



Liturgical Service to Mark the Start of the Legal Year 2023

*The Kirby Laing Centre in partnership
with the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship*

11 October 2023, 6-7PM UK time

Introit: *The Lord's my shepherd* – Stuart Townend

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.



Leader: The first service to mark the start of the Legal Year was held in Paris in 1245. The first service in England was held around 1310. The service traditionally includes a prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be poured out on Christian lawyers and judges and for the Holy Spirit to be at work in the administration of justice in our land.

Bidding Prayer:

We gather in the presence of almighty God, who is the judge of all and who knows the secrets of our hearts, to renew our commitment to the service of others that we may, together, do right.

We acknowledge a shared high calling, a common commitment to a justice that all can recognize. So we seek God's strength and guidance that we might remain true to our calling; informed, wise, and just.

We ask God to sustain us in our life and work, to grant us humility and sound judgment, to forgive our errors, and to inspire our service. Through us and in us, may the words of the prophet find fulfilment and justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Prayer of Confession:

Loving God,
you are faithful and forgiving:
help us now to grasp the greatness of your love.

Help us to pray honestly
as we make our confession and seek your forgiveness.

Silence is kept

Where we have failed to love, and have loved to hurt:
Forgive us, and heal us.

Where we have been indifferent to those in need:
Forgive us, and heal us.

Where we have spoken harsh words to others,
and have been quick to take offence ourselves:
Forgive us, and heal us.

Where we have prayed and sung about justice,
and have ignored the injustice around us:
Forgive us, and heal us.

Merciful God, unlike us, you are true to your word.
When we cry to you in sorrow and repentance,
you hear our cries and are swift to forgive.
For your faithful love we praise you. **Amen.**

Leader: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:

Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Offering

Lord, we bring to you our work as lawyers. We bring to you the hours spent staring at screens or poring through books looking for the right answer. We bring to you the time spent drafting documents to protect and promote our clients' interests. We bring to you our conversations with colleagues, our interactions with other legal professionals and court staff, and with all those others with whom we come into contact. May we treat them with respect and show the love of Christ to them.

Lord, we bring our clients to you. May our service to them be a faithful witness to Christ. Give us wisdom by your Holy Spirit in all our dealings with others. May we speak truth in the places you have called us to serve.

Lord, we bring to you the structures of authority within which we work. We ask that you might grant wisdom, a commitment to truth, and a heart of justice to the senior partners and managers in our firms, to the Heads of Chambers, to the academic administrators and managers, to the Heads of Legal Departments and others running universities, to judges, to civil servants and to politicians. We pray that there might be a greater sense of the importance of justice and of the rule of law in our land.

Lord, we bring our families, friends and churches to you. May we honour you as we love and serve them.

Keep us free from a love of money. Deliver us from finding our sense of worth in our work. Equip us to know how to balance the responsibilities to

which you have called us. Breathe on us by your Holy Spirit, renewing the flame of our first love. Grant that all we do may be an act of worship to you.

We pray all this, not trusting in our own strength, but wholly dependent on the love of God the Father, the grace we have received through Jesus Christ, and the renewing, sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Now let us pray together for the coming of God's kingdom on earth, saying, as Jesus taught us:

**“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who have sinned against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.”**

Reading: *2 Peter 3:1-13* (NIV)

¹ Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. ² I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

³ Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” ⁵ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶ By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Sermon – David McIlroy

Leader: Lord, your faithfulness and patience and desire to bless is constantly astonishing to us. We thank you that you have called us, jars of clay that we are, and you have entrusted us with sharing the good news about the One who is Justice In Person, with demonstrating the mercy of the One who is Mercy In Person, with witnessing to the truth of the One who is Truth In Person, and in showing what it means to follow the One who is Love in Person. **Amen.**

Anthem: *Love divine, all loves excelling* – Charles Wesley

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all Thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;

suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be:
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in Thee;

Changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

– <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miFQoHvOTaw>

Sending Prayer:

Almighty God, our Father in heaven, Your Son, our Lord, wept over the city,
and longed that its inhabitants should know the way of peace.
Grant that by the power of your Spirit we may so walk in your ways of justice
and truth, that our lives of integrity and joy may declare your praise, Father
Son and Holy Spirit,
Strengthen our confidence in your promises, O Lord.
Re-ignite our hope in your power and love,
And fill us with the longing and joy of a world which justice dwells in our
midst.

Amen.