



## Morning Worship

January 2021

### New Year – Enduring Hope

The Lord will build you up again;  
Again, you will go out to dance with the joyful;  
Again, you will plant vineyards and enjoy their fruit.

#### OPENING PRAYER

**God of hope, as we gather,  
at the threshold of a new year,  
at a time of uncertainty and change,  
give us courage to overcome our fears,  
and help us to build a future  
in which all may prosper and share;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.**

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31: 3 – 14 (New International Version)

<sup>3</sup> The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying:

“I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

<sup>4</sup> I will build you up again,  
and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt.

Again you will take up your timbrels  
and go out to dance with the joyful.

<sup>5</sup> Again you will plant vineyards  
on the hills of Samaria;  
the farmers will plant them

and enjoy their fruit.

<sup>6</sup> There will be a day when watchmen cry out  
on the hills of Ephraim,  
'Come, let us go up to Zion,  
to the LORD our God.'

<sup>7</sup> This is what the LORD says:

"Sing with joy for Jacob;  
shout for the foremost of the nations.  
Make your praises heard, and say,  
'LORD, save your people,  
the remnant of Israel.'

<sup>8</sup> See, I will bring them from the land of the north  
and gather them from the ends of the earth.  
Among them will be the blind and the lame,  
expectant mothers and women in labour;  
a great throng will return.

<sup>9</sup> They will come with weeping;  
they will pray as I bring them back.  
I will lead them beside streams of water  
on a level path where they will not stumble,  
because I am Israel's father,  
and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

<sup>10</sup> "Hear the word of the LORD, you nations;  
proclaim it in distant coastlands:  
'He who scattered Israel will gather them  
and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'

<sup>11</sup> For the LORD will deliver Jacob  
and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.

<sup>12</sup> They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion;  
they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD—  
the grain, the new wine and the olive oil,  
the young of the flocks and herds.

They will be like a well-watered garden,  
and they will sorrow no more.

<sup>13</sup> Then young women will dance and be glad,  
young men and old as well.

I will turn their mourning into gladness;  
I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

<sup>14</sup> I will satisfy the priests with abundance,  
and my people will be filled with my bounty,"  
declares the LORD.

SECOND READING: Ephesians 1: 3 – 10 (New International Version)

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment — to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

REFLECTION: *Jeremiah 31:5. "You will plant vineyards...."*

The reading from Jeremiah 31 is full of hope and confidence. Verse 5 speaks of planting vineyards, which is a long-term activity – several years in fact. In bible commentaries the point is made that, according to Hebrew law, it was forbidden to eat fruit from the new vines until the fifth year. So, for a planter of a vineyard, it means an investment of time, dedication and money before any reward is seen in terms of a harvest. It also needs some confidence that whoever plants the vineyard will enjoy the fruit.

We tend to think about the old year passing, leaving behind past problems and a new year commencing and a fresh start. An annual cycle of renewal. But in truth many of the challenges we are currently facing, might take more time than 2021 to resolve. We need the faith, confidence and resilience of the vineyard planter to look beyond a year.

Remember also the purposeful activity of the vineyard planter over the years between planting and gathering fruit – continually cultivating and looking after the vines even though the harvest may be some time away. A lesson for us all in the coming year is to understand and focus on what needs to be done now and over the coming months so there can be a fruitful future, no matter what the challenges are and how long it takes.

And to recognise from Jeremiah 31, verse 3, the continued presence of God's everlasting love to guide us through.

HYMN: Lord for the Years – Sung by the congregation of Chet Valley Churches. (Please click on link below to go to the YouTube clip)

<https://youtu.be/Cd14v0e1RWU?list=PL-Wo7lu6CksuTKdkFbx68JxCo0xmtG81A>

HYMN: Lord for the years

1 Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

2 Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

3 Lord, for our land in this our generation,  
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:  
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

4 Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

5 Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

#### PRAYERS

Lord, we place our hands into your guiding hands at the start of the year.  
Help us to put behind us the past troubles but take forward with us the good.  
Give us the vision to see beyond current adversities and rejoice in your love, revealed in the  
people and the environment around us.  
Grant us grace to remain positive and generous to all we meet.

#### LORDS PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.  
Now and for ever. Amen**

CLOSING PRAYER

**The love of the Lord Jesus,  
draw us to himself.**

**The power of the Lord Jesus,  
strengthen us in his service.**

**The joy of the Lord Jesus,  
fill our hearts.**

**Amen.**

THE GRACE

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**And the love of God,**

**And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore.**

**Amen.**