

**Transformation – NOW!
GIFTS**

Hymn: As with gladness men of old

Sung by St Martin's Voices

As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold,
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,
to that lowly manger-bed,
there to bend the knee before
him whom heaven and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet
ever seek thy mercy-seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
at that manger rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy,
pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesu, every day
keep us in the narrow way,
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown,
thou its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
alleluias to our King.

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

Opening prayer

In deep gratitude we come to worship God.

We recognise God as the source of all goodness.

All good gifts come from the Spirit of God:

**love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness
are all of God.**

We come with grateful hearts, not for things,
but for who God is.

We gather to show our gratitude in song and prayer.

from The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Bible Reading: I Corinthians 1: 4-11 (The Message)

God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful: wise counsel, clear understanding, simple trust, healing the sick, miraculous acts, proclamation, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues.

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.

Reflection

by Ian Butterworth

Did you get what you wanted?

That's one of the favourite questions asked after Christmas, especially of children but still relevant to adults, even if we have made sure that Santa in the shape of our nearest and dearest knows exactly what is top of our list. Did you get what you wanted or were you disappointed that something you set your heart on wasn't under the tree?

It's not just at Christmas of course that we can be disappointed at not having the gift we'd really like. Hear a brilliant pianist and it seems unfair that we can just about manage Chopsticks on the piano; watch a famous actor on

TV or in the theatre and our attempts at charades at a family party seem more wooden than Pinocchio. It doesn't seem fair that some people have great gifts while most of us don't seem to have any worth talking about.

But when we stop looking with just our own eyes and try to see ourselves through God's eyes it's not like that at all. God has given every one of us gifts which, if we will use them, help him open doors and windows into his kingdom.

What about patience? We might not think we are the most patient person in the world but every one of us will patiently listen to someone pouring their heart out or even telling the same tale over and over again because no one else will listen to them. That patience is a gift from God, given to us so that we can support those who are distressed or lonely in their deep need. We might not feel we exercise that gift as much as we should, but it is in us, God has given it to us so that we can use it to channel his love when it is needed.

Or what about cleaning? It seems very odd to talk about cleaning as a gift but helping someone to have a comfortable clean place to live is not something everyone can do, especially if we are of the male part of the species.

There is a true story of a church where some of the ladies responded to a request to clean an old man's flat so he could come home from hospital. Armed with mops and buckets they set out in fine style but had to keep coming out into the fresh air to stop themselves being sick at the sights and smells in the flat. Despite that they left the flat spotless and

gave the man who lived there a fresh start and new hope for the future. Their gift for cleaning was used by God to transform a life.

The Christmas gift question we started with is looking at life from the wrong end. We shouldn't be focusing on what we haven't got but on what we have got and asking God to help us see the gifts he has given us and pledging to him that we will acknowledge them and use them and be thankful.

Hymn: Brightest and best

sung by St Martin's Voices

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;
low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would his favour secure:
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

Prayers

God you have given each of us many gifts,
**but sometimes we cannot recognize
what gift we have to share,
so we hide it under a bushel.**

God you remind us that all gifts are needed,
**but sometimes we let ourselves be convinced
that some gifts are more special than others.**

God you call us to work, to live, to love together
as parts of one body,
**but sometimes we decide that membership in the
body is limited by our understandings.**

God, for the times we have ignored or mislabelled Your gifts,
for those times we have cut another off from the body,
**We offer words of repentance,
we ask for forgiveness and grace.**
Amen

The Mary Sumner Prayer

**All this day, O Lord,
let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken,
whether through the word I speak,
the prayer I breathe,
or the life I live.**

Amen

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Hymn: God is working his purpose out

sung by the Choral Scholars of St Martin-in-the-Fields

God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year,
God is working his purpose out, and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the
waters cover the sea.

From utmost east to utmost west wherever feet have trod,
by the mouth of many messengers goes forth the voice of God,
'Give ear to me, ye continents, ye isles, give ear to me,
that the earth may be filled with the glory of God as the
waters cover the sea.'

What can we do to work God's work, to prosper and increase
the love of God in all mankind, the reign of the Prince of Peace?
What can we do to hasten the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the
waters cover the sea?

All we can do is nothing worth unless God blesses the deed;
vainly we hope for the harvest-time till God gives life to the seed;
yet nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the
waters cover the sea.

Arthur Campbell Ainger (1841-1919)

Final prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the gifts you give us through your Spirit. Thank you for the variety of those gifts. And thank you for making clear their purpose. You empower us so that we might benefit others in the work of your kingdom. Your gifts strengthen us to help each other. May your gifts flow through me to others, and may you receive all the glory.

Amen

Material: as stated

Theme music: Catherine Hilton

Theme image: Erik Karits on Pixabay.com

Gift image: kstudio on Freepik

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**Thursday Prayers next month will be on
9th February 2023 – God's Love**