sup> Isiorho, 'Black Theology, Englishness and the Church of England', 64.

<sup>238</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 46.

<sup>239</sup> James W. Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2.

<sup>240</sup> Perkinson, *White Theology*, 3.

<sup>241</sup> Hall, *A Redemption Song: Illuminations on Black British Pastoral Theology and Culture*, 96.

The concepts described by the light/dark metaphors in the six phrases could potentially be expressed in different ways, using different combinations of metaphors as described below and subsequently discussed.

\*Dark harbouring sin which light exposes: change to **exposure of hidden sin**.

\*The out working of grace and protection given by God: change to removing **grubby clothing** and putting on **gleaming clothing**.

\*New beginning, new era: use **dawn/day spring** and retain **death-like shadow** with darkness omitted.

\*Preparing to meet Christ when he returns in glory: the **Sun** (of Righteousness) retained and scattering darkness changed to **illuminate your path and disperse the gloom**.

\*Rescued from sin/evil, to be the church, knowing and sharing the joy of the love of God: change by omitting darkness but leaving **death-like shadow** or replace darkness with **gloom**, and light with **brightness**.

\*Salvation and leaving behind sin as we follow Christ: changed to **May God the Son, who brings reconciliation illuminate for you the path from judgement to welcome**.

Some metaphors, including gloom and shadow, can replace dark in ways which dissociate it from black. Gloom can convey the idea of inadequate light, of difficulty seeing and of identifying people and places, and a low mood or feeling of hopelessness. The coming of day or the presence of light dispels gloom as does the coming of hope or a new way of seeing. The use of gloom probably excludes concepts such as chaos or evil and so would not be helpful in all texts but there is

potential for use to give more variation. The contrast could be with illumination or brightness, which suggest dispelling of gloom. Shadow has been discussed as a possible metaphor but in Scripture there was a strong link with death, and this may be an issue with some uses, although death-like shadow has merit. However, as was noted, creating shadow requires a light source, as does gloom. This could be helpful in the recognition that the world is not without the presence of God, but his presence is obscured.

Another positive metaphor could be night, sometimes used to contrast with day<sup>242</sup>. Night is a natural precursor of day and although it can be thought of as darkness, it can have wider associations, many of which are positive e.g., rest and relaxation, coolness after the heat of the day, safety under some circumstances, peace, prayerfulness, and stillness etc. This could be considered for use in conjunction with dawn when a binary is appropriate.

Replacing light with dawn or sunlight could also be helpful in some places but these are more restricted metaphors. Dawn could be helpful as a metaphor for the coming of something new e.g., a new era or new life. Sunlight again could be used where the concept is of dispelling gloom or shadow, but care would be needed to link the metaphor with concept. Where light is depicted as showing the way it could be replaced with illumination. It might have relevance when light is revealing the path or way, perhaps like a torch. More generally Jagessar and Burns suggested replacing light in liturgy with radiance or brightness because they are not linked to a colour<sup>243</sup>, but they have not developed this idea further. Brightness is associated with the

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<sup>242</sup> Romans 12:13.

<sup>243</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 41.

presence and the glory of God in some Bible verses<sup>244</sup>, and Isaiah 59:9<sup>245</sup> is of note for the parallel contrasting of light and darkness and brightness and gloom. The concept of brightness indicating the coming of justice and righteousness could be investigated further.

Advent is a season of waiting, expectation, preparation and reflecting on the sin and evil from which Jesus came to save us. Common Worship lists Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell as themes for meditation during Advent <sup>246</sup>. Advent has a long tradition, shaped by the Church, which assimilated pagan culture, linked to the Unconquered Sun<sup>247</sup>. Carvalhaes suggested that Advent ‘must be interpreted every year’<sup>248</sup> according to context and based on a re-evaluation of Scripture. He offers various suggestions to broaden Advent to include themes of waiting/anticipating/longing for the coming of God,<sup>249</sup> and the dawn of a new age illustrated through counter-cultural expressions. His context is different, but his ideas of using different perspectives is helpful. Within the CofE different additional Biblical metaphors for these themes could be explored, which could enrich worship and deepen our understanding of Advent, in addition to minimising the use of light/dark as a binary. Additional liturgy for Advent is available<sup>250</sup>, without the binary, which was not examined in this project, but the influence of colonialism would require investigation. Personal experience suggests that this is less used than light/dark in Advent Sunday liturgy and hence the need for replacing these metaphors.

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<sup>244</sup> Psalm 18:12, Isaiah 60:3,

<sup>245</sup> Isaiah 59:9. Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us; we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.

<sup>246</sup> The Archbishop’s Council, ‘Advent,’ in *Common Worship-Times and Seasons*, 9-33.

<sup>247</sup> Carvalhaes, *What’s Worship Got to Do with It? Interpreting Life Liturgically*, 74.

<sup>248</sup> Carvalhaes, *What’s Worship Got to Do with It?*, 74.

<sup>249</sup> Carvalhaes, *What’s Worship Got to Do with It?*, 73–78.

<sup>250</sup> The Archbishop’s Council, ‘Advent,’ in *Common Worship-Times and Seasons*, 9-33.

Metaphor can be powerful and has potential to change our world<sup>251</sup>, and so new metaphors could potentially change racist perspectives as well as 'facilitate divine encounters'<sup>252</sup>. While it may be argued that Scripture has been 'misused to subjugate'<sup>253</sup>, careful selection of Biblical metaphors or phrasing using a postcolonial hermeneutic could avoid supporting anti-racism and conform to the liturgical tradition of echoing Scripture. Jagessar believes with justification, that remaining faithful to Scripture and our lived experience will mean courageously changing our established interpretations and the texts used<sup>254</sup>.

Scripture contains other several helpful examples where darkness is a positive such as the darkness of the womb, a place of nurture and security<sup>255</sup>, the darkness of the soil, functioning similarly for a seed<sup>256</sup>, darkness as a place of trust in God<sup>257</sup>, darkness as representing the presence of God and provoking awe and reverence<sup>258</sup>, and the darkness of crucifixion<sup>259</sup> symbolic of Christ's death for our salvation. The negative use of dark could be offset by some relevant positives, but this would require a process of reformulating the Advent liturgy, based on a broader selection of Scripture.

Isaiah used the metaphor of womb<sup>260</sup>, a place of darkness yet also of comfort and nurture, indicating a period of waiting, growing, getting ready for the birth of a new/renewed people of God and for the cleansing and judgement that God would

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<sup>251</sup> Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>252</sup> Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, xxvii.

<sup>253</sup> Jagessar, 'Holy Crumbs, Table Habits and (Dis)Placing Conversations-beyond Only One Is Holy', 228.

<sup>254</sup> Jagessar, 'Holy Crumbs, Table Habits and (Dis)Placing Conversations beyond Only One is Holy', 229.

<sup>255</sup> Psalm 139:13.

<sup>256</sup> Matthew 4:27.

<sup>257</sup> Isaiah 50:10

<sup>258</sup> Exodus 20:21, Deuteronomy 5:22-23, 2 Chronicles 6:1.

<sup>259</sup> Luke 23:44.

<sup>260</sup> Isaiah 66:7-11.

bring. This seems a relevant metaphor for Advent incorporating waiting for Christ and for renewal. Potentially Christ could be seen as the midwife, the one who brings to birth. As with all metaphors, problems could arise if midwife is taken literally for there may be resistance to depicting Christ as a female, although it is not an exclusively female profession today. Could Christ be both midwife and the baby born in Bethlehem? The Holy Spirit, described as the giver of life in the Nicene Creed<sup>261</sup>, could be less controversially described as a midwife. Using womb and describing the Holy Spirit as midwife in the Advent season seems one way of making a positive change.

There are other possible metaphors for the Advent season e.g., a seed lying dormant in the soil waiting for the season of growth. The parable of the Sower<sup>262</sup> suggests that given the right circumstances the seed sown in the heart will grow and produce fruit. Jesus described the seed as the word of the Kingdom, the gospel, which can produce the fruit of practical acceptance of God as King<sup>263</sup>. Advent could be described as a time of preparing the soil of our hearts, of waiting for and anticipating the growth that Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, will bring.

Rewriting liturgy is a huge task but could eliminate the unhelpful racist influences of our colonial past as a church. This has been recognised in New Zealand, where the latest Anglican Prayer Book has postcolonial liturgy which is honouring to diversity and 're-inscribing it's (empire's) hybrid offspring'<sup>264</sup>. If this were to happen in the CofE wide consultation would be needed and could include using a similar

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<sup>261</sup> The Archbishops' Council, *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for The Church of England*, 140.

<sup>262</sup> Matthew 13:1-9 & 18-23.

<sup>263</sup> R.T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 219.

<sup>264</sup> Storm Swain, 'A New Zealand Prayer Book-He Karakia O Aotearoa,' in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives. Only One Is Holy*, ed. Claudio Carvalhaes, Postcolonialism and Religions (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 165.



approach to the practical black theological methodology advocated by Reddie<sup>265</sup>, where discussion at the local church level proved fruitful in identifying the need for change as well as proposing actions. There are precedents for the church congregation to formulate liturgy. A famous example being the work done by Vincent Donovan with the Masai people where he encouraged them to find words in their language to describe e.g., church and priest<sup>266</sup> and formulate a creed<sup>267</sup>. It might also be profitable to include in discussion those who do not attend church to ensure that liturgy is accessible for all.

Much liturgy in use today is derived from The Book of Common Prayer (BCP). The Collect for Advent found there is like the one used today on Advent Sunday and includes the contrast between light and dark<sup>268</sup> using the phrases ‘cast away works of darkness’ and ‘put upon us the armour of light’. This liturgy may date from 1549, when the BCP was first produced<sup>269</sup>, and so would have been written in the early days of the British being involved in African slave trading, and as they were beginning to conquer overseas territories, and so at least some colonial influence on the liturgy can be assumed. This light and dark motif is regarded as traditional so that the Advent Sunday Collect and newer liturgy in use today retains the restricted portrayal of dark or darkness which is always negative and of light which is always positive creating a contrasting binary. Jagessar and Burns have made the case that

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<sup>265</sup> Reddie, *Working against the Grain: Re-Imagining Black Theology in the 21st Century*, 177.

<sup>266</sup> Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1982), 76–79.

<sup>267</sup> Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*, 163.

<sup>268</sup> ‘Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal’, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 47.

<sup>269</sup> The Church of England website states that *The Book of Common Prayer* was first published in 1549. It was then revised, and the final version was published in 1662. [Worship texts and resources /The Church of England](#), accessed 18th May 2023.

the selection of lectionary readings is not value free and shows a bias towards favouring the power dynamics of a particular group<sup>270</sup> and the results here indicate that the Bible texts and metaphors for Advent liturgies were selected with similar biases. Change is needed and everyone, both black and white, need to recognise and take on this challenge to tradition, which appears to serve the dominant culture, and perhaps the traditionalist churchgoer without regard for those who it negatively impacts.

The autoethnography suggested that the context was important in emphasising white dominance and power. The darkened worship space, candles and white leadership have all reinforced this. White and light appeared to be closer to God/holy, good, pure, trusted with leadership. The liturgy had greater impact as a result. There could be challenges in changing this too. The use of candles for Advent is a well-established tradition and to many represents the coming of Jesus, the 'Light of the World'. The obvious perspective is that the light comes into the darkness of our situations, which would resonate with those who have considerable experience of the Advent season. However, it might be refreshing and perhaps challenging to use gloom which could illustrate that the world is not completely dark but has a glimmer of the God's radiance. Visual changes could emphasise gloom e.g., making the chancel darker than the nave, or having more lights in the nave, the choir could dress in darker colours, choosing a greater ethnic mix of readers.

### **Summary**

Corporate Theological Reflection was shown to be a useful method for assessing data derived from an analysis of the liturgy using autoethnography and a

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<sup>270</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 81.

postcolonial hermeneutic. In addition, reflections on the associated Biblical texts viewed with a postcolonial optic proved helpful in identifying anti-black sentiment and the role of colonialism and white privilege as described by e.g., Jagessar and Burns<sup>271</sup> and Havea<sup>272</sup>. The outcome established a need for liturgical change.

The concepts perceived to lie behind the metaphors were provisionally identified, which enabled possible alternative metaphors to be suggested for darkness, and to a lesser extent light, which could avoid supporting racism. More radical suggestions were made to change the theme of Advent services from the contrast between light and dark to express other concepts such as waiting and preparing. These possible metaphors, derived from Scripture, were discussed and their use could potentially enrich Advent liturgy for all worshippers, no matter what their background or skin colour. Care would be needed to gather adequate data before beginning a process of changing established tradition, but this research has indicated that anti-blackness can be found in liturgy and warrants serious investigation. Research into the reception of the current liturgy by people of diverse cultural backgrounds, different skin colours and different exposures to church would be required and the suggested changes to the liturgy could be discussed by similar groups, following the examples described of interactive theologians.

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<sup>271</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 11.

<sup>272</sup> Havea, 'Foreword,' in *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*.

## Conclusions

This practical theology project was undertaken to investigate anti-blackness in CofE Advent liturgy, arising from the metaphoric use of the binary of darkness and light. The published literature was reviewed to establish the background and context for this project. Some significant findings included the ongoing institutional racism of the CofE, identified in the report of the Archbishop's Task force 'From Lament to Action'<sup>273</sup>. This provided theological grounds for ending racism and recommendations for action. Worship, including liturgy was identified as one of many areas where work was needed. Outside of the church anti-racism movements such as Black Lives Matter, the marking of anniversaries relating to Windrush immigration<sup>274</sup>, and media reporting of racism have been making an impact.

It has also been shown that liturgy, and the language and concepts it conveys, are of significance in reinforcing bias/prejudice and excluding participation for some. Jagessar and Burns<sup>275</sup> have expressed concern about the lack of use of a postcolonial hermeneutic in liturgical studies, which is significant considering the probable influence of colonialism. Jagessar and Burns<sup>276</sup> and other authors have raised a concern about the use of light and dark in liturgy signifying good/holy and evil/bad as this dichotomy supports anti-black sentiment and white privilege. The literature supplied evidence that light can represent white, and darkness/dark can represent black and hence liturgical use can signify that white is good and black is bad. Advent liturgy and symbolism were identified as featuring light and dark and

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<sup>273</sup> The Archbishops' Taskforce, 'From Lament to Action'.

<sup>274</sup> The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of HMS Windrush at Tilbury Docks was marked on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023 and further information can be found at <https://www.windrush75.org>

<sup>275</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 1.

<sup>276</sup> Jagessar and Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives*, 46.

although some work has been done on this, no reports of the reception of CofE Advent Sunday liturgy were found. This liturgy was selected for examination.

The chosen practical methodology included autoethnography, a postcolonial hermeneutic and corporate theological reflection. Two Advent Sunday services, available online, with printed liturgical text were selected for analysis.

The autoethnography showed that the contrast between light and dark was a significant theme within the liturgy in both services, given prominence by the context/setting. The overall impression was of light being positive and good, joyful, and associated with the coming of Christ and dark being associated with evil, sin, death and despair and defeat. Six phrases of liturgy containing dark, and light were selected for further investigation.

Postcolonial analysis of these phrases revealed that the liturgy was potentially re-enforcing white privilege and giving a negative view of blackness. Darkness and light are familiar metaphors, and they can be accepted as 'normal' but once the association between dark and black and light and white is made, then black can be perceived as bad and white as good. In all the liturgy examined there was not a single positive reference to dark or a negative reference to light.

The concepts perceived to lie behind the metaphors were provisionally identified, which enabled possible alternatives to be suggested in some instances. The concepts included the hiddenness of sin, revealed by Christ, the outworking of grace and the protection of Christ, the beginning of a new era, getting ready to meet Christ, the church knowing and sharing the love of God, and the way of salvation.

One or more Bible references, associated with each liturgical phrase were also subject to a postcolonial hermeneutic. This suggested that these could convey

anti-black sentiment. It was surmised that Biblical verses and metaphors were chosen from a biased/white privileged perspective, possibly originating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and have become established as tradition.

The data accumulated were analysed using a corporate theological reflection model, which enabled reflection on the experiences, the text, Scripture and the concepts conveyed in the light of published literature and in relation to the gathered church. This enabled possible alternatives for the potentially racist use of the light/dark metaphors to be suggested.

Suggested changes to replace darkness included using gloom, which is more neutral and can convey concepts such as lack of sight or of hope. The use of shadow is helpful as light disperses it, although death-like shadow was a better translation from Biblical texts. Darkness could be omitted from some texts leaving just light, although the strength of the metaphor would be diminished. The metaphor of light could be changed e.g., using gleaming clothing for protection, dawn to indicate new beginning or new life, illumination for revealing something hidden or the path to walk and sunlight for radiance. These are more specific, and individually lack the fullness of meaning encompassed by the single metaphor of light.

Different metaphors have been identified from Scripture which could change the liturgy more significantly. Several examples of darkness as a positive were found such as the darkness of the womb, the soil, and the night. The negative use of dark could be balanced by positives suited to Advent such as the womb and soil which could give new insights into the season. Metaphor has potential to transform<sup>277</sup>, and

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<sup>277</sup> Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, xxvi-xxvii.

new metaphors could change racist perspectives as well as ‘facilitate divine encounters’<sup>278</sup>.

Advent is the period of waiting for the ‘Light of the World’, at the time of the year when days are shortest and so light is embedded in the seasonal tradition. Some reference to light might be acceptable if not used in contrast with darkness to the extent found in existing liturgy. Changing tradition is a challenge but could enhance worship, make it less racist and more widely accessible and prevent lightness becoming an idol<sup>279</sup> or supporting white supremacy.

The researcher was white, European and female and was inevitably influenced by personal bias, and the analysis and conclusions will require more research to verify or challenge them. An important aspect that could not be investigated due to the constraints of this project was the reception of the liturgy by those who identify as black and those who do not regularly attend CofE worship. There is literature on this as described previously and suggested further work includes interviewing people and forming focus groups to assess current liturgy and the impact of alternative metaphors. Alternative metaphors could also be assessed or preferably suggested by racially diverse congregations as well as by liturgists and theologians.

The findings strongly suggest that Advent Sunday liturgy in current use supports anti-black sentiment and white privilege attitudes. The extensive use of the binary of light and dark may derive from colonial influence, and is potentially discriminatory, given the significance of liturgy in the church. This binary re-enforces

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<sup>278</sup> Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*, xxvii.

<sup>279</sup> Prevot, ‘Divine Opacity: Mystical Theology, Black Theology, and the Problem of Light-Dark Aesthetics’, 166.

the sense that the CofE is exclusive, white dominated and racist. Different metaphors could be used to broaden the experience of Advent liturgy for worshippers of all races and backgrounds and some of the concepts behind the use of the binary could be conveyed in alternative ways.

This research suggests that CofE Advent liturgy requires revision to make it less racist, more accessible to all and more honouring to God. Suggestions have been made which could enrich worship. Considerable further work is needed to both assess the reception of current liturgy and evaluate the proposed changes.



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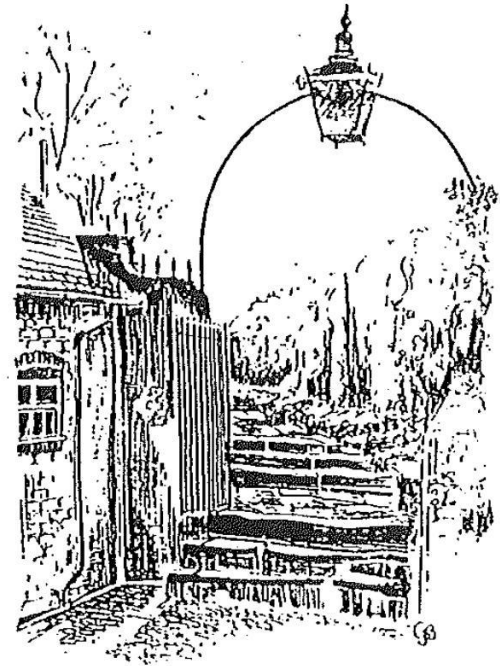
## **Appendix**

### ***The Eucharist During Advent. Holy Trinity Church Guildford***

The attached liturgy is referred to in the text and footnotes as the Advent Service booklet.

The page numbers given for reference are as in the booklet. The service selected was that  
for the First Sunday in Advent.

**THE EUCHARIST  
DURING ADVENT**



**HOLY TRINITY CHURCH  
GUILDFORD**



## Prayer after Communion

*Each child who has just been baptized is given a lighted candle.*

God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness  
and has given us a place with the saints in light.  
You have received the light of Christ;  
walk in this light all the days of your life.

*All* **Shine as a light in the world  
to the glory of God the Father.**

*All* **Lord, in the vision of your heavenly kingdom  
you reveal among us the promise of your glory;  
may that glory be ours  
as we claim our citizenship in the kingdom  
where you are alive and reign, one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

*A hymn is sung.*

## The Dismissal

May God,  
who kindled the fire of his love in the hearts of the saints,  
give you joy in their fellowship,  
and strengthen you to follow them in the way of holiness;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*All* **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## Welcome to Holy Trinity Church

In Advent we look forward.

We look forward to the festival of Christmas, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. This moment marks the unbreakable link between earth and heaven, that God chose to be en-fleshed, or incarnate, here on earth. By this act, God forever made himself accessible in human form. Thereby God raised up all our human concerns, our hopes and frustrations, into being matters of inestimable worth. When translated literally, the prologue to John's gospel, well known as the key passage read at Carol services and on Christmas Eve, says that Jesus "pitched his tent among us". Jesus was prepared to "throw in his lot with us" – "he slung his hook down here"! Whatever phrase we use to describe it, we know the reality of God's presence among us.

During Advent, we are reminded how the Old Testament prophets looked forward to the fulfilling of their hopes in the form of the Messiah, God's anointed one. They lived courageously for years with expectation but not completion, never abandoning their belief that God would fulfil his promise of a wise ruler, a noble leader, a prince of peace. In the Eucharist during this season, by concentrating on Old Testament readings, we can participate too in this aspect of looking forward and be strengthened in our belief that God is ready to fulfil his promises.

Also, Jesus himself taught us to look forward to the day when all will be gathered together by God. All wrongs will be put right, all tears wiped away and our full character as God's chosen children will be revealed. Some call it "the day of judgement"; some point to the end as the perfection of unity, joy and love.

In different ways, this service reflects all these themes. Hope, trust and longing combine as we rely on the reality of God's presence here and in the age to come.

## THE ADVENT ANTIPHONS

Since at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century these antiphons have been used before and after the Magnificat is sung at Vespers. They are based on seven of the titles found in the Old Testament that Christians see as pointing towards the coming of Christ, the Messiah. Each antiphon declares something of the nature and character of the coming Christ. An eighth and final antiphon was added some time later to honour Mary, the mother of Christ. These titles are familiar to modern worshippers by the singing of the advent hymn *O come, O come, Emmanuel*.

### **O Sapientia – December 16<sup>th</sup>**

O Wisdom, which camest out of the mouth of the Most High, and reachest from one end to another, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.

### **O Adonaï – December 17<sup>th</sup>**

O Adonaï, and Leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst in the bush to Moses in a flame of fire, and gavest him the Law in Sinai: Come and deliver us with an outstretched arm.

### **O Radix Jesse – December 18<sup>th</sup>**

O Root of Jesse, which standest for an ensign of the people, at whom kings shall shut their mouths, and whom the Gentiles shall seek: come and deliver us, and tarry not.

### **O Clavis David – December 19<sup>th</sup>**

O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel; that openest, and no man shutteth, and shuttest, and no man openeth; Come and bring the prisoner out of the prison-house, and him that sitteth in darkness and the shadow of death.

*When all have been baptized, all say together*

**All** May God, who has received you by baptism into his Church,  
pour upon you the riches of his grace,  
that within the company of Christ's pilgrim people  
you may daily be renewed by his anointing Spirit,  
and come to the inheritance of the saints in glory.  
**Amen.**

## The Welcome and Peace

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism:  
*N and N*, by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.

**All** We welcome you into the fellowship of faith;  
we are children of the same heavenly Father;  
we welcome you.

*The congregation may greet the newly baptized.*

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy,  
that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul, and body,  
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**All** and also with you.

*All may exchange a sign of peace.*

*The Eucharist continues at page 16.*

## Profession of Faith

Let us affirm, together with *these* who *are* being baptized,  
our common faith in Jesus Christ.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All I believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All I believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All I believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

## Baptism

*The minister pours water on each child, saying*

*N, I baptize you  
in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.*

**All Amen.**

## O Oriens – December 20<sup>th</sup>

O Day-spring, Brightness of Light Everlasting, and Sun of  
Righteousness: Come and enlighten him that sitteth in darkness and the  
shadow of death.

## O Rex Gentium – December 21<sup>st</sup>

O King of the Nations, and their desire; the Corner-stone, who maketh  
both one: Come and save mankind, whom thou formedst of clay.

## O Emmanuel – December 22<sup>nd</sup>

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Desire of all nations, and their  
Salvation: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

## O Virgo Virginum – December 23<sup>rd</sup>

O Virgin of virgins, how shall this be? For neither before thee was any  
like thee, nor shall there be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye  
at me? The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery.

## The Collect for Christmas Eve

Almighty God,  
you make us glad with the yearly remembrance  
of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ:  
grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer,  
so we may with sure confidence behold him  
when he shall come to be our judge;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## A Vision for the Parish of Holy Trinity and St Mary's

The people of Guildford have worshipped God, as revealed through his Son Jesus Christ, in this parish for a thousand years. As their heirs and successors we seek to establish God's Kingdom by offering holy lives and dedicated service. Our two churches were built for the worship of God, for the proclaiming of Christian truth and as places of prayer.

God is faithful, holy and generous. We therefore seek to be a place and people of

- ✠ Worship - we will offer regular and varied services of the highest quality that seek to glorify God through beauty, orderliness, and peace and, by faithful and challenging preaching, invite people to respond with all their being.
- ✠ Faithful living - we will stimulate reflection on the will of God for our daily lives, whether at work, at home, or at leisure, so that we may be faithful disciples of Jesus.
- ✠ Fellowship - we will encourage people to feel part of a welcoming and caring community that gives and receives practical service, especially in times of need.
- ✠ Prayer - we will maintain a community of prayer which listens carefully for the voice of God, which brings before God the needs of the parish and the world, and which supports individuals in their spiritual lives.
- ✠ Learning - we will encourage people to develop their understanding of the Christian faith in an honest and thoughtful way, drawing on the best from the Anglican tradition using scripture, reason and tradition.
- ✠ Public ministry - we value an active engagement with the wider community in the centre of Guildford as well as those living in our parish, and will seek to interpret the Christian Gospel to these institutions and people.
- ✠ Connections - we will celebrate and display signs of God's Spirit at work in Creation, in the arts, in the lives of other churches and charities, and in the church overseas.

In all that we are, we will seek to act from, and to show forth, the joy and love that are God's gifts to his children.

## Prayer over the Water

Praise God who made heaven and earth,  
*All* **who keeps his promise for ever.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*All* **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Lord of the heavens,  
we bless your name for all your servants  
who have been a sign of your grace through the ages.

You delivered Noah from the waters of destruction;  
you divided the waters of the sea,  
and by the hand of Moses  
you led your people from slavery into the promised land.

You made a new covenant in the blood of your Son,  
that all who confess your name may, by the Holy Spirit,  
enter the covenant of grace,  
receive a pledge of the kingdom of heaven,  
and share in the divine nature.

Fill these waters, we pray, with the power of that same Spirit,  
that *those* who *enter* them may be reborn,  
and rise from the grave to new life in Christ.

As the apostles and prophets, the confessors and martyrs,  
faithfully served you in their generation,  
may we be built into an eternal dwelling for you,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be honour and glory, now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

**I renounce them.**

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

**I repent of them.**

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

**I turn to Christ.**

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

**I submit to Christ.**

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

**I come to Christ.**

### Signing with the Cross

*The minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each child, saying*

Christ claims you for his own.

Receive the sign of his cross.

Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.

*All* **Fight valiantly as a disciple of Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life.**

May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness, restore in you the image of his glory, and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

*All* stand.

## Approaches to God

This page offers some of the many descriptions of God that lie at the heart of our relationship with God.

✘ God is worthy of praise

*Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed."*

*Luke 1. 46-48*

✘ God is faithful

*His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

*Isaiah 9. 7*

✘ God is dedicated to his people

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

*John 1. 14*

✘ God calls us to pray

*Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.*

*Romans 12. 12*

✘ God teaches and guides us

*Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."*

*John 15. 12*

✘ God reaches out to those who do not know him

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*

*John 3. 16*

✘ God's spirit is free and life-giving

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;*

*Luke 4. 18-19*

## FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*The first of the Advent Candles is lit.*

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors:  
to you be praise and glory for ever!  
You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith  
and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment.  
May we be obedient to your call  
and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ,  
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;  
for you are our light and our salvation.

*All* **Blessed be God for ever.**

Cantor

REFRAIN  
(1st time: Cantor) (Full) Fine

Pour down, O hea-vens, from a - bove, - and let the skies rain down right-eous-ness.

*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

Cantor Turn your fierce anger from us, O Lord,  
and remember not our sins for ever.  
Your holy cities have become a desert,  
Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation:  
our holy and beautiful house,  
where our fathers praised you.

*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

*The service continues on page 6.*

## The Baptism Service

### Presentation of the Children

*The minister addresses the whole congregation*

Faith is the gift of God to his people. In baptism the Lord is adding to our number those whom he is calling.  
People of God, will you welcome *these children* and uphold *them* in *their* new life in Christ?

*All* **With the help of God, we will.**

*The minister then says to the parents and godparents*

Parents and godparents, the Church receives *these children* with joy. Today we are trusting God for *their* growth in faith. Will you pray for *them*, draw *them* by your example into the community of faith and walk with *them* in the way of Christ?  
**With the help of God, we will.**

In baptism *these children* begin *their* journey in faith. You speak for *them* today. Will you care for *them*, and help *them* to take *their* place within the life and worship of Christ's Church?  
**With the help of God, we will.**

### The Decision

*The minister addresses the parents and godparents*

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?  
**I reject them.**

## SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*The first two of the Advent Candles are lit.*

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, just and true,  
to you be praise and glory for ever!  
Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets  
but in our days you speak through your Son  
whom you have appointed the heir of all things.  
Grant us, your people, to walk in this light  
that we may be found ready and watching  
when he comes again in glory and judgement;  
for you are our light and our salvation.

*All* **Blessed be God for ever.**

Cantor

REFRAEN  
(1st time: Cantor) (Full) Fine

Pour down, O hea-vens, from a - bove, \_ and let the skies rain down right-cous-ness.

*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

Cantor We have sinned and become like one who is unclean;  
we have all withered like a leaf,  
and our iniquities like the wind have swept us away.  
You have hidden your face from us,  
and abandoned us to our iniquities.

*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

*The service continues on page 6.*

## THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*The first three of the Advent Candles are lit.*

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, just and true:  
to you be praise and glory for ever!  
Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth  
as a burning and shining light.  
May we your servants rejoice in his light,  
and so be led to witness to him  
who is the Lord of our coming Kingdom,  
Jesus our Saviour and King of the ages.

*All* **Blessed be God for ever.**

Cantor

REFRAIN  
(1st time: Cantor) (Full) Fine

Pour down, O hea-vens, from a - bove, \_ and let the skies rain down right-eous-ness.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style. The lyrics are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The word 'REFRAIN' is written above the staff, and '(1st time: Cantor)', '(Full)', and 'Fine' are written above the staff at different points. The lyrics are: 'Pour down, O hea-vens, from a - bove, \_ and let the skies rain down right-eous-ness.'

*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

Cantor You are my witness, says the Lord,  
and my servant whom I have chosen,  
that you may know me and believe me.  
I myself am the Lord, and none but I can deliver;  
what my hand holds, none can snatch away.

*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

*The service continues on page 6.*

*A hymn is sung.*

The Dismissal

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,  
scatter the darkness from before your path,  
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*All* **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*The ministers and people depart.*

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The Parish is grateful to all those who have contributed to the publication of this service book especially  
Bea Daniel and Michèle Lyon.



*Incarnation*

When I go from hence  
let this be my parting word:  
that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus  
that expands on the ocean of light,  
and thus I am blessed -  
let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms  
I have had my play,  
and here I have caught sight  
of Him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have been thrilled  
with His touch who is beyond touch;  
and if the end comes here -  
let this be my parting word.

*Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1944)*

Death is going home.  
Very often as we live, so we die.  
Death is nothing but a continuation of life,  
the completion of life: the surrendering of the human body.  
But the heart and the soul live for ever.  
They do not die. This life is not the end.

*Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)*

**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

*All four of the Advent Candles are lit.*

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle:  
to you be praise and glory for ever!  
Your light has shone in our darkened world  
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary;  
grant that we who have seen your glory  
may daily be renewed in your image  
and prepared like her for the coming of your Son,  
who is the Lord and Saviour of all.

*All* **Blessed be God for ever.**

Cantor



*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

Cantor Comfort my people, comfort them;  
my salvation shall not be delayed.  
I have swept your offences away like a cloud;  
fear not, for I will save you.  
For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
your Redeemer.

*All* **Pour down, O heavens, from above...**

*The service continues on page 6.*

*Come, Radiant Sun*

Hail, heavenly beam, brightest of angels thou,  
sent unto us upon this middle earth!  
Thou art the true refulgence of the sun,  
radiant above the stars, and from thyself  
illumines for ever all the tides of time.  
And as thou, God indeed begotten of God,  
thou son of the true Father, wast from aye,  
without beginning, in the heaven's glory,  
so now thy handiwork in its sore need  
prayeth thee boldly that thou send us  
the radiant sun, and that thou comest thyself  
to enlighten those who for so long a time  
were wrapt around with darkness, and here in gloom  
have sat the livelong night, shrouded in sin.

*Cynewulf, Bishop of Lindisfarne (8<sup>th</sup> century)*

No one knows how bad she is  
till she tries very hard to be good.

*"Mere Christianity"*  
*C S Lewis (1898-1963)*

*THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT*

*All* God our Father,  
you gave to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age  
a son called John.  
He grew up strong in spirit,  
prepared the people for the coming of the Lord, and baptized  
them in the Jordan to wash away their sins.  
Help us, who have been baptized into Christ,  
to be ready to welcome him into our hearts,  
and to grow strong in faith by the power of the Spirit.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
the Light who is coming into the world. Amen.

*FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT*

*All* God our Father,  
the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary  
that she was to be the mother of your Son.  
Though Mary was afraid,  
she responded to your call with joy.  
Help us, whom you call to serve you,  
to share like her in your great work  
of bringing to our world your love and healing.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
the Light who is coming into the world. Amen.

*Prayers for the four weeks of Advent*

*FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT*

*All* God of Abraham and Sarah,  
and all the patriarchs of old,  
you are our Father too.  
Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ,  
Son of God, and Son of David.  
Help us in preparing to celebrate his birth  
to make our hearts ready for your Holy Spirit  
to make his home among us.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
the Light who is coming into the world. Amen.

*SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT*

*All* God our Father,  
you spoke to the prophets of old  
of a Saviour who would bring peace.  
You helped them to spread the joyful message  
of his coming kingdom.  
Help us, as we prepare to celebrate his birth,  
to share with those around us  
the good news of your power and love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
the Light who is coming into the world. Amen.

*A hymn is sung, during which the choir and ministers enter.*

The Greeting

Grace, mercy and peace  
from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with you

*All* and also with you.

*All kneel.*

Confession and Absolution

*The priest introduces the service.*

When the Lord comes,  
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,  
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.  
Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

*All* God our Father,  
long-suffering, full of grace and truth,  
you create us from nothing and give us life.  
You give your faithful people  
new life in the water of baptism.  
You do not turn your face from us,  
nor cast us aside.  
We confess that we have sinned  
against you and our neighbour.  
We have wounded your love and marred your image in us.  
Restore us for the sake of your Son,  
and bring us to heavenly joy,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

See the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.

*Malachi 4: 1-2*

O God,  
 who in the work of creation  
 commanded the light to shine out of darkness:  
 we pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ  
 may shine into the hearts of all your people,  
 dispelling the darkness of ignorance and unbelief  
 and revealing to them the knowledge of your glory  
 in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world:  
 have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God,  
 you take a-way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

*The priest and people receive communion.*

*At the distribution the minister says to each communicant*

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life.  
 The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life.

*The communicant responds each time:*

**Amen.**

*During the distribution hymns and anthems may be sung.*

*After the distribution, the notices are given.*

**Prayer after Communion**

O Lord our God,  
 make us watchful and keep us faithful  
 as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;  
 that, when he shall appear,  
 he may not find us sleeping in sin  
 but active in his service  
 and joyful in his praise;  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.  
 "I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.  
 "Then drink," said the Lion.  
 "May I – could I – would you mind going  
 away while I do?" said Jill.  
 The Lion answered this only by a look and  
 a very low growl...  
 "I daren't come and drink," said Jill.  
 "Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.  
 "Oh dear!" said Jill coming another step nearer.  
 "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."  
 "There is no other stream," said the Lion.

From *The Silver Chair*  
 C S Lewis (1898-1963)

May the God of all healing and forgiveness  
 draw you to himself,  
 and cleanse you from all your sins  
 that you may behold the glory of his Son,  
 the Word made flesh,  
 Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All Amen.*

*At a moderate pace*

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.

*poco rall.*

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

### The Collect

Let us pray.

*Silence is kept.*

*The Collect of the day is said, after which:*

*All Amen.*

*All sit for the reading.*

Religion has always been the wound, not the bandage. This reflection, I think, pinpoints something essentially important for those with faith to remember, namely: that belief in God comes out of an intuition, a sense of awe, surprise, beyond-ness, epiphany. It emerges from the perception that reality can somehow, ultimately, be trusted.

*"The Collage of God"*  
Mark Oakley, quoting Dennis Potter

The bird on the branch, the lily in the meadow, the stag in the forest, the fish in the sea, the countless joyful creatures sing, God is Love. But beneath all these sopranos, as it were a sustained bass part, is the *De profundis* of the Sacrificed, God is Love.

*Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)*

I greet Him the days I meet Him,  
and bless when I understand.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)*

## Breaking of the Bread

*The priest breaks the consecrated bread.*

Every time we eat this bread  
and drink this cup,  
**All we proclaim the Lord's death  
until he comes.**

## Giving of Communion

God's holy gifts  
for God's holy people.  
**All Jesus Christ is holy,  
Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.**

**All Most merciful Lord,  
your love compels us to come in.  
Our hands were unclean,  
our hearts were unprepared;  
we were not fit  
even to eat the crumbs from under your table.  
But you, Lord, are the God of our salvation,  
and share your bread with sinners.  
So cleanse and feed us  
with the precious body and blood of your Son,  
that he may live in us and we in him;  
and that we, with the whole company of Christ,  
may sit and eat in your kingdom.  
Amen.**

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for, you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurped town, to another due,  
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end,  
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue,  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,  
But am betrothed unto your enemy,  
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

*John Donne (1572-1631)*

May all of us, who share in the one loaf and the one cup, be united with each other in the fellowship of the one Holy Spirit. May communion in the holy Body and Blood of thy Christ bring judgement and condemnation upon none of us; but may we find grace and mercy with all the saints, who have been well-pleasing to thee from all ages.

*Liturgy of St Basil the Great*

## First Reading

*At the end the reader says*

This is the word of the Lord.

**All Thanks be to God.**

*A hymn is sung.*

## Gospel Reading

*All remain standing and turn to face the Gospel reader.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

**All Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to *N.*

**All Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the end the reader says*

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**All Praise to you, O Christ.**

## The Sermon

*After the sermon, silence may be kept.*

*BC:AD*

This was the moment when Before  
Turned into After, and the future's  
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing  
Happened. Only dull peace  
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans  
Could find nothing better to do  
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment  
When a few farm workers and three  
Members of an obscure Persian sect

Walked haphazard by starlight straight  
Into the kingdom of heaven.

*U. A. Fanthorpe*

Prayer is giving loving attention to the nature of things,  
to the world and loved ones in it.  
It is also to correct the corruptions of human power.

Gather your people from the ends of the earth  
to feast with all your saints  
at the table in your kingdom,  
where the new creation is brought to perfection  
in Jesus Christ our Lord;

by whom, and with whom, and in whom,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father,  
for ever and ever.

*All Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer

As we look for the coming of the kingdom, so we pray

*All* **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.**



Welcome, all wonders in one sight!  
Eternity shut in a span,  
Summer in winter, day in night,  
Heaven in earth and God in Man;  
Great little one! Whose all embracing birth  
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.

To thee, meek Majesty, soft King  
Of simple graces and sweet loves,  
Each of us his lamb will bring  
Each his pair of silver doves;  
Till burnt at last in fire of thy fair eyes,  
Our selves become our own best sacrifice.

From *A Hymn of the Nativity*  
*Richard Crashaw (1612-1649)*

God be in my head:  
and in my understanding.  
God be in mine eyes:  
and in my looking.  
God be in my mouth:  
and in my speaking.  
God be in my heart:  
and in my thinking.  
God be at mine end:  
and at my departing.

*The Primer*

## The Apostles' Creed

*All* I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Do not worry about anything, but in prayer with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.

*All kneel.*

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed,  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of an eye,  
When none but God is near.

*James Montgomery*

*Thomas Cranmer, the chief compiler of the first  
Book of Common Prayer, set that the prayer  
printed opposite should be recited each day during  
Advent.*

On the night he gave up himself for us all  
he took bread and gave you thanks;  
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper  
he took the cup and gave you thanks;  
he gave it to them, saying:  
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

*All Amen. Lord, we believe.*

Therefore we proclaim the death that he suffered on the cross,  
we celebrate his resurrection, his bursting from the tomb,  
we rejoice that he reigns at your right hand on high  
and we long for his coming in glory.

*All Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

As we recall the one, perfect sacrifice of our redemption,  
Father, by your Holy Spirit let these gifts of your creation  
be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
form us into the likeness of Christ  
and make us a perfect offering in your sight.

Look with favour on your people  
and in your mercy hear the cry of our hearts.  
Bless the earth,  
heal the sick,  
let the oppressed go free  
and fill your Church with power from on high.

*All Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.*

The wilderness and the dry land shall rejoice,  
the desert shall blossom and burst into song.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weary hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to the anxious, 'Be strong, fear not,  
your God is coming with judgement,  
coming with judgement to save you.'

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

then shall the lame leap like a hart,  
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;

The ransomed of the Lord shall return with singing,  
with everlasting joy upon their heads.

Joy and gladness shall be theirs,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*From Isaiah 35*

*The prayers usually include these concerns  
and may follow this sequence:*

- ✠ *The Church of Christ*
- ✠ *Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority*
- ✠ *The local community*
- ✠ *Those who suffer*
- ✠ *The communion of saints*

*This response may be used*

Lord, hear us.

*All Lord, graciously hear us.*

*And at the end of the prayers, silence is kept for private prayers.*

*All Almighty God,  
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness  
and to put on the armour of light,  
now in the time of this mortal life,  
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;  
that on the last day,  
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty  
to judge the living and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;  
through him who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.*

*God's Grandeur*

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)*



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,



God of power and might, hea - ven and earth are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na in the high - est.



Bles - sed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.



Ho - san - na in the high - est.

*All kneel.*

Lord God, you are the most holy one,  
enthroned in splendour and light,  
yet in the coming of your Son Jesus Christ  
you reveal the power of your love  
made perfect in our human weakness.

Embracing our humanity,  
Jesus showed us the way of salvation;  
loving us to the end,  
he gave himself to death for us;  
dying for his own,  
he set us free from the bonds of sin,  
that we might rise and reign with him in glory.

Poor human race that must  
Feed on pain, or choose another dish  
And hunger worse.

There is also a cup of pain, for  
You to drink all up, or,  
Setting it aside for sweeter drink,  
Thirst evermore.

I am thy friend. I wish  
You to sup full of the dish  
I give you and the drink,  
And so to fatness come more than you think  
In health of opened heart, and know peace.

Grief spake these words to me in a dream. I thought  
He spoke no more than grace allowed  
And no less than truth.

*Stevie Smith (1902-1971)*

*All stand.*

## The Peace

In the tender mercy of our God,  
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,  
to give light to those who dwell in darkness  
and in the shadow of death  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
*All* and also with you.

*All may exchange a sign of peace.*

## Preparation of the Table and the Gifts

*The gifts of the people may be gathered and presented.  
The altar is prepared as bread and wine are placed upon it.  
The priest takes the bread and wine.*

As the grain once scattered in the fields  
and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside  
are now reunited on this table in bread and wine,  
so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together  
from the corners of the earth  
into your kingdom.

*All* Amen.

*A DISSENTER'S HAIL MARY*

You bore him, fed him, clothed him, led him;  
you carried him, suckled him, sang him to sleep.  
You nursed him, enfolded him, encouraged him, scolded him;  
you suffered him, moved him to laugh (and to weep).  
You were the chosen one, you were the maiden,  
he was yours before he was ours.  
With your flesh the Word was laden,  
Seed of eternity, Hope of the years.  
For your obedience, your faith and your firmness,  
for your humility, tenderness, grace,  
sinners salute you: presume to say 'Thank you',  
who love him and serve him  
but had not your place.

*John Badcock (1915 -)*

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord be with you  
*All* **and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.  
*All* **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*All* **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

You are worthy of our thanks and praise,  
Lord God of truth,  
for by the breath of your mouth  
you have spoken your word,  
and all things have come into being.

You fashioned us in your image  
and placed us in the garden of your delight.  
Though we chose the path of rebellion  
you would not abandon your own.

Again and again you drew us into your covenant of grace.  
You gave your people the law and taught us by your prophets  
to look for your reign of justice, mercy and peace.

As we watch for the signs of your kingdom on earth,  
we echo the song of the angels in heaven,  
evermore praising you and singing: