

# worship notes

from the United Reformed Church



**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
**The Fourth Sunday**  
**of Lent**  
**Emma Howarth**

## Greeting & Call to Worship

Actions are:

Every-	(right arm out)
body's	(left arm out)
wel-	(right hand hug across chest)
come	(left hand hug across chest)
God	(right hand point up)
is	(left hand point up)
Here	(both hands point down).

The grace and peace of Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us worship God.

Come everybody, gather to worship. **Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

Come if you're weary, hungry or thirsty. **Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

Bring your rejoicing, dancing and singing. **Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

Bring all your failures, questions and sorrows. **Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

All shapes and sizes, faces and backgrounds. **Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

All to the glory of Jesus our saviour.

**Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

**Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

**Everybody's welcome, God is here!**

his is your day **and we shall praise you!**

This is your day **and we shall declare your name!**

This is your day, **and we shall worship a risen Saviour and our King!**

## Prayers of Approach, Confession and Grace

Gracious God, Father Son and Holy Spirit  
we come before you as your beloved children.  
Hear our cry.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we confess we have failed you as did your first disciples.

We ask for your mercy and your help.  
Our selfishness betrays you:

Lord, forgive us. **Christ have mercy.**

We fail to share the pain of your suffering:  
Lord, forgive us. **Christ have mercy.**

We run away from those who abuse you:  
Lord, forgive us. **Christ have mercy.**

We are afraid of being known to belong to you:  
Lord, forgive us. **Christ have mercy.**

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins,  
and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Prayer of Illumination

Lord God Almighty  
Your word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.  
May our heads understand what you ask of us,  
our hearts be stirred into action for you,  
and our hands be put to your work. Amen.

## Readings

*1 Samuel 16: 1-13 | Psalm 23 | Ephesians 5:8-14 | St John 9:1-41*

## Theme Introduction

The act of anointing is often used by Christians as a symbol of God's grace. In the Bible anointing is seen as a sign that someone has been set apart for a special calling or purpose. The title 'Christ' comes from the Greek 'chrīstós', meaning 'anointed one'.

Activity - Marked for a Purpose

Objective: Help participants understand that anointing means being empowered by God for a specific purpose and setting apart means being dedicated to Him.

Materials Needed:

Small stickers (to make a visible mark) or a small bottle of olive oil (optional, for symbolic demonstration)

A few everyday objects (e.g., a pen, a cup, a book)

A couple of willing volunteers

### Illustration with Objects

Ask for volunteers to come up – any age.

Hold up a common object (like a pen) and ask: “What is this for?”

People should answer: “Writing.”

Then say: “If I set this pen apart only for signing important documents, it now has a special purpose.” Explain that setting apart means dedicating something for a specific use. Explain Anointing. Briefly share: “In the Bible, anointing with oil symbolized God’s Spirit empowering someone for a task—like kings, priests, and prophets.” Show the oil and say: “It’s not magic—it’s a sign of God’s calling and empowerment.”

### Interactive Marking

Give each volunteer a sticker on their hand. Say: “This mark reminds you that God has chosen you and set you apart for His purpose.” [Optional: Lightly anoint a few volunteers with oil as a demonstration. Stickers are better because they can be seen.]

### Reflection Question

What does it mean for you to be set apart for God in your daily life?

Encourage short responses.

Key Takeaway: Setting apart = dedicated for God’s purpose. Anointing = empowered by God to fulfil that purpose.

## Sermon Notes

The four texts have a theme of ‘anointing’. Anointing is a symbol of being set apart, in this case, for God. There is nothing special about the oil used, but rather it is a symbolic public gesture that says “This one belongs to God”. Indeed, anointing is used at every level. Sometimes used in healing services, or services of dedication. It is used in some denominations annually as ordained and licenced ministers recommit themselves to God’s service. It is used in the coronation service of monarchs in the United Kingdom. Moreover, it is an outward symbolic gesture of an inward dedication of heart and soul.

### *1 Samuel 16:1-13*

When Samuel is sent by God to the house of Jesse, he is sent to identify the one that God has chosen. When he finds David, the least likely, Samuel anoints his head with oil as a symbol that he has been chosen by God.

### *Psalm 23*

Familiar to many of us in several contexts, not least at funerals, we are reminded of God's abundant provision and love. The references to guidance, protection and refreshment provide a clear picture of how God loves and cares for us. In verse 5 the psalmist says that God provides and anoints as a declaration that they belong to Him.

### *Ephesians 5:8-14*

Whilst not specifically mentioning anointing, this reading makes clear the identity of God's children. Urging the reader to pursue the light and let Christ shine on them.

### *St John 9:1-41*

Again, not explicitly mentioning anointing but this passage reveals Jesus performing a miracle and the acknowledgement that Jesus is the Messiah. The man who was blind declares his belief. No anointing with oil, but a public declaration of identity.

## **Affirmation of Faith**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**  
**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**  
**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**  
**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**  
**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**  
**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**  
**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**  
**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**  
**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**  
**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*The Nicene Creed*

## Prayers of Intercession

Good Shepherd, within your embrace you keep us safe and secure  
and you hold us as a shepherd holds his lambs.  
We know that we are precious in your sight,  
knowing your love and belonging to you.  
Bind us together as one flock with one shepherd.

Come, let us bow down **before the LORD our Maker.**

Good Shepherd, within your embrace we find comfort and healing.  
We bring to you those who are weak,  
or struggling with physical, mental or spiritual health.  
Bring comfort, grace and healing  
for those we now name in the silence of our hearts.

Come, let us bow down **before the LORD our Maker.**

Good Shepherd, within your embrace we find justice.  
We bring to you all who cry out for freedom,  
those prepared to stand up and be heard.  
We pray for those who have been imprisoned or tortured  
because of who they are.  
We pray for those who have fled their own lands  
believing they would be safe on our shores  
but have been met with fear, hatred and rejection.

Come, let us bow down **before the LORD our Maker.**

Good Shepherd, within your embrace we find peace.  
We bring to you those affected by war,  
for refugees wandering this earth in search of a home,  
for all victims of strife and warfare,  
and for the peacemakers who have dedicated their lives  
for the search for peace and reconciliation.

Come, let us bow down **before the LORD our Maker.**

Good Shepherd, within your embrace we find direction and hope.  
We bring before you leaders at all levels:  
church, local, national and worldwide.  
We pray for wisdom, compassion and a sense of justice.

Come, let us bow down **before the LORD our Maker.**

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. **Amen**

## Offertory

Let us bring our gifts before God and offer ourselves to Him. Let us pray.

Gracious God  
in your generosity you pour out your love on us.  
Receive these monetary offerings  
and those that go directly to the bank.  
Receive our time, talents and lives.  
All things come from you,  
and we offer them back to You to further Your Kingdom. Amen.

## Blessing

May our Gracious God go out with us into the world.  
May we be the head, heart and hands of God.  
And may the blessing of God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
rest upon us, those we love  
and those that we find it difficult to love,  
now and until we meet again. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**

### Hymn Suggestions

	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Amazing Grace	92	533	440	31
Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)				1151
Here in this place		623		
Creation sings the Father's Song				1268
Christ Be Our Light		543	706	1201
Hail to the Lord's Anointed	127	474	228	204
How deep the Father's love for us		549		988
Just as I am without one plea	364	553	556	396
Purify my heart (Refiner's Fire)			508	921
Spirit of the Living God (Fall afresh on me)	308	619		612/613
The King of love my shepherd is	552	462	479	649
The Lord's my shepherd (Traditional)	679	14	395	660
The Lord's my shepherd (Townend)			481	1008
We Cannot Measure How You Heal	653	718	655	
O Christ the healer we have come		717	653	
Lord of life, we come to you		782	651	
Christ is the world's true light	601	456		
When Jesus the Healer		350		
When I survey the wondrous cross	217	392	287	755
Now Thank We All Our God	72	182	81	486

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*

Other Options:

Anointing – Jesus Culture [Jesus Culture - Anointing \(Lyrics\)](#)

Fresh Wind – Hillsong [Fresh Wind \(Lyric Video\) - Hillsong Worship](#)