

15 For ever and ever

We reflect on the nature of eternity and the eternally present

Leader	For ever and ever God is, and the things of God hold true.
All	For ever and ever the kingdom stands, sunlit with love and stretching into the distance of faithfulness.
Leader	For ever and ever the Spirit broods, breathes life and bears fruit.
All	For ever and ever God is, and the things of God hold true.

Singing

Keeping Stillness

With your finger, slowly trace round and round the knotwork pattern, thinking as you do so: 'For ever and ever God is, and the things of God hold true.' Let this pattern of movement and thinking teach your soul and settle you in the ordered love of his Being.

Leader	As time dwellers we come to visit eternity
All	and discover not length of days but a lasting presence of love.
Leader	We find not sequence
All	but orchestration. Not 'before and after'
Leader	but 'now'.
All	For ever and ever, O Lord, the kingdom is yours; for ever and ever all power belongs to you; for ever and ever your glory brightens heaven, touching earth now with the warmth of hope, and drawing us into your presence.

Leader	Hear these words written to an early Christian community and to you, now, celebrating things of lasting significance.
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Reading	Colossians 1:3-20
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This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Keeping Stillness

Use this time to consider yourself and your church as part of God's 'ever'. Think over the qualities which will last beyond death, and recognise what is only temporal. Notice any imbalance of priority in the way energy and resources are directed. Is too much time and money being spent on what is temporal, and not enough on what is eternal?

Leader Jesus said,
 'Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out,
 an unfailing treasure in heaven,
 where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

All 'For where your treasure is,
 there your heart will be also.'

Leader St Paul wrote,
 'And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
 'and the greatest of these is love.'

All

Leader So, Father, give us the grace to seek as our priority
 the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

All May we not be distracted from this calling.

Leader Father, in all our future plans and decisions
 anoint our vision with your perception;
 anoint our hearing with your understanding;
 anoint our activity with your direction;
 that we may share in your 'ever'
 as we walk through the 'now',
 our lives reflecting your love
 and making you known. Amen.

Singing

Leader Hear the prophet Isaiah speaking out God's assurance to his
 people of ongoing strength and refreshment.

Reading Isaiah 40:27-31

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Keeping Stillness

Welcome God's lasting kingdom into the different areas of your life and the
 life of your church. Imagine the meetings and activities, the in-tray, diary,
 financial reports and times of gathered prayer, committing it all to God's
 prioritising and in the context of God's kingdom values.

All Ever-present God, holy and loving,
 your children come to pray your kingdom in.
 May your reign and your will transform us all,
 till heaven and earth are one.
 May your feeding and forgiveness
 be mirrored in our lives.
 Protect us in temptation and shield us from evil.
 Your kingdom lasts for ever and ever;

your power and glory never fail.
Alleluia. Amen.

Leader	Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for all those through whom the message of your love has been brought down to us.
Men	For those who battled with danger and death to keep the flame alive and deliver it on to others.
Women	For those who through the generations reflected on your love and shared what they had learnt.
Men	For grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren catching the story and passing it faithfully on.
Women	For pastors and teachers, and all whose lives have been dedicated to the spread of your gospel and strengthening faith.
Men	For all who are working now to reach those who do not know you and dare not trust your love.
Leader	For all who have taught us by their example, made us think, allowed us to doubt, and loved us into the kingdom,
All	heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise. May the story continue to be told. May the flame of your love burn bright in our lives and may our children's children live to praise your name. Amen.