

# **North Staffordshire Circuit (11/22)**

## **Service Sheets For the Month of February 2026**

**Compiled by:**  
**Rev'd Liz Singleton**  
**Rev'd Joy Ventom**  
**Rev'd James Pritchard**  
**Mrs Sheila Heap**

## Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2026 – Epiphany 4/Ordinary 4

*This service has been compiled by Rev'd James Pritchard*

### Opening Prayer

Let us worship the God who gives life, who fills our lives with the beauty of creation,  
and who offers us comfort. God, you call us to walk with you in justice, in kindness, in humility. Help us to see this is what you require, and to walk into the future you want for us as the people of God. **Amen.**

### Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father, (StF 51)

Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;  
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be:

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love:

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)

### Prayer of Worship and Adoration:

*Spend a few moments calling to mind some of the small blessings of life... maybe remember something of God that leads you towards praise or adoration. Come before God in an attitude of worship.*

God of all, of heaven and earth, sea and sky we worship and adore you.  
God who knows our innermost thoughts and loves even the corners of our lives we find most unlovable we worship you.

God who shows to us love not through power and might but through service and suffering we worship you and adore you.  
God beyond our imaginings yet closer than our breath we worship you. Open our hearts afresh to you, by your Spirit be at work in us so that we might worship and adore you not just in this moment, but in each and every moment of our lives. Accept our worship and draw near we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **1 Corinthians 1:18-31:**

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

### **Hymn: Hear the call of the kingdom, (StF 407)**

Hear the call of the kingdom,  
lift your eyes to the King;  
let his song rise within you

as a fragrant offering  
of how God, rich in mercy,  
came in Christ to redeem  
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom  
to be children of light  
with the mercy of heaven,  
the humility of Christ;  
walking justly before him,  
loving all that is right,  
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,  
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the kingdom  
to reach out to the lost  
with the Father's compassion  
in the wonder of the cross,  
bringing peace and forgiveness,  
and a hope yet to come:  
let the nations put their trust in him.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call ...*

Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980) and  
Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

**Video of the song** is found here

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

**Introduction to Micah 6:**

In this powerful section of the book of Michah the prophet sets out a case against God's people, a kind of imagined legal action against Judah. He enlists creation as jury in the case, which is a simple one, namely that God's people are not grateful for all that God has done for them through their history and, as a result, they are not living as God requires in the Law given to Moses. So, God retells Israel's history from the Exodus onwards, a

history of failing to live up to their calling as a nation. But it is also a history marked by God's gracious acts of salvation for the people. The passage ends by suggesting that they have tried to placate God through acts of 'worship', including burnt offerings, as if that is what God really wants. They have even gone to the extreme of child sacrifice despite the Law making it abundantly clear that this is an abomination (Leviticus 18:21, 20:1-5 and Deuteronomy 12:30-31, 18:10).

In verse 8 the oracle ends with one of the most well-known utterances from the prophets. A reminder that what God desires has nothing to do with external shows of piety and everything to do with the heart and how we live. Doing justice and loving kindness and walking humbly with God - it is simple and yet difficult and demanding!

### **Micah 6:1-8:**

Hear what the LORD says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

Hear, you mountains, the case of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has a case against his people, and he will contend with Israel.

"O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD."

"With what shall I come before the LORD and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

### **Confession:**

Merciful God, we confess that we chase after the world's wisdom and forget your way of love. We measure success by wealth and influence, not by kindness or compassion. We avoid conflict rather than making peace and ignore injustice rather than risking comfort.

Forgive us when we honour those with power more than those who bear pain. Forgive us when we call blessed the things you call loss, and curse what you call blessed. Renew our minds O God, let humility be our strength, mercy our courage, and justice our joy. Teach us again to walk humbly with you. **Amen**

### **Hymn: Breathe on me, Breath of God (StF 370)**

Breathe on me, Breath of God;  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldest do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until with thee I will one will,  
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
till I am wholly thine,  
until this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God;  
so shall I never die,  
but live with thee the perfect life  
of thine eternity.

Edwin Hatch (1835–1889)

### **Matthew 5:1-12:**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **Reflection:**

We have in our readings a clear message about the way we are to live...

We hear words such as 'blessed are the poor in spirit' or 'What does the lord require?'

But what does 'to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God' really mean in practise? *How seriously do we take the challenge of the prophet's words?* Or to think about the Beatitudes the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5 it is easy to say '*of course we agree with Jesus, of course we want to live our lives in love*' but in practice do we really?

Faith is sometimes described as being about what we think and trust in, but our readings today are a reminder that faith needs to be embodied in who we are and how we live, just as Jesus embodies the message he brings. Jesus' message spoke of how God's world was one that was upside down where the poor were rich where the rich would be poor where those who weep will laugh. Jesus' message, which is primarily a message about life, is a revolutionary message of real change. Jesus calls us into a new relationship, into new life and into a new way of living...a way of righteousness...

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he made it clear that the world and God's kingdom, God's way are very different - Paul writes of 'wisdom and foolishness'. He points to death as a sign of life, he points to the suffering and pain on the cross as God's wisdom. A turning upside down of all that might seem important.

Many years ago, I came across a book about the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero, maybe you are familiar with his story, it is a story of a total commitment to the Gospel way of love and to the values of God's kingdom (not the worlds). He stood up for the needs of the poor, for those who were oppressed... the book itself was entitled 'Voice of the Voiceless' which I think in itself says something very profound. He was a man whose total commitment to the good news of Christ ultimately led to his assassination. People could not cope with this man who upset the balance, who stood up for the poor and offered hope to the hopeless. It is people like this whose commitment to the way of Jesus is so profound that we are reminded of our own call to follow Jesus. It is this kind of path that we too are called to follow.

We may never be perfect but as Micah reminds us, what God requires is that we do justice, love kindness and that we walk humbly with God. That is not saying we will always get it right or always achieve these things but that is the direction in which we should travel, that is the way of God, a way that is foolishness to the world and the worlds standards. As Paul reminds us, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

As we seek to follow our call to be disciples, as we seek to follow our call to be God's people, let us remember that God's way is a different way, a way of peace, love, justice, a way of sacrifice and self-giving. Not a fashionable way but a way of blessing.

May God give us strength to walk the path in front of us... walk humbly with our God, who walks beside us all the way. Amen

### **Hymn: Show me how to stand for justice (StF 713)**

Show me how to stand for justice:  
how to work for what is right,  
how to challenge false assumptions,  
how to walk within the light.

May I learn to share more freely  
in a world so full of greed,  
showing your immense compassion  
by the life I choose to lead.

Teach my heart to treasure mercy,  
whether given or received —  
for my need has not diminished  
since the day I first believed:  
let me seek no satisfaction  
boasting of what I have done,  
but rejoice that I am pardoned  
and accepted in your Son.

Gladly I embrace a lifestyle  
modelled on your living word,  
in humility submitting  
to the truth which I have heard.  
Make me conscious of your presence  
every day in all I do:  
by your Spirit's gracious prompting  
may I learn to walk with you.

Martin Leckebusch (b. 1962) Tune DIM OND IESU  
(Here is love vast as the ocean)

### **Intercessions:**

God of the poor in spirit, we lift you before we lift before you. For nations consumed by pride and rivalry. Grant leaders who walked humbly and people who seek peace.

For those crushed by poverty or debt, bring justice that restores dignity and compassion that transformed systems.

For the grieving and we re comfort them with your presence. For the persecuted and silenced, protect them with your peace.

For the earth, exploited and exhausted, teach us again to live gently, to honour soil, water and breath as sacred gifts.

For your church, that we may embody the foolishness of love, standing with the broken, living the Beatitudes with joy.

God of blessing, hear our prayer. Make us merciful as you are merciful, and fill our lives with your reconciling love.

*(Offer you God the concerns of your heart... you may wish to conclude these prayers by saying the Lord's Prayer)*

**Amen.**

### **Hymn: Make me a channel of your peace (StF 707)**

Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;  
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you:

*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;  
where there is darkness, only light;  
and where there's sadness, ever joy:

*Refrain*

Make me a channel of your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving unto all that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928–1997)

### **Blessing:**

May the God who blesses the humble strengthen your steps in courage.  
May the Christ who walks with the poor guide your way in peace.  
May the Spirit of justice and joy fill your heart and renew your hope.  
**Amen.**

*Some material from Roots for churches and  
Priming the Lectionary (G Hopkins 2025)*

## **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2026 – Epiphany 5/Ordinary 5**

*This service has been compiled by Rev'd Joy Ventom*

### **Call to Worship:**

God, you call us to walk with you, in justice, in kindness, in humility. Help us to see this is what you require, to leave behind all other expectations and be free to walk into the future you want for us as the people of God.

**Amen.**

### **Hymn: Come let us sing to the one (StF 2)**

Come, let us sing to the One  
To the Father of life,  
For His light fills the earth like the sun;  
Come, tell of the wonders He's done.  
Great is the world He has made,  
Are the mysteries untold,  
Is His measureless power of old;  
Come, come let us sing to our God.

*To our God, who is able  
To strengthen us in His grace,  
Beyond all we imagine,  
Be all glory and praise,  
Be all praise.*

Come, let us sing to the One,  
To the Saviour of life,  
Find the fullness of God in the Son;  
Come, tell of the wonders He's done.  
Wild is the mercy of Christ,  
Is the richness of grace,  
Is the unending life we embrace;  
Come, come let us sing to our God.

Come, let us sing to the One,  
To the Spirit of life,  
Leading us in the way of the Son;  
Come, tell of the wonders He's done.

Strong is the Spirit within,  
Is the boldness to speak,  
Is the power to run when we're weak;  
Come, come let us sing to our God.

**Prayers:**

Inspirational God, you show us the true meaning of fellowship and faithfulness. We rejoice at your presence with us and reassurance. As Father, you require us to bring justice to your world: As Son, you require us to learn from Jesus to love kindness: As Holy Spirit, you require us to walk humbly with you:.

God of justice, we are sorry for the times when we have fallen short of the hopes you have for us and the standards you require. Strengthen and renew us. When pursuing justice seems too demanding, inspire us afresh. When kindness takes too much time and energy, touch and warm our hearts. When humility is not our first approach, help us walk more closely with you. We ask this in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

**Hymn: The Kingdom of God is justice and joy (StF 255)**

The kingdom of God is justice and joy;  
For Jesus restores what sin would destroy.  
God's power and glory in Jesus we know;  
And here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God is mercy and grace;  
The captives are freed, the sinners find place,  
The outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share;  
And hope is awakened in place of despair.

The kingdom of God is challenge and choice:  
Believe the good news, repent and rejoice!  
God's love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross:  
Our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal;  
In Jesus begun, in heaven made whole.  
The heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call;  
And all things cry "Glory!" to God all in all.

## **Micah 6:6-8 - New Living Translation**

<sup>6</sup> What can we bring to the Lord?

Should we bring him burnt offerings?

Should we bow before God Most High

with offerings of yearling calves?

<sup>7</sup> Should we offer him thousands of rams

and ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Should we sacrifice our firstborn children

to pay for our sins?

<sup>8</sup> No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good,

and this is what he requires of you:

to do what is right, to love mercy,

and to walk humbly with your God.

### **Thought for the day:**

Imagine two siblings and a difficult old mother who is now in a care home. One sibling is living just around the corner from her; the other is some distance away. The nearby sibling is visiting almost every day, doing bits of shopping, and listening to their mother's worries and grumbles. The distant sibling announces a visit next week. Then, the day before they are due to arrive they suddenly announce they are not coming as they have to go abroad for work. As an attempt to try and make up for this, the distant sibling sends huge bunches of flowers and boxes of chocolates for both their mum and their sibling. How will the exasperated caring sibling and the disappointed mother react when these arrive? Will the gifts do any good, make amends?

The sibling who is nearby and caring for their mother possibly feels the keenness of injustice. It feels unfair that they are burdened by such a weight of responsibility and the distant sibling doesn't take their fair share. The mother doesn't like being a burden on the nearer sibling.

In addition to this, both mother and the nearby sibling want to be shown some kindness, upfront and personal, by a visit. The token of sending flowers and chocolates seems superficial and not a truthful loving kindness. The reality is that both mother and the other sibling need a visit and an acknowledgement of their struggle.

Finally, both would like to feel that failings have been acknowledged by the absent sibling, that they now have a deepening awareness of the situation and agree that they have fallen short of what was needed. If the distant sibling could show a bit of humility rather than an over-the-top gesture, what a difference that might make.

These days we don't offer placatory gifts of fruit and flowers and livestock to our God as the people of the ancient world did. But how often are we guilty, like the sibling living at a distance, of using customary gestures, the flowers adorning the front of the church, the well-chosen hymns, the good quality coffee afterwards, to hide from our lack of attention to the things God really wants – a determined quest for justice in society, real kindness to our fellow worshippers and the wider community and a recognition – through humility – that we can never do enough. In our relationship with God, can we avoid the mistake of the distant sibling who gave a grand gesture but not the justice, kindness and humility that was required? God calls us to walk alongside and, like the mother, wants presence, not presents!

### **Hymn: God of Justice (StF 699)**

God of Justice, Saviour to all,  
Came to rescue the weak and the poor;  
Chose to serve and not be served.  
Jesus, You have called us.  
Freely we've received now freely we will give.

*We must go, live to feed the hungry  
Stand beside the broken, we must go  
Stepping forward keep us from just singing  
Move us into action, we must go*

To act justly everyday  
Loving mercy in every way  
Walking humbly before You, God  
You have shown us what You require  
Freely we've received now freely we will give

*We must go, live to feed the hungry  
Stand beside the broken, we must go*

*Stepping forward keep us from just singing  
Move us into action, we must go*

Fill us up, send us out  
Fill us up, send us out  
Fill us up, send us out, Lord  
Fill us up, send us out  
Fill us up, and send us out  
Fill us up, send us out, Lord

Fill us up, send us out  
Fill us up, send us out  
Fill us up, send us out, Lord  
Fill us up, send us out  
Fill us up, send us out  
Fill us up, send us out, Lord

*We must go, live to feed the hungry  
Stand beside the broken, we must go  
Stepping forward keep us from just singing  
Move us into action, we must go*

**Prayers of intercession:**

In humility and need, we gather our prayers for others.  
God of justice and mercy,  
**hear our prayers.**

For those peoples whose tragedies, injustice, crisis and suffering make the news headlines today.  
God of justice and mercy,  
**hear our prayers.**

For those who do not know you, who do not know the depths of your love and care, who live with poverty of spirit and understanding, confusion and denial of you. For them all, may your Spirit speak to them and may the deeds and the words and the actions of how we live, shine with your Spirit for them. For those who know you but know they fall short of what you call them to be, give them encouragement to strive more and learn more and believe more.

God of justice and mercy,  
**hear our prayers.**

We pray for those who mourn, who have had their lives changed, turned upside down by the death of family, friends or neighbours. In their grief may we and you be a comfort to them. A strength in times of trouble, a light to lead the way in their darkness.

God of justice and mercy,  
**hear our prayers.**

We pray for those whose arrogance, pride and vanity stop them from seeing the truth about themselves and the needs of others. For those who do not know what humility is and where it might lead them.

God of justice and mercy,  
**hear our prayers.**

We pray for those who daily, no matter what the cost to themselves, speak out your words of truth, who live lives reflecting your glory, who each day step-out to help and heal and care and show your love even in face of danger.

God of justice and mercy,  
**hear our prayers.**

We pray for those who find it within them to forgive others who really repent, those who forgive for the good of others and society, those who show mercy and compassion.

God of justice and mercy,  
**hear our prayers.**

We pray for those who work for peace, who strive for peace, who yearn for peace. Those who engage at the highest levels of state seeking peace and those who stand on the battlefield yearning for conflict to end and peace to be restored. For those caught in the middle, who fell helpless and hopeless in the face of war and aggression.

In the name and for the sake of Jesus.

**Amen.**

### **Hymn: Hear the call of the kingdom (StF 407)**

Hear the call of the kingdom  
Lift your eyes to the King  
Let His song rise within you  
As a fragrant offering  
Of how God rich in mercy  
Came in Christ to redeem  
All who trust in His unfailing grace

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
To be children of light  
With the mercy of heaven  
The humility of Christ  
Walking justly before Him  
Loving all that is right  
That the life of Christ may shine through us

*King of Heaven we will answer the call  
We will follow bringing hope to the world  
Filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
Salvation in Jesus' name*

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
To reach out to the lost  
With the Father's compassion  
In the wonder of the cross  
Bringing peace and forgiveness  
And a hope yet to come  
Let the nations put their trust in Him

### **Blessing:**

O God, what do you require of us?  
Do you require us to be the best and do the most? No.  
Do you require us to turn our hearts to you and live with justice, kindness and humility? Yes.  
Give us what we need to adopt the beautiful attitudes you want for your people **Amen**

## **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026 – Transfiguration Sunday**

*This service has been compiled by Rev'd Liz Singleton*

The glory of God blazes out in today's readings, inviting us to enjoy a time of blessing and encouragement before we set out on our journey through Lent, following Christ in the way of the cross.

### **Hymn: Immortal, invisible, God only wise (StF 55)**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might -  
thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;  
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on a tree,  
and wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render: O help us to see  
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

### **Prayer:**

Eternal, majestic God,  
creator of life and light,  
you bring order out of chaos  
and light out of darkness.

We praise and adore you.  
All glory and majesty,  
wisdom and authority  
belong to you, now and for ever. Amen

**OT Reading: Exodus 34: 29 – 35 NLT**

When Moses came down Mount Sinai carrying the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, he wasn't aware that his face had become radiant because he had spoken to the LORD. So when Aaron and the people of Israel saw the radiance of Moses' face, they were afraid to come near him.

But Moses called out to them and asked Aaron and all the leaders of the community to come over, and he talked with them. Then all the people of Israel approached him, and Moses gave them all the instructions the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking with them, he covered his face with a veil. But whenever he went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he would remove the veil until he came out again. Then he would give the people whatever instructions the LORD had given him, and the people of Israel would see the radiant glow of his face. So he would put the veil over his face until he returned to speak with the LORD.

**Reflection:**

The story of Moses on Mount Sinai shows what can happen when people draw near to God in an active and intentional way. As Moses came back down the mountain, unbeknown to him, the reflected glory of God shone from his face. The glory only lasted for a while, however. Like the manna in the wilderness that the Israelites had to collect every day, so the radiance that shone from Moses was only temporary but it encouraged him to get into the habit of spending time with God – to top up with God's glory if you like. Recharging his spiritual batteries regularly so that God's glory reflected from him all the time instead of now and again.

*If you have a hand mirror, and the light is right, use it to catch the light and reflect it around the room.....*

Mirrors are excellent at spreading light around because they are able to reflect light. When Moses came down the mountain he was like a mirror reflecting the light of God's glory. The same happened whenever he was in God's company. We sometimes talk about people looking radiantly happy or glowing with happiness – newly-wed couples, students hearing they've passed their exams, children on their birthday. How we are feeling and thinking inside can change the way we look on the outside.

When Jesus was on earth, three of his close friends were on a mountain with him when he was praying, and they saw him not just with a radiant face but completely shining or transfigured. What they were seeing was the glory of God in Jesus, who was and is completely at one with God, his Father. They heard God's voice explaining who Jesus was and telling them to listen to him, not like listening to music in the background, but really attentive listening, like you would listen to instructions for flying a plane if you were the only person on board able to bring it safely to land. When we live our lives close to Jesus like this, listening to his quiet voice guiding us, talking over our problems and happiness with him, and working at living a good life, then gradually our faces will start to show some of God's glory, and our lives will start to shine, reflecting God's loving nature like mirrors reflecting the light.

### **NT Reading: Luke 9: 28 – 36**

About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly, two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus. They were glorious to see. And they were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

Peter and the others had fallen asleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him. As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, blurted out, "Master, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But even as he was saying this, a cloud overshadowed them, and terror gripped them as the cloud covered them.

Then a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him.” When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone. They didn’t tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

### **Hymn: Christ, whose glory fills the skies (StF 134)**

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,  
Christ, the true, the only Light,  
Sun of Righteousness, arise,  
triumph o'er the shades of night;  
Day-spring from on high, be near;  
Day-star in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn  
unaccompanied by thee:  
joyless is the day's return,  
till thy mercy's beams I see,  
till they inward light impart,  
glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine;  
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;  
fill me, radiancy divine;  
scatter all my unbelief;  
more and more thyself display,  
shining to the perfect day.

### **Reflection:**

Our lives are influenced by the behaviour and attitudes of those around us. And as such, being in the presence of Jesus changes people.....and the accounts of the disciples, their responses, questions, and reactions provide us with the first record of this happening. As a result of their experiences two specific things happened to the disciples. Firstly, **they were transformed when they saw Jesus for who he really is.** And secondly, **they were transformed when they began to see themselves for who they really were.** It’s fascinating as you read the gospels to see the change in the disciples as they slowly began to understand that there was something about Jesus that went beyond mere humanity. They move

between disbelief, incredulity and amazement as they wrestle with that question ‘Who do you say I am?’ that Jesus asks of them in Matthew 16. Their attitudes and their own personal behaviours change as they see Jesus calm a storm, heal lepers, give sight to blind people and even raise the dead. Through the stories, the parables, he shares with them he challenges them to look at things differently, to think about others, to recognise that not everyone is the same but that everyone has value. Their time spent with Jesus proved to be an emotional rollercoaster for the disciples but, ultimately, their lives were transformed and they came to reflect the glory of God in their own lives in the way that they had seen it reflected in, and through, the life of Jesus.

Chapter 7 of *A Wind in the Willows* tells the story of little Portly, the troublesome son of Otter, who has gone missing – again! Rat and Mole go looking for him. As they work their way upstream in their boat they become aware of haunting yet beautiful music. It is the music of Pan, who in this scenario is the god of the animals, and it leads them to find Portly. Kenneth Grahame describes Mole’s reaction at this moment like this.....’Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror – indeed he felt wonderfully at peace and happy – but it was an awe that smote and held him and, without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august Presence was very, very near.’ That was the feeling that the disciples had at times in the presence of Jesus and it is the feeling we too can experience when we catch even a glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ. It is life-changing.

Seeing Jesus for who he really is transforms us because, in recognising the true nature of Jesus, we see ourselves and begin to recognise what needs to change within us. In the light of Jesus’ holiness we become aware of our own imperfections. You may think that the fascias on your house are white until it snows as it did a few weeks ago. Against the whiteness of the snow you notice the yellowing process that has taken place on those parts of the building that once were clean and fresh. So it is with us in the presence of Jesus.

There are many myths told about Helen of Troy. One story goes that the beautiful Helen was kidnapped and taken to another land. She lost her memory and unable to remember her name or status she fell into a desperate state. In Troy she was never forgotten and one particular friend/admirer never lost faith that Helen was alive somewhere and he went to search for her. One day on the waterfront of a strange city he saw a wretched woman with deep lines across her face and wearing tattered clothes. He was sure it was Helen. Going up to her he asked her name but he didn't recognise the name she gave him. Still convinced it was Helen he asked to see her hands – hands that he knew so well – and he gasped. "You are Helen! You are Helen of Troy!" The fog in her mind seemed to clear and a sense of realisation came over her face. Helen discovered her lost self, and she put her arms around her old friend and wept. Discarding the tattered clothes she once again became the queen she was born to be.

How true to fact that story is I don't know, but it could be our story, yours and mine. We were not created for sin but for salvation. When we see ourselves as God created us to be, then the possibility of transformation is ours.

Like the disciples we can, and need, to see Jesus as he really is. Like the disciples we can, and need, to see ourselves for who we really are.

### **Hymn: The splendour of the King (How great is our God) (StF 15)**

The splendour of the King,  
clothed in majesty;  
let all the earth rejoice,  
let all the earth rejoice.  
He wraps himself in light  
and darkness tries to hide,  
and trembles at his voice,  
and trembles at His voice.

*How great is our God, sing with me,  
how great is our God, and all will see  
how great, how great is our God.*

Age to age he stands,  
and time is in his hands;  
beginning and the end,  
beginning and the end.

The Godhead, Three in One,  
Father, Spirit, Son,  
the Lion and the Lamb,  
the Lion and the Lamb.

*How great is our God, sing with me,  
how great is our God, and all will see  
how great, how great is our God.*

Name above all names,  
worthy of all praise;  
my heart will sing:  
how great is our God.

Name above all names,  
worthy of all praise;  
my heart will sing:  
how great is our God.

*How great is our God, sing with me,  
how great is our God, and all will see  
how great, how great is our God.*

### **Reflection:**

Seeing Jesus for who he really is, glimpsing the glory of God that radiates from him, transformed the disciples in a third way. **They saw the world for which Jesus gave his life.**

Rabbi Abraham Heschel tells a parable about a kingdom in which the grain crop was poisoned. Everyone who ate the grain went crazy. But because there were few other food supplies, the people were faced with eating the grain or starving. Surveying the situation, the king said, “Very well, then, let us eat the grain, for we cannot starve. But at the same time let us feed a few people on a different diet so we will at least have some people who will know why we are crazy.” And that is what they did.

We live in a crazy world - a world of terror and tragedies that defy comprehension. And in this crazy world there needs to be some people who are dedicated to a saner way of living – people who can show love and forgiveness and offer healing. Jesus died to give the world that kind of sanity.

Peter attempted to hold on to the glory of the moment on the mountain. He couldn't. He and the others had to come down and set out on the difficult journey to Jerusalem. But we should never forget that they came away from that moment with the voice from heaven ringing in their ears: 'This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him.'

Moses had come down from the mountain bearing tablets of stone, but for the disciples, and all of humanity ever since, the teachings of Jesus were to be the way in which God offered his guidance through life.

This week we enter our journey through Lent. I wonder how you will be listening to Jesus in the weeks to come? How do you plan to spend time with him and so recharge your spiritual batteries that God's glory might be reflected through you? How might you play your small part through your transformed life to transform the bit of the world that is around you?

### **Hymn: Be still, for the presence of the Lord (StF 20)**

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One is here;  
come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found -  
we stand on holy ground.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One is here

Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned:  
how awesome is the sight -  
our radiant King of light!

Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place;  
he comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace:  
no work too hard for him -  
in faith receive from him.

Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.

**Prayers:**

As God's people, let us pray to him now.

Lord God, we long to shine with your light.  
Set our hearts on fire with love for you and for one another.  
May our lives proclaim:  
**that the Lord our God is holy.**

Lord God, help us to focus our attention on you,  
to spend time with you,  
that our lives may reflect your glory.  
May our lives proclaim:  
**that the Lord our God is holy.**

Lord God, send lives of light among the darkness  
of injustice, corruption and despair,  
and strengthen those who are already  
shining in the dark places of the world.

May our lives proclaim:  
**that the Lord our God is holy.**

Lord God, come into our homes and make them places of welcome  
where your love is woven into all our relationships.  
And we think of those who are struggling today –  
give courage to those who suffer physical pain,  
or mental or emotional anguish.  
Enable them to draw on your resources to find the strength

and the comfort that they need.

May our lives proclaim:

**that the Lord our God is holy.**

Lord God, we remember those who have died.

May you welcome them into your kingdom of everlasting light.

Comfort those who mourn

and when the day comes

we pray you will bring us all to spend eternity

in the radiance of your presence.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **Hymn: Rejoice, the Lord is King! (StF 335)**

Rejoice, the Lord is King!

Your Lord and King adore;

mortals, give thanks, and sing,

and triumph evermore:

*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice! Again I say: rejoice!*

Jesus the Saviour reigns,

the God of truth and love;

when he had purged our stains,

he took his seat above:

His kingdom cannot fail,

he rules o'er earth and heaven;

the keys of death and hell

are to our Jesus given:

He sits at God's right hand

till all his foes submit,

and bow to his command,

and fall beneath his feet:

Rejoice in glorious hope;  
Jesus the Judge shall come,  
and take his servants up  
to their eternal home:

*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;  
God's trumpet-call shall sound: rejoice!*

**Closing words:**

Go in peace to meet God in the extraordinary and in the ordinary.  
Go and listen. Go and hear. Go and respond.  
And know that God will give you peace.  
Amen

## **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 – The First Sunday of Lent**

*This service has been compiled by Mrs Sheila Heap*

**Wherever you are, welcome to this time of worship.  
May you find it to be a time of blessing.**

### **Call to Worship:**

Rejoice in the Lord, for He calls us to be honest with Him,  
offering His forgiveness, to teach us the way to go as we make our  
choices.

Let us walk with Him, in faith. **Amen.**

### **Hymn: All My Days (StF 343)**

All my days, I will sing this song of gladness,  
Give my praise to the fountains of delight:  
For in my helplessness You heard my cry,  
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the Cross of my Redeemer,  
I will sing of the blood that never fails,  
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,  
Of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,  
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,  
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life,  
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,  
You're the risen One, You're the Champion,  
And You reign, You reign, over all.*

I long to be where the praise is never ending,  
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades,  
Where countless worshippers will share one song,  
And cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!

*Beautiful Saviour .....*

*Stuart Townend (b. 1963)*

### **Prayer of Praise and Adoration:**

Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for Your love, courage and commitment in walking the way of the Cross.

We thank You that, though You had every reason to give in to temptation, You stood firm to the end, refusing to compromise Your calling.

In our weakness we stand in such contrast to Your strength - the ease with which we are lead astray;

the readiness with which we compromise our principles, preferring instead the excuses with which we shut out Your voice, preferring to follow our own choices instead of Yours.

Help us to follow You more faithfully, not in any attempt to earn Your love, for we are already enveloped in it, but simply to respond to it, celebrating the grace that reconciles us to You, despite all that keeps us apart. **Amen.**

### **Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:**

Faithful God, we are sorry for the times when what we have doesn't satisfy us and we crave for more.

We are sorry for when we are persuaded to make choices we know to be wrong.

We are sorry for when we resent the gifts of others and dismiss our own blessings.

We are sorry for when we are tested and look to our strength and not Yours to get us through.

Forgive us, and help us to refocus on You and Your abundance.

God of stability and strength,

for Your understanding of our weakness and the generosity of Your forgiveness,

we give You heartfelt thanks and pledge to look to Your Son for guidance in our choices, to follow in His footsteps

and to support others going through testing times.

We pray in His name and in His love. **Amen.**

**You may like to join in the words of the Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven ..... Amen**

The season of Lent begins with a recognition of our sinfulness, and its origins, and the need for God's forgiveness. At the same time, it recalls Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness as a model for how we face testing times in our walk with God. These are profound Lenten texts that take us into the beating heart of our relationship with God in a world of trouble and temptation. They are texts that remind us that God has made us moral agents capable of choice and that God is always waiting to forgive and restore us when we make the wrong one.

## **Reading: Genesis chapter 2 vs. 15 – 17 and chapter 3 cs. 1 – 7 NIV**

### **Introduction:**

Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden and commanded to care for it but warned not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Later, the serpent deceives Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, shared with Adam; they both realise they are naked and cover themselves.

Half-truths and deceptions can be so convincing, making it easy for us to succumb to temptation without noticing. We live in a world where the media can share unchecked reports and AI can generate facts or images in an instant: this week we explore how our trust in God must guide us to discern how to live with testing of wants and needs as well as truth and uncertainty.

<sup>15</sup> The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

<sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

<sup>4</sup> "You will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

<sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

**Hymn: Jesus, Tempted in the Desert (StF 237) (Alternate tune: Bethany no. 25)**

Jesus, tempted in the desert,  
Lonely, hungry, filled with dread:  
'Use your power,' the tempter tells Him;  
turn these barren rocks to bread!'  
'Not alone by bread,' He answers,  
'can the human heart be filled.  
Only by the Word that calls us  
is a deepest hunger stilled!'

Jesus, tempted at the temple,  
high above its ancient wall:  
'Throw yourself from lofty turret;  
angels wait to break your fall!'  
Jesus shuns such empty marvels,  
feats that fickle crowds request:  
'God, whose grace protects, preserves us,  
we must never vainly test.'

Jesus, tempted on the mountain  
by the lure of vast domain:  
'Fall before me! Be my servant!  
Glory, fame, You're sure to gain!'  
Jesus sees the dazzling vision,  
turns His eyes another way:  
'God alone deserves our homage!  
God alone will I obey!'

When we face temptation's power,  
Lonely, struggling, filled with dread,

Christ, who knew the tempter's power,  
come and be our living bread.  
By Your grace, protect, preserve us  
lest we fall, Your trust betray,  
Yours, above all other voices,  
be the Word we hear, obey.

*Herman G. Stuempfle Jnr. (1921 – 2007)*

### **Reading: Matthew chapter 4 vs. 1-11 NIV**

#### **Introduction:**

The Gospel reading is not specifically about sin, rather it is all about choices. God's Spirit drives Jesus into the desert to be tested by 'the devil'. Three specific moments of testing are mentioned, all of them broadly political, demonstrating that these temptations are like the scene in the garden where what is at stake is the human desire for good and capacity to partner with God in the management of creation, the governance of the world.

It is a test that Jesus passes unlike the first couple in the garden. We also know that He will face these challenges many more times on His journey to and through the Cross. Jesus passes the test because He has paid attention to what God has said and chosen to obey it whatever others might suggest.

<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came to Him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

<sup>4</sup>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took Him to the holy city and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup>"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.' "

<sup>7</sup>Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " <sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed

Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.<sup>9</sup> "All this I will give You," he said, "if You will bow down and worship me."

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.' "

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him.

When faced with a life-changing choice, author, David Ritter, wrote this poem:

I came upon a fork in the road  
and paused to have a look.  
I was weary and filled with burdens,  
ashamed of past roads I took.  
The road I was on was battered and worn,  
I feared another mistake.  
So I bowed my head to say a prayer,  
before choosing which road to take.

After my prayer, I looked to my left,  
that path was cold, dark and bare.  
And I would have wandered off that way  
if my God did not care.  
He spoke to me in a still small voice  
"Why not try something new?  
You don't have to keep living this way,  
there's a better road for you."

I humbly mustered up the courage,  
to step towards the right.  
Suddenly I became misty-eyed  
in God's glorious light.  
The path was warm, bright and peaceful,  
His love gently flowed.  
And I'm ever grateful for His guidance,  
facing the fork in the road.

Copyright: David Ritter

## Reflection: 'CHOICES'

Walk with me, if you will, into the most magnificent garden you can imagine. The perfume of the flowers overwhelms your senses as you wander through. There is every colour, variety and scent, both bold and delicate delighting the senses in borders, beds and planters. In the distance, you see fruit trees and as you approach, you meander through plots of fruit bushes - everything you can think of: ripe, juicy strawberries, blackcurrants bursting with juice, red and white currents growing side by side, thorny gooseberries keeping away the weeds, raspberries - just right for jam making. Next comes vineyards, rows and rows of heavy bunches of grapes hanging down, almost begging to be picked; large bushes of luscious fruits of every kind leaning against walls, ripened by the warmth of the sun: peaches – large and inviting, apricots dangling from the stalks, plums, dark skinned contrasting the lighter colours. Rows of peas are waiting for podding, lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers ready for salads; kidney beans climbing canes with their red flowers, cauliflowers showing their white centres. We carry on into an orchard filled with trees of every kind: rosy, red apples - just ripe for eating, large green apples destined for pies and crumbles, pears waiting to be poached and dipped in chocolate - such delights stretching as far as the eye can see. We're just reaching out to pick a perfectly formed apple when, in the corner of our eye, we spot a tree, almost hidden, with a fruit we do not recognise. We must get closer to see. There is a sign on the trunk: **'DO NOT PICK THE FRUIT FROM THIS TREE'**. We wonder: Who says? Why should it be different from any other? Perhaps it's because this fruit tastes better than all the rest. We have to make a choice. Obey or ignore the sign. We look around, there's no one about, nobody would see, one would never be missed. So we choose - just pick one and take a bite. Crunch! Eburgh! It tastes horrid, it's sour, acidic, unripened. It's absolutely foul, and we spit it out. Immediately, the garden looks bare, barren, devoid of produce, and we stand there, ashamed of ourselves. Why didn't we take notice of the sign on the tree? We're not alone - most people would have done the same. Why? Because we are human and God blessed us with the gift of making our own choices. But is that something we can do of our own volition - or do we need guidance and help to ensure we make the right choice? Some choices are easy - we would not go out in a storm dressed for the beach!

It doesn't need to be a serpent! There is so much in life today that puts that big ? in our minds and makes making right choices so difficult.

Eve would not have made the wrong choice if she had followed God's prompting. Choosing is a matter of will. She knew that the tree was out of bounds - but there was that voice in her mind that made her question how she made that choice and the consequences were immediate. The harmony between God and His created world and everything within was shattered.

Matthew tells us of the choices Jesus was confronted with as the Spirit led Him Into the deserts to spend time alone in God's presence to prepare for His ministry. Right at the start, an evil presence creates doubts in His mind that could affect His choices. Should he:

- Turn stone into bread - in other words- choose to use His power for the wrong purposes.
- Jump from the rock - in other words - choose to gain popularity by performance.
- Serve the wrong master - in other words - the temptation to idolatry.

So how did Jesus deal with challenging choices?

After His Baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus needs time to prepare for His public ministry in order that He follow the path God had prepared for Him. The Spirit which had filled Him at His Baptism now leads Him Into the desert where He will be confronted by choices that would test His dependence on God.

In the first and second, His sense of identity is tested. "If You are the Son of God" [Chapter 4 vs. 3 & 6]. Did Jesus have this intimate relationship with and obedience to God? Intense hunger could easily have driven Jesus to give in to temptation. In each case, Jesus chooses the words of Deuteronomy to counter the temptation: "Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." [Chapter 8 v.3].

Secondly comes the temptation to put Himself in danger by jumping from the highest point of the Jerusalem Temple. His safety was guaranteed – God would ensure that, but the words of Deuteronomy again are the response:[Chapter 6 v 16].

Thirdly comes the temptation to put His trust in the powers of evil to gain the whole world by first worshipping powers other than of God. As the Son of God, He already possessed that power, so why would He choose something already His? His response was: "Fear the Lord your God, serve Him only. [Chapter 6 v. 13].

Matthew shows that Jesus chose to be fully faithful to God through all these deserts temptations - a choice which was to characterise His life. God provided for Jesus in the desert and Jesus proved Himself the obedient Son. Had he have chosen otherwise; He would have gained nothing but lost everything.

What about us? We all face choices every day and temptation has become an increasing part of our culture, and we are constantly being tempted to choose to fall away from our faith by the lure of self-satisfaction and materialism. If this all sounds very negative - here's another way of looking at it: it might mean that we are free to reject God, **BUT**, it also means that we are free to choose God despite those forces that prey upon life.

### **A final thought:**

John had at last got his chance to make a success of himself. He was going into the final interview for the biggest contract he had ever written. In the office of the executive buyer, her assistant brought him a cup of coffee. Everything was looking good. Then the assistant re-entered the office and spoke briefly with the executive who then apologised as she had to leave the office for a couple of minutes to deal with another matter. The sales executive looked around the beautifully appointed office. He noticed the family pictures on her desk. Then, he noticed a contract from a competitive bidder. Leaning forward he could see the columns of figures, but the total was obscured by a cola can. Should he move the can and see the competitor's bid? What harm could there be in reading her confidential information? After all, she had left it in plain sight. He chose to take a peek. As he lifted the can, it wasn't filled with coke, rather it was bottomless and filled with hundreds and thousands cake decorations which gushed all over the desk and carpet. His attempt at cheating was exposed! Coincidence or test? I think you've guessed the right answer!

Not every choice is so obvious. Not every failure is so embarrassing, but every temptation is a choice. As we begin our Lenten journey with Jesus, we will face many choices as we walk with Him to the Cross. There will be pitfalls along the way, but through worship, prayer, studying Scripture and sharing with others, we may find our choices much easier to make. Our devotion will lead us to the ultimate goal – everlasting life in the presence of our Lord. No nasty, sour, acidic tastes, but pure love of the sweetest kind. **Amen.**

### **Hymn: Take This Moment (StF 513)**

Take this moment, sign and space;  
Take my friends around;  
Here among us make the place.  
Where Your love is found.

Take the time to call my name,  
Take the time to mend  
Who I am and what I've been,  
All I've failed to tend.

Take the tiredness of my days,  
Take my past regret,  
Letting Your forgiveness touch  
All I can't forget.

Take the little child in me,  
Scared of growing old;  
Help me here to find my worth  
Made in Christ's own mould.

Take my talents, take my skills,  
Take what's yet to be;  
Let my life be Yours, and yet,  
Let it still be me.

*John L Bell b. 1949 & Graham Maule (b. 1958)*

### **Prayers of Love and Concern:**

Today, we use the words of Singing the Faith 693 as the basis of our prayers:

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,  
Lord in Your suffering world this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,  
Sunrise to sunset, Your Kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,  
work for all people, trade for their skills;  
land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,  
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,  
cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.

Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green,  
Christ for the bitterness, His Cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams,  
plundered and poisoned - our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed;  
make us content with the things that we need.

Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame  
until Your justice burns brightly again;  
until the nations learn of Your ways,  
seek Your salvation and bring You their praise.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray,  
melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain;  
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

So as we offer all our prayers for the world, our country, the Church, our communities, our families, friends and ourselves, may God's Spirit rest upon us, fill us, equip us and work through us. **Amen.**

### **Hymn: Have You Heard God's Voice? (StF 662)**

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart being stirred?

Are you still prepared to follow?

Have you made a choice to remain and serve, though the way be rough and narrow?

*Chorus: Will you walk the path that will cost you much and embrace the pain and sorrow?*

*Will you trust the One who entrusts to you the disciples of tomorrow?*

Will you use your voice, will you not sit down  
when the multitudes are silent?

Will you make a choice to stand your ground  
when the crowds are turning violent?

In your city streets will you be God's heart?

Will you listen to the voiceless?

Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,  
will you share your faith with the faithless?

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith  
and believe it could be different?

Will you share your views using words of grace?

Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much  
and embrace the pain and sorrow;  
we will trust in One who entrusts to us  
the disciples of tomorrow.*

*Jacqueline G. Jones*

### **Blessing:**

Let us walk through Lent with the love of God surrounding us.

Let us walk through Lent with the wisdom of God guiding us.

Let us walk through Lent with our trust in God protecting us.

In the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*Some material is adapted from 'Roots For Churches'*

**Our printed services do not include an offering but if you feel you would like to respond to God's love in this way please contact the treasurer of your church or contact the Circuit Office. Thank you.**

If you no longer wish to receive this printed sheet, could you let either your Minister or the Circuit Office (tel: 01782 612648)  
e-mail: [northstafscircuit@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:northstafscircuit@hotmail.co.uk)) know please, or equally, please let us know if there's someone you know who would like to receive it. CCLI No. 1256474