

**“The Travelling People of God”**  
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Dear Friends,

The theme for this Local Arrangement Service is “The Travelling People of God.

Please feel free to 'customize' your service to your own congregation... e.g. You could replace either of the poems or the reflection with readings of your own or stories from members of the congregation about 1. decisions on life's journey (p. 2); 2. second thoughts (p. 2) or 3. times of struggle on their journey (p. 3), respectively. The hymns are only suggestions - if your congregation knows others that fit in with the theme, especially any newer ones, you could use those. This is *your congregation's* service of worship to God. The prayers of intercession will need to be prepared in line with current concerns.

I have suggested that you use 2 leaders and 4 readers, but you can adjust this too!

*Chris Odell (Sheasby)*

## “The Travelling People of God”

### **Call to Worship: Leader 1**

Wherever our father Abraham stopped on his travels he built an altar to worship God. We, too, are travellers – travelling on the journey of life. Let us, like him, offer sacrifices of praise to the God who travels with us.

**HYMN** – One more step along the world I go... *StF 476; H&P 746*

### **Prayer of Adoration: Leader 2** Let us pray:

Loving God, wherever we are, wherever we go, you are there.  
You created the world to be our home and our place of journeying.  
Your glory shines through the world and yet far transcends it.  
Loving God, we praise you, Creator of the world.

Loving God, wherever we are, wherever we go, you are there  
You sent your only Son to be our guide, our companion and our Saviour.  
Your love shines through his life. Your love has conquered death.  
Loving God, we praise you, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Loving God, wherever we are, wherever we go, you are there.  
You have sent your Holy Spirit to warm our hearts, to challenge and encourage us  
Your power shines through your people. Your power unites them in love.  
Loving God, we praise you, Giver of the Holy Spirit.  
In the name of Jesus, our fellow traveller, **Amen.**

### **Introduction to the theme of the service: Leader 1**

In our service today we are going to think about what God has to say to us through our experiences of travel.

Humankind, both peoples and individuals, has always been travelling. And even those who have never left the place where they were born will testify that Life itself is a journey of new experiences and sights that leaves us in a different place from where we started, for we ourselves are different. The hymn we're going to sing later reminds us 'we're a travelling, wandering race, we're the people of God' – and in our service we're going to reflect on what it means to be the travelling people of God. We'll think about the start of the journey, having second thoughts, help through difficult times, and our final destination. First of all, we listen to a story about the call to journey.....

**Old Testament Reading 1: Reader 1** - Genesis 12:1-10

**Old Testament Reading 2: Reader 2** - Genesis 13: 1, 14-18 - 'Then.....

### **Comment: Leader 1**

The time before the start of a journey may be a time of joyful expectation, but it can also be a time of uncertainty, as we step out into the unknown. This is true of much in our lives – every new beginning involves brave decisions, change and challenge. We call Abraham a great 'Man of Faith', because of his willingness to trust God as he, in obedience to God's call, travelled far from home, the familiar and the understood. But sometimes, on our call to journey, we are not so sure. The poet Robert Frost expresses the hesitancy and indecision that we often experience.

### **Poem: Reader 3** 'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood

And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair.....  
.....Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

**Prayer: Leader 2** Let us pray –  
Lord, you have called us to love and serve you,  
To walk beside you in trust every day of our lives.  
Give us the wisdom to know where we should go and what we should do,  
The courage to keep on walking and loving,  
And the faith that will see us through life's journey. In the name of Jesus, **Amen.**

**HYMN:** Will you come and follow me? *StF 673* **OR** When we walk with the Lord *H&P 687; MP760*

**Comment: Leader 1**

The decision is made! The journey is started! In our next reading, Moses leads his people out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt into freedom. But then the challenges of travelling – and the second thoughts – begin....

**Old Testament Reading 3: Reader 4** - Exodus 17: 1-6

**Reflection: Reader 1**

Life in Egypt was pretty tough. Slavery was a life sentence of hard labour. The overseers beat us if we weren't or couldn't work hard enough. They also beat us to keep our spirits low - there were so many of us that, if we had united and turned on them, they would have lost their power. That is why they didn't want us to have any more male babies, and had them all killed at birth.

That was our way of life – a way of living death. But Moses, brought up in the Pharaoh's court, was able to think out of the box. He was appalled by the lives that the people of Yahweh, of God, were leading. He pleaded with Pharaoh to let us go, to let us walk away. God sent signs to show the Egyptians that he was angry with the way we were treated, and that we should be set free. Eventually Pharaoh capitulated. And so our long walk to freedom began. And after our initial joy and excitement, the grumbling started, too. We were angry with Moses. We were angry with God. As refugees we were hungry, thirsty and afraid, unable to see the end of our journey. We even began to look back with nostalgia on our life in Egypt. At least there we had had enough to eat and to drink. Could we really trust Yahweh to look after us?

**Prayer: Leader 2** Let us pray:

Let us confess to our loving, saving God, the times on our Christian journey when our faith has faltered: when we have looked back and not forward; when our own needs and comfort have mattered more than anything else. Lord of the journey, we ask you, for Jesus's sake, to put us back on a right footing with you. The Lord hears our prayer. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

**HYMN:** 'Moses, I know you're the man', the Lord said... *StF 473; H&P 450*

**Offering:**

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**Offering Prayer: Leader 2**

*Response:* Loving God, accept this thank-offering: **Our love-gift to you.**

Let us pray - God, our parent and our companion and guide through life

For being with us from the very start,

Loving God, accept this thank-offering: **Our love-gift to you.**

For giving us all that is good and perfect,

Loving God, accept this thank-offering: **Our love-gift to you.**

For giving us yourself in Christ our Saviour to lead us into life in all its fullness,

Loving God, accept this thank-offering: **Our love-gift to you.** In Jesus's Name, **Amen.**

**New Testament Readings 1: Reader 2** - Matthew 7:13,14 and 16:24,25

**Poem:** *Reader 3* - 'The Narrow Way' by Emily Bronte (printed as a hymn, *H&P 708*)

**Prayers of Intercession: Leader 2 Response** – In your loving mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray: Lord, we are all of us on a journey through life,

some of us are near the beginning, some of us are on the home stretch,

some of us are trudging along the middle miles

Lord, we have seen wonderful things on our journey

and heard and read words of wisdom and truth.

We praise and thank you for the love we have received from others,

for the power of love in the world

We have also seen terrible things on our journey

and heard of and experienced suffering and loss.

We praise and thank you that you have never left us to journey on alone,

and that we have known your resurrection power.

Lord, we pray for our sisters and brothers,

some whom we do not know and some whom we hold dear,

who are finding their journey through life hard and heart-breaking.

We pray for those who have scarcely enough to maintain their own lives

or those of their family:

we pray for refugees and all who are hungry, homeless or destitute, for ....

In your loving mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are uncertain how much longer they will be travelling on the journey of life.

We pray for those who are seriously ill or injured, for ....

for those living in areas of conflict or famine, for ....

In your loving mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose journey

is a struggle with anxiety or depression or loneliness

or with disability or chronic pain, for ....

In your loving mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have lost beloved companions on the journey,

who struggle on alone burdened by grief, for ....

In your loving mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, on our journey,

we need a leader, we need provisions, we need signposts,

we need strength, we need courage, we need companions.

We pray that your Church, being filled with the Holy Spirit,

may bring to those on life's pilgrimage the resources of friendship, love and prayer.  
In your loving mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Keep us travelling on together, Lord, keep us travelling on towards you.  
May we never stop learning. May we never stop trusting.  
May we never stop growing. May we never stop loving.  
In the name of our Saviour, Guide and Companion, Jesus Christ, **Amen.**

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

**HYMN:** The Lord's my shepherd... (*And I will trust in you alone*)...*StF481: MP 1008 OR H&P 70*

### **Comment: Leader 1**

Our hymn, a paraphrase of the well loved Psalm 23, reminds us that even if life often feels like a 'Mystery Tour', with the route unclear and the destination unknown, our faith in God means that we know we can trust the driver. We will have an interesting journey, we will not get lost, and our needs will be provided for. He knows the Way, and the destination. The final destination is, after all, home – our eternal happy home with Him.

**New Testament Reading 2: Reader 4** John 14:1-6

### **Reading: Reader 3**

Of life's journey, the Christian poet T.S. Eliot wrote, in his poem '*Little Gidding*' –  
"We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time."

### **Prayer: Leader 2**

Let us pray:  
Loving Lord, on each day's journey, may we walk with you.  
On each day's journey, may we reveal your love to those whom we meet.  
On each day's journey, may we experience the joy of drawing closer to you,  
Knowing that our final destination is to be with you for all eternity

**HYMN:** Captain of Israel's host, and Guide... *StF 459; H&P 62*  
*OR Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah...StF 465; H&P 437; MP 201*

### **Blessing: Leader 1** – (words of a traditional Gaelic blessing)

May the road rise up to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face;  
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,  
may God hold you in the palm of His hand. **Amen.**