

North Staffordshire Circuit (11/22)

Service Sheets For the Month of September 2026

Compiled by:
Rev'd Joy Ventom
Rev'd Richard Parkes
Mr Ryan Davies
Mrs Sheila Heap

Sunday 6th September 2026 – 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

This service was compiled by Rev'd Joy Ventom

Call to Worship:

Let's get ready!

Let's get ready to meet God here together.

Let's get ready to listen to God's Word.

Let's get ready to explore God's message.

Let's get ready to pray for ourselves and the world.

Let's get ready to worship!

Hymn: Jesus Calls Us Here To Meet Him (StF 28)

Jesus calls us here to meet him as,
through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour,
class and gender neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter

in their common search for truth.

A Prayer Of Adoration:

God of the present and of the past, for all that you have done in the lives of your people, we praise you.

For all the ways you invite us to follow and serve you, we praise you.

For the continuity of faith through the ages, we praise you.

Reading your Word, remembering your faithfulness, following your precepts, together as your people, we praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

A Prayer Of Confession:

Forgive us, living God, for those moments when we have been slow to respond

to your prompting, when we haven't been ready to give up our time, our resources, our 'self' to serve you, when we have walked alone, instead of walking with others, when, in chasing a future, we have trampled on the past.

Forgive us and unite us as your people, equipped to share our faith and your love.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Assurance Of Forgiveness:

Jesus, lamb of God, you have brought us out of the land of oppression and failure; guiding us through want, trauma and conflict; blessing us with new hope, new opportunities and a new story; uniting us with those who have gone before;

strengthening our fellowship with those around us, and inspiring us to witness to those who will come after us, that your kingdom may come and your will be done, today and always. Amen.

Hymn: One More Step Along The World I Go (StF 476)

One more step along the world I go,

One more step along the world I go;

From the old things to the new,

Keep me travelling along with you:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;
Keep me travelling along with you.

Round the corners of the world I turn,
More and more about the world I learn;
All the new things that I see
You'll be looking at along with me.
And it's from ...

As I travel through the bad and good,
Keep me travelling the way I should.
Where I see no way to go,
You'll be telling me the way, I know.
And it's from ...

Give me courage when the world is rough,
Keep me loving though the world is tough;
Leap and sing in all I do,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from ...

You are older than the world can be,
You are younger than the life in me;
Ever old and ever new,
Keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from

Exodus 12:1-14:

12 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbour shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶ and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. ^[a]

⁷ “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰ And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹ In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

Thought For The Day:

Today's passages offer perspectives on how to deal with cycles of conflict. The Israelites have lived under slavery in Egypt and are longing to be set free. But all Moses' attempts to persuade Pharaoh to release them are unsuccessful, and we are told that Pharaoh 'hardened his heart' against them. The plagues represent increasingly strong consequences to this unjust treatment. We might feel uncomfortable with the idea that God had to use violence, even as a last resort. What kind of God suggests the death of all firstborn sons? One answer is that this is the kind of God who liberates slaves and oppressed people. This Passover story is retold each year in Jewish households as a reminder of their liberation from slavery and the journey that followed to God's Promised Land. Liberation theologians from oppressed communities around the world have highlighted how God asks us to be ready for justice and offers freedom from whatever imprisons us.

The Gospel passage (**Matthew 18:15-20**) picks up this theme of breaking the cycle of conflict. Church leaders have sometimes used it to protect church reputations and avoid wider justice, for example, by dealing with

cases of abuse within the church rather than seeking appropriate criminal justice. If we read this passage carefully, we see it's actually a process of:

1. local resolution – first trying to resolve conflict between the parties;
2. accountability – explaining grievances in front of witnesses;
3. transparency – reporting to the whole church;
4. value-based risk management – if people refuse to change, separation and transformation.

Notably, Jesus' attitude toward Gentiles was one of inclusion and healing, as seen in the Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10) and the Canaanite woman's daughter (**Matthew 15:21-28**).

We might recognise this cycle in schools, for example, where a restorative approach to bullying and conflict involves pupils as well as staff. We can see this in our workplaces, where grievance and disciplinary processes have progressive stages, from local resolution to dismissal. I wonder how well we deal with disagreement with our family, our friends, and here in our church? Is there a space where we can safely talk things through and try to find common ground? Can we get expert help, such as mediation, when we need it?

We'll always have to deal with unexpected and challenging things in life. In the Exodus passage, God gives clear instructions to the Israelites about how to be prepared for the journey ahead. They have to get ready in a hurry, and there isn't time for more than the basics – so we'll see as we read more of the Exodus story over the next weeks that things didn't always go as planned. There were squabbles and challenges ahead, but, for now, they were safe.

Jesus provides guidance for how Christians can be prepared to deal with the challenges and disagreements. Following God doesn't mean that all our faults and problems just disappear and life is perfect. Rather, we are equipped to work through life's challenges together and, given the chance to put things right, balancing both justice and mercy. Are we ready for God to move in our lives – bringing freedom and restoration in difficult situations? How might we be prepared to welcome God into those situations and be prepared to be led by God if and when those situations arise?

Hymn: It Is God Who Holds The Nations In The Hollow Of His Hand (StF 705)

It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand;
It is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land;
It is God who builds the city on the Rock and not on sand;
May the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us to use the present hour;
Who recalls us to our senses when a nations life turns sour;
In the discipline of freedom we shall know God's saving power;
May the living God be praised!

When a thankful nation looking back has cause to celebrate
Those who win our admiration by their service to the state;
When self-giving is a measure of the greatest of the great;
May the living God be praised.

God reminds us every sunrise that the world is ours on lease;
For the sake of life tomorrow may our love for it increase;
May all races live together, share its riches, be at peace;
May the living God be praised!

Prayers Of Intercession:

Lord God, we come before you now, so conscious of the conflicts in the wider world, but also those much nearer to home, and in our own hearts and minds.

Sometimes, Lord, we just want to raise our hands in horror at the things we see around us, the things we hear in the news.

But, Lord, we know what we need to do – we raise our hands to you in prayer,

for you can show us how to do conflict well.

Teach us your ways, Lord, **and bring peace to your people.**

We pray for our world, for countries ravaged by war, for situations of conflict where the future seems to hold no hope, no reconciliation or resolution. Where man's inhumanity to man, makes countless thousands mourn.

Teach us your ways, Lord, **and bring peace to your people.**

We pray for your church, Lord, your body, gathering together over all the world, but with so many different challenges and conflicts to face. Bind us all together in your love, we pray.

Teach us your ways, Lord, **and bring peace to your people.**

We pray for our local communities. Whether we live among green fields or in the heart of the city, we cannot turn a blind eye to needs around us.

May we live in harmony together, always open to your presence, however hidden it may seem;

always asking what Jesus would do, as we seek to resolve our conflicts.

Teach us your ways, Lord, **and bring peace to your people.**

As the new school year gets underway we pray for wisdom, understanding and care for teachers as they get to know their students – and vice versa.

We pray that conflicts won't be swept under the table, that young people will learn to understand and navigate them, to realise that violence is never the answer.

Teach us your ways, Lord, **and bring peace to your people.**

Lord God, whose love knows no bounds, no boundaries, help us to do conflict well, whatever our situation. Amen.

Hymn: O Thou Who Camest From Above (StF 564)

O Thou who camest from above,
the pure celestial fire to 'impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
upon the altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return,
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work and speak and think for Thee,
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up Thy gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,

till death Thy endless mercies seal,
and make my sacrifice complete.

Blessing:

Lord, now we're Ready to follow you,
we're all Set to carry your message,
and Go out into the world,
spreading your love and peace.
Amen.

Sunday 13th September 2026 – 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Education Sunday)

This service was compiled by Rev'd Richard Parkes

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

Hymn: Praise To The Lord (StF 88)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear; brothers and sisters draw near,
Praise him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
Surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend thee.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
Who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,
Fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee.
Then to thy need he like a mother doth speed,
Spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord, who, when darkness of sin is abounding,
Who, when the godless are do triumph, all virtue confounding,
Sheddeth his light, chaseth the horrors of night,
Saints with his mercy surrounding!

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.
Let the Amen sound from his people again;
Gladly for aye adore him.

*Joachim Neander (1650-1680), translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827-
1878)*

and Rupert Davies (1909-1994)

Prayers of Praise (based on In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified)

If you are reading this online you can watch the song by following this link:

[https://www.google.com/search?q=in+my+life+lord+be+glorified+song&ca_esv=88955b1080c15925&sxsrf=APpeQnvcaPHjoQKU-sZx5dx3e3YByelCbww%3A1787760648198&source=hp&ei=CBCPav7UCJ7Yhb1P0e3KiAs&iflsig=ABILxe8AAAAAao8eGB7dLrrRNthR5BL0yyqcWoC_CXEm&gs_ssp=eJzj4tVP1zc0LEkyMlivLDc3YPRSzMxTyK1UyMlMS1XlyS9KUUhKVUjPyS_KTMtMTVEozs9LBwCK_hCY&oq=ln+&gs_lp=Egdnd3Mtd2l6lgNJbiAqAggAMgQQLhgnMgQQlxgnMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQLhiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQLhiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDSKAWUABY1ANwAHgAkAEAmAGLCKABtRCqAQkyLTEuNi0xLjG4AQHIAQD4AQGYAgOgApkRmAMAKgcHMy0xLjYtMqAHITCyBwczLTEuNi0yuAeZEclHBzMtMi4wLjHIB1CACAE&scli ent=gws-wiz#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:7bd27863,vid:e5bpU3hzMXs,st:0](https://www.google.com/search?q=in+my+life+lord+be+glorified+song&ca_esv=88955b1080c15925&sxsrf=APpeQnvcaPHjoQKU-sZx5dx3e3YByelCbww%3A1787760648198&source=hp&ei=CBCPav7UCJ7Yhb1P0e3KiAs&iflsig=ABILxe8AAAAAao8eGB7dLrrRNthR5BL0yyqcWoC_CXEm&gs_ssp=eJzj4tVP1zc0LEkyMlivLDc3YPRSzMxTyK1UyMlMS1XlyS9KUUhKVUjPyS_KTMtMTVEozs9LBwCK_hCY&oq=ln+&gs_lp=Egdnd3Mtd2l6lgNJbiAqAggAMgQQLhgnMgQQlxgnMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQLhiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQLhiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDMgoQABiABBiKBRhDSKAWUABY1ANwAHgAkAEAmAGLCKABtRCqAQkyLTEuNi0xLjG4AQHIAQD4AQGYAgOgApkRmAMAKgcHMy0xLjYtMqAHITCyBwczLTEuNi0yuAeZEclHBzMtMi4wLjHIB1CACAE&scli ent=gws-wiz#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:7bd27863,vid:e5bpU3hzMXs,st:0)

In our lives, Lord, be glorified. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they settle in you. You made us in your image, and we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Yet we go our own way, we try to pretend you did not make us, that we are in control. Help us to rise above self-centredness, help us to praise you in all that we do and say. In our lives, Lord, Be glorified.

In your church Lord, be glorified. We are the people called together by Christ. We are his body, crucified and risen. Through him we are brought us home and given hope. By your grace, may we live together in peace, may we joyfully work together for your kingdom, may we give hope to others; give them the message that your love is for everyone. In your church, Lord, be glorified.

In this world, Lord, be glorified. For this world and this creation are so full of wonder and beauty, power and mystery. All is your handiwork, all started from your imagination and came from your life-giving word. From the smallest subatomic particle, to the largest galaxy, nothing is beyond your love. And your love has not missed us.

In this world, lord, be glorified.

A Prayer for Education Sunday

Loving God,

We bring to you children and young people who find education challenging and even overwhelming.

We pray for those who are excluded from education or live in areas of disaster or conflict.

We pray for those who will soon be looking for work; that they might show perseverance and never lose hope.

We pray for those who teach, that they may find ways to inspire all those who come into their classrooms.

Help us all to put our faith into action, to allow your word to shape us, and to do our bit for a better world. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: Almighty God (StF 419)

Almighty God, we come to make confession
for we have sinned in thought and word and deed.

We now repent in honesty and sorrow;
forgive us, Lord, and meet us in our need.

Forgiving God, I come to make confession
of all the harm and hurt that I have done;
of bitter words and many selfish actions,
forgive me, Lord, and make me like your Son.

Forgiving God, I come to make confession
of all that I have failed to do this day;
of help withheld, concern and love restricted,
forgive me, Lord, and lead me in your way.

Redeeming God, we come to seek forgiveness,
for Jesus Christ has died to set us free.
Forgive the past and fill us with your Spirit
that we may live to serve you joyfully.

Christopher J Ellis (B. 1949)

Matthew 18:21-35:

²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven

times?’ ²²Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³ ‘For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, “Pay what you owe.” ²⁹Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.” ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?” ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.’

To Ponder:

In his novel ‘Hard Times’ (based in Preston), Thomas Gradgrind, a school board Superintendent, defines his view of education like this: “Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!”

I mention this because today is Education Sunday. And immediately we can see that Jesus teaching method is very different to that of Mr Gradgrind! If Mr Gradgrind wants facts, he won’t get them here. Instead, Jesus weaves a powerful story and draws his hearers into it. He’s not

interested in the capital city of Bolivia. What Jesus is interested in is teaching about the Kingdom. Here, Jesus is encouraging his followers to be forgiving, tolerant, graceful.

Perhaps our familiarity with these parables makes it harder for us to be shocked by them. So, imagine a man who owed his boss £450 million. And the boss lets it slide. But the man then meets someone who owes him £10,000. And he demands it back. When the news gets out, people are outraged. They can see the obvious injustice.

This parable is a description of economic life in the middle east under Roman rule around the time of Jesus. Through collecting taxes, rent and bribes, small local officials made their living. Above them were higher officials who took their cut and passed it up- the line eventually to the top guy, the king. It wasn't about strict taxation, it was more about greasing the wheels.

What we have in this story is a senior official who hasn't been giving the king enough – the king is short to the tune of £450 million (Jesus loved exaggerating to make a point).

I don't think it's exactly like a contract, but the King knows that one his income streams is a bit short. But, the king is generous – he lets the senior official off.

Then the senior official comes across a minor official, and demands his cut. And he shows no mercy, despite having been shown mercy.

Mercy and forgiveness are at the heart of the gospel. 'The forgiveness of sins' is quite a common phrase – it appears 10 times in the NT (thank you computer). Usually in sermons in Acts saying why Jesus came – so that we might receive forgiveness of sins.

Peter has picked up the importance of forgiveness from Jesus, but he's still trying to see what the rule is. But there is no rule.

Peter's Error

How often should I forgive? As many as seven times? No, says Jesus, 70 times 7.

Interesting fact I picked up preparing for this sermon – Look at Gen ch 4, the murder of Cain and Abel.

Cain complains that anyone will be able to kill him once he's out of the garden. God says, 'Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.' Sevenfold vengeance, mirrored in Peter's asking if forgiving 7 times is enough. But a few verses later, in Genesis 4:24, one of Cain's great-several-times grandsons boasts that he killed a man for wounding him, 'If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.'

Maybe that's where Peter got the idea from.

But Peter has reduced grace to legalism. In this picture, forgiveness is something we do or give to someone else. Or maybe receive from someone else. It's an action.

In the film 'The Sting', the Robert Shaw character, Doyle Loney, issues instructions to his henchmen to kill an insignificant con-man. The henchmen points out the insignificance of the target, and Doyle Loney tells him that he can't let it be known that he was beaten by a simple con man. You have to be strong and ruthless in that world.

That's seen as the way of the world – not being seen as weak. Keeping up a façade of unbreakability. And in that world, forgiveness is an action, it's something we give to other people, or something they give to us. Or it's something we withhold. And then it's become a story of power.

Forgiveness – not an action, an attitude

Forgiveness is not an action, it is an attitude – and not an easy one.

What does the forgiving attitude mean? In part it means that we will not allow hurt and misunderstanding and deliberate actions to have the last word in our relationships.

Forgive and forget? Forgetting is not possible – or wise. But forgiveness is possible.

And it is hard. Because some hurts go deep. When trust has been abused. When people we know have been deeply hurt or lives turned upside down. Forgiveness is hard.

Gerard Hughes, the Catholic writer, made the point about Peter's question – we assume that our brother sins, we forgive. He sins again, we forgive again. BUT actually, it may well be the case that we forgive someone – but then we realise that what they did still hurts, and we have to forgive

again. And maybe even years down the line, we still have to struggle to maintain the forgiving attitude.

And it's a message the world needs to hear. Good relationships matter. It seems that people want a power relationship – which is OK if you're the one on the top.

If we can't forgive, can God forgive us? Yes, but can we accept forgiveness? Are we in the right frame of mind? That phrase in the Lord's prayer – forgive us our sins as we forgive those who forgive us. In the same way as we forgive those? Yet we know that God's forgiveness is unconditional.

Why this insistence of forgiveness? In Isaiah's vision of the Kingdom, the wolf lies down with the lamb. Harmonious relationships are at the heart of this vision, and forgiveness is essential to that.

Is forgiveness easy?

No. It cost Christ his life on the cross.

Let's be forgiving and graceful to each other, to family and to friends. Because Christ first forgave us.

Hymn: Great God, Your Love Has Called Us Here (StF 499)

Great God, your love has called us here
as we, by love for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed;
we come, with all our heart and mind,
your call to hear, your love to find.

We come with self-inflicted pains
of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half-free, half-bound by inner chains,
by social forces swept along,
by powers and systems close confined,
yet seeking hope for humankind.

Great God, in Christ you call our name,
and then receive us as your own,
not through some merit, right or claim,
but by your gracious love alone;

we strain to glimpse your mercy-seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.

Then take the towel, and break the bread,
and humble us, and call us friends;
suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.

Lord God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share;
give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do,
while love is making all things new.

Brian Wren Words: © 1975, 1995,
Stainer & Bell Ltd, 23 Gruneisen Road, London N3 1DZ

A Prayer Of Confession:

Coventry and Dresden were two cities heavily bombed during WWII.
Coventry's Medieval Cathedral was destroyed. But after the war,
Coventry Cathedral began a ministry of reconciliation. This is the Coventry
Litaby of Reconciliation.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from
class,

FATHER FORGIVE

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their
own,

FATHER FORGIVE

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the
earth,

FATHER FORGIVE

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,

FATHER FORGIVE

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,

FATHER FORGIVE

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,

FATHER FORGIVE

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,

FATHER FORGIVE

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Hymn: Great Is Our Redeeming Lord (StF 683)

Great is our Redeeming Lord,

in pow'r, and truth, and grace;

Him, by highest heav'n adored,

His church on earth shall praise.

In the city of our God,

In His holy mount below,

publish, spread His name abroad,

and all His greatness show.

For Your loving kindness, Lord,

we in Your temple stay;

here Your faithful love record,

Your saving pow'r display.

With Your name Your praise is known,

glorious Your perfections shine;

earth's remotest bounds shall own

Your works are all divine.

See the gospel church secure,

and founded on a rock;

all her promises are sure;

her bulwarks who can shock?

Count her every precious shrine;

tell, to after ages tell:

fortified by pow'r divine,

the church can never fail.

Zion's God is all our own,
who on His love rely;
we His pardoning love have known,
and live to Christ, and die.
To the new Jerusalem
He our faithful guide shall be;
Him we claim, and rest in Him,
through all eternity.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

A Sending Out Prayer

Let us have courage,
as we know God before us.
Let us have faith,
as we know God beside us.
Let us have joy,
as we know God behind us.
Let us have love,
as we know God goes with us.
Amen.

Sunday 20th September 2026 – 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This service has been compiled by Mr Ryan Davies

Call to Worship:

As Moses and the people were fed with manna,
so we gather to be fed by the Bread of Life.
As God sent them water in the desert,
so we gather to be refreshed by the Water of Life.
As God spoke to them through Moses and the prophets,
so we gather to hear the Word of God.

Opening Hymn: All My Days I Will Sing (StF 343)

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
Give my praise to the Fountain of delights;
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 heaven's 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...

Prayer of Praise:

God of each moment and each day,

thank you for giving us enough.
Your love is enough.
Your forgiveness is enough.
Your promises are enough.
Your guidance is enough.
Your presence with us is enough.
We praise you and trust you and give ourselves to you,
knowing that with you we are enough.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Lord God, forgive us: when we want more than we need;
when we want more time, but don't use the time we have wisely;
when we want more money, but don't use what we have sensibly;
when we want more things, but don't value what we already own;
when we want more attention, but don't give our focus to others;
when we want more reassurance, but forget our blessings.
Forgive us and empower us to live as those who know that, in you,
we have enough and are enough.
Amen.

Hymn: All My Hope On God Is Founded (StF 455)

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
what with care and toil he buildeth,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought:
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the Almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Exodus 16:2-15 (N.R.S.V):

² The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.'

⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.' ⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, 'In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you shall see

the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?’⁸ And Moses said, ‘When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.’

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, “Draw near to the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.”’¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked towards the wilderness, and the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.¹¹ The Lord spoke to Moses and said,¹² ‘I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, “At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.”’

¹³ In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.¹⁴ When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground.¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.

Thought Of The Day:

When is the last time you had a good moan? We can all think of times when we’ve complained, whether over small annoyances, or serious faults. We might complain about things we find unfair in our family, about our consumer rights, or the world in general. In some situations, our right to complain is protected by law; for example, in England and Wales, children have a right to an advocate when they complain about children’s services. This can provide important protection for vulnerable people. Perhaps you think the Israelites were ungrateful; or perhaps that they had plenty to complain about, wandering in the wilderness with not enough to eat or drink. Do you complain more when you’re hungry? It sounds like the Israelites were ‘hangry’ – a term coined by combining the words ‘hungry’ and ‘angry’. Yet God provided food enough for their needs, which suggests their complaint wasn’t dismissed but heard. That’s such an

important part of making a complaint – that we are listened to and heard, and something changes.

Did you notice that God sent them quail and manna – bread of heaven – enough for their needs, but hardly a feast. Are we content with enough, or are we always looking for more? Research suggests that our brains are hard-wired to complain. In harsh environments, it's a key survival skill to be able to identify what is wrong in a situation, the risks that might put us into danger, and try to fix it. When we're no longer in life-or-death situations, though, this instinct might lead to dissatisfaction or greed. At this time when people celebrate harvest, if we have enough to eat, are we satisfied with that, or do we always expect bigger, better, more? Perhaps we make ourselves unhappy by never being content that we have enough, failing to believe that life is good enough.

Some years ago, Will Bowen started the complaint-free challenge (Will Bowen, *A Complaint Free World: How to Stop Complaining and Start Living the Life you Always Wanted* (Harmony, 2004; Paperback; ebook).

The idea was to wear a bracelet on your wrist, and swap arms each time you found yourself complaining. The challenge was to try to go for 21 days without complaining! Will said, 'Complaining is focusing on what we don't want. It's talking about what's wrong, and what we focus our attention on expands'. To be happier, we need to focus more on positive, happy things. Will was not saying that we shouldn't complain about serious injustice or traumatic events. Rather, he suggested that change happens not through complaining but by taking action to make things better. But often our complaints are about more trivial things – a chore we don't like or running out of our favourite chocolate. Can we refocus that negativity into gratitude?

Hymn: Give Thanks With A Grateful Heart (StF 78)

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
Give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
Give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.

And now let the weak say, "I am strong",
Let the poor say, "I am rich",
Because of what the Lord has done for us;
And now let the weak say, "I am strong",
Let the poor say, "I am rich",
Because of what the Lord has done for us;

Give thanks.

Prayers of Intercession:

Lord God, we come before you, marvelling at your sense of justice. Amazed by our wonderful world where Barry, the dinosaur, walked 150 million years ago. Yet a world so full of troubles. Sometimes it is so hard to believe in you as a God of justice when bad things happen. Lord God, we only have to watch the news to realise how far the world has strayed from your standards. We pray today as our ideas are challenged, that our prayers will be heartfelt. We think about those for whom justice seems very far away.

God of infinite justice,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the church worldwide. We pray for people who struggle against injustice in trying to live out their faith. For places where faith has to be hidden.

God of infinite justice,
hear our prayer.

We remember that every single individual in this world belongs to you. As countries all over Europe are working together to deal with the migrant crisis, we pray for wisdom for them. May they not see people just as excess numbers but take to heart their needs and what they are escaping from.

God of infinite justice,
hear our prayer.

We continue to pray for the people of the Middle East. They must be finding it hard to believe in a just God. We cannot even begin to

understand their depths of grief and anger. May aid reach them as quickly as possible and help to alleviate the suffering of the survivors.

God of infinite justice,

hear our prayer.

We pray for people who tirelessly work for God's justice. For all who follow your calling to spread your word, and your work in whatever situation, that they will open the way to a harvest of generosity. For Tear Fund, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Fair Trade – for all who, like you Lord, go the extra mile.

God of infinite justice,

hear our prayer.

We pray for our communities, the places where we live and work. That we would respect those around us. Be ready to stand up when we see things that are against God's law. We pray for the times when people say to us that God isn't fair. Give us the right words to say in reply.

God of infinite justice,

hear our prayer. Amen.

Followed by the Lord's Prayer

Final Hymn: Give Me Joy In My Heart (StF 76)

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,

give me joy in my heart, I pray;

give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,

keep me praising till the break of day:

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,

sing hosanna to the King of kings!

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,

sing hosanna to the King!

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,

give me peace in my heart, I pray;

give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,

keep me loving till the break of day:

Sing hosanna...

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
give me love in my heart, I pray;
give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
keep me serving till the break of day:

Sing hosanna...

Blessing:

May God our provider bless us,
giving us just what we need.

May God the Son bless us,
being our bread of life.

May God the Spirit bless us,
fuelling us to bless the world.

Amen.

Sunday 27th September 2026 – 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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:

Come and speak with our God who listens.
Come and meet Jesus who speaks on our behalf.
Come and hear the God who answers.
Come and receive the Spirit who helps us. **Amen.**

Hymn: As The Deer (StF 544)

As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after You.
You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship You.

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship You.*

I want You more than gold or silver,
only You can satisfy.

You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship You.*

You're my friend and You are my brother,
even though You are a King.

I love You more than any other,
so much more than anything.

*You alone are my strength, my shield,
to You alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship You.*

Martin J Nystrom (b 1956)

Prayer of Praise and Adoration:

Eternal Father,

You are the source of life, the wellspring of joy, the river of peace.

From the rock, You brought forth water; from Your heart, You pour out grace.

We adore You for the abundance of Your goodness,

for the depth of Your compassion,

and for the unending flow of Your Spirit into our lives.

You alone satisfy the thirst of our souls.

To You be praise, honour, and worship, now and always. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:

Merciful God,

We confess that, like the Israelites in the wilderness,

we have often doubted Your goodness when life felt dry and barren.

We have complained instead of trusting,

demanding instead of waiting,

and tested Your patience instead of resting in Your promises.

Forgive us for the times we have forgotten Your past faithfulness

and failed to believe You would provide again.

Quench our thirst with the living water of Your Spirit,

and teach us to walk in trust,

so that our hearts may be steadfast even in the desert places.

In Jesus' name we pray.

At Meribah and Massah, the people asked, *"Is the Lord among us or not?"*

Yet God answered not with anger, but with life-giving water.

So too, in Christ, He answers our sin with forgiveness.

So God says to us: You are not abandoned.

We are loved, forgiven, and held in His steadfast care. **Amen.**

You may like to join in the words of the modern form of The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your Name,

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours
now and for ever. **Amen**

Hymn: Moses I Know You're The Man (StF 473)

'Moses, I know you're the man,'
the Lord said.
'You're going to work out my plan,'
the Lord said.
'Lead all the Israelites out of slavery,
and I shall make them a wandering race
called the 'People of God.'

*So every day,
we're on our way,
for we're a travelling, wandering race,
we're the People of God.*

'Don't get too set in your ways,'
the Lord said.
'Each step is only a phase,'
the Lord said.
'I'll go before you and I shall be a sign
to guide my travelling, wandering race;
you're the People of God.'

So every day...

'No matter what you may do,'
the Lord said.
'I shall be faithful and true,'
the Lord said.
'My love will strengthen you as you go along,
for you're my travelling, wandering, race;

you're the 'People of God.'

So every day...

'Look at the birds in the air,'

the Lord said.

'They fly unhampered by care,'

the Lord said.

'You will move easier if you're travelling light,

for you're a wandering, vagabond race;

you're the 'People of God.'

So every day...

'Foxes have places to go,'

the Lord said.

'But I've no home here below,'

the Lord said.

'So if you want to be with me all your days,

keep up the moving and travelling on,

you're the 'People of God.'

So every day...

Estelle White (b 1925)

The Link Between Our Two Readings Today Is:

Moses calls out to God on behalf of a thirsty people and acts for God in meeting their needs. His humble shepherd's staff has become the instrument of God's great signs. Paul praises Jesus, who, humbly obedient in human form, has been highly exalted and named as Lord. He was the one who came to Jerusalem humble, and mounted on a donkey, who could teach the authorities in the Temple what it really means to be 'from heaven'. In both readings we see the importance of praying on behalf of others.

Reading: Exodus chapter 17 vs. 1 – 7 NSRV

Introduction:

Here, in chapter 17, striking the rock with his staff Moses releases life-giving water. With his humble staff, the shepherd Moses effects God's awe-inspiring purposes. But the story of the staff says more about the

challenges for the 'middleman', who cries out to the Lord on behalf of his thirsty people (v.4), and acts for God in meeting their needs.

¹ From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² The people quarrelled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?"

³ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

⁵ The Lord answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Reading: Philippians chapter 2 vs. 1-13 NSRV

Introduction:

Paul is encouraged by the Philippians' prayers for his release from prison, and prays for them with joy. His joy will be complete when they have the mindset of Jesus, one of humility and unity, informed by His life of serving others. This leads Paul to share a hymn in praise of Christ as the one 'in the form of God' who took 'the form of a slave'.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!
⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
¹² Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Reflection:

The story is told of a young man who entered a very strict monastic order. It was so strict that members were permitted to speak only two words per year to the Abbot. At the end of year one a young man appeared before the Abbot and spoke his two words: 'Bad food'. At the end of the second year the young man appeared before the Abbot again and spoke two more words: 'hard bed'. At the end of the third year he came to the Abbot and spoke his last two words: 'I quit'. The Abbot responded: 'Well it's about time. Complain, complain, complain - that's all you've done since you came here.'

We all probably did some complaining during the unprecedented spring and summer. The sun was warming and welcoming – certainly some help with our fuel costs – but the droughts that ensued were a time of concern. The extent of wildfires across the UK and Europe were, as one TV Newsreader put it: “of Biblical proportions”. Everyone was affected. The land was parched and barren, river beds dried up, reservoirs emptied. Every drop of water needed to be saved. And did we complain? We may have tried not to – but we probably did. Can you remember a time when we actually prayed for rain? Thankfully it came after four months by which

time, wildfires had destroyed countryside, woodland, conservation areas, farmlands – even homes. Farmers lost their crops – the repercussions will be endless.

So perhaps that might help us to understand Israel's plight in the desert.

Just imagine the scene, a multitude of people in the desert; desolate, barren, devoid of life. You might find the occasional sturdy breed of plant, animal or insects that can survive in such conditions, but little else.

Deserts are mostly unpopulated expanses that lack everything needed to sustain life.

But as we see from our Old Testament reading, in one particular portion of the vast wilderness that lies between Egypt and Canaan, we read of thousands of men, women, children and animals. Where we expect to find maybe a few weeds, we see a crowded throng of tents, families and cattle. How in the world can they all survive there?

These were the children of Israel - the travelling, wandering race. Having been slaves in Egypt for centuries, they were finally free. God had promised to give them a different land - one reputedly flowing with milk and honey. But first they had to get there! Between the place of bondage and the place of God's promise - there was a journey to be made. The Bible says they journeyed in stages over forty years and along the way, they will have accrued what was needed to get them to the next stage. Most of the stages of this particular journey were experienced in the wilderness around the Sinai Peninsula, but ultimately, it led to an obvious problem: The lack of provisions – food, water, clothing On average, a human can last approximately three days without water and up to thirty days without food – but these were not normal circumstances.

It was an enormous problem confronting the Israelites and an even more enormous problem confronting Moses. COMPLAINTS! A small group in a caravan could have done it. A small group of travellers could have done it, but over a million people? No rivers, streams, fields, gardens, fruit trees.

When the community came to camp at Rephidim, there was no water. There, in desperate, understandable hunger and thirst, they complained. The tension and discontent led to chaos. Everyone needs life's basics.

Imagine the complaints to Moses. He could not even offer them the reassurance that there would be relief over the next sand dunes - just more of the same, dry desert as far as the eye could see in every direction, and the tension erupted between the people and Moses. But Moses stood firm. He was obeying God's instructions - it was not his fault. The people were directing their complaints in the wrong direction. Imagine how Moses must have felt. Their real complaint is with God. If we remember back to the story of the Burning Bush, Moses had wanted nothing to do with this mission and was quite unwilling - but God was persistent. Now out of Egypt, God was leading the people through cloudy and fiery pillars. But Moses was the one who had to take the heat when the people were discontented. Moses becomes the classic 'middleman', like the waitress who takes the complaints when the chef made the mistake or the attendant on the travel desk fielding complaints when a flight is delayed. So, now it's Moses' time to complain and he takes it directly to God in desperation: "What shall I do with these people?". In response God directs Moses to a rock that will become for the people a miraculous source of water. What followed must have been an incredulous sight, equal in Exodus to the parting of the Red Sea. It was no mere trickle. The rock must have produced a torrent of water, as though a dam had burst within it. God had answered Moses' plea. He called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and tested God asking: "is the Lord not among us?" Moses had been the 'go between'. He was the connection between the people and God. Moses trusted in God's provision and prayed as one who believed that God would answer. And He did.

Paul finds himself in a situation where the Philippians are the 'go betweens' praying for him imprisoned in Rome from where he writes to encourage them in their new life in Christ. Paul has shared their trials and sufferings and he wants to remind them that, as Christians, they are to mirror the characteristics of Christ. Paul knows these people well, as Moses knew the Israelites well. It may be more helpful to replace the word 'if' with 'since' as their devotion is not in question. He calls them to a life worthy of the Gospel and sets out the example of Christ for them to follow, who is the source of encouragement, love, tenderness and compassion. For Paul, every Christian is comforted by the love of God. He wants them to be a community where they are like minded, united and

under the authority of God's Word; to show Christ's love and compassion, and do all this with a sense of humility. At the heart of this new way of living lies prayer – not just for themselves, but for others.

The Israelites needed Moses to pray for their needs in the wilderness. Paul needed the Philippians to pray for him in prison so that he could fulfil his mission. The Philippians needed to pray for one another in building this new community. In the same way, we are called to pray for one another and especially to pray for those with specific needs. As our Call to Worship reminds us: speak with the God who listens; meet with Jesus who intercedes with God on our behalf; listen for the God who answers and receive the Holy Spirit who is sent to help us.

For Further Thought: Is there someone you know who is going through a difficult time? Will you commit some time each day to pray about their specific need? Will you become the 'middle person' between them and God? Prayer is a powerful tool in our Christian toolkit – and we need to ensure that we use it often. **Amen.**

Hymn: At The Name Of Jesus (StF 317)

At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow
every tongue confess Him
King of Glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call Him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom He came,
faithfully He bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death He passed:

Bore it up triumphant
with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone Him;
there let Him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true;
crown Him as your captain
in temptation's hour:
let His will enfold you
In its light and power.

For this same Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with His Father's glory,
with His angel train;
all the wreaths of empire
meet upon His brow,
and our hearts confess Him
King of Glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817 – 1877)

Prayers of Love and Concern:

Lord God, sometimes we look upon our world with sadness. As the climate gets warmer harvests fail and the poor grow poorer. Many are comfortable and are reluctant to adapt their lifestyles. Yet You have given us stewardship of the planet. We pray that the governments of the world may formulate policies and practices that support the transition to renewable energy. May we all reflect on how we live and find ways to reduce our energy consumption and promote sustainability.

**Loving God,
turn hearts and minds towards Your kingdom.**

More and more people suffer as a result of mental health issues. Stress causes illness, relationship breakdowns and even crime. Yet so many are indifferent to their needs. You tell us to love all Your children. We pray for those on the brink of despair that they may find the support and guidance they need. We commend to Your care the work of Samaritans and all helplines as they offer care and compassion.

**Loving God,
turn hearts and minds towards Your kingdom.**

Lord, Churches are struggling. There are not enough people to do the essential jobs. We focus on maintenance and have no energy for mission. Yet You command us to make disciples of all nations. Give us the courage to lay down what is past and to look for relevant and innovative ways of being Your Church today.

**Loving God,
turn hearts and minds towards Your kingdom.**

Lord, Foodbanks are reporting shortages. More and more people are turning to them out of necessity. People fear the winter because of the cost of heating our homes. Yet You call us to feed the hungry and shelter the needy. May those who have plenty realise how blessed they are and be willing to share generously with those in need. May nations follow policies that discourage greed and which seek to offer help and support to those in greatest need.

**Loving God,
turn hearts and minds towards Your kingdom.**

Lord, many are suffering in our world. We remember those in hospitals, care homes and hospices especially. We pray for those on waiting lists hoping for treatment and care soon. We commend to You all who work in health and social care at the front line or in policy making. May the care of individuals be a priority and may all health and social care establishments be places of love and peace.

**Loving God,
turn hearts and minds towards your kingdom.**

Father, we try to be caring and loving; we try to see Your face in those in need; we try to be faithful disciples but sometimes prejudice, self-interest and ignorance get in the way. Help us to look at ourselves; at what we believe; at how we live. May we be transformed into praying, compassionate, faithful, Christ-focussed disciples.

**Loving God,
turn hearts and minds towards Your kingdom.**

In a time of quiet we bring to God our own special concerns and reflections.....

**Loving God,
turn hearts and minds towards Your kingdom.**
In the name of our Lord and Saviour we pray. **Amen.**

Hymn: May The Mind of Christ My Saviour (StF 504)

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
Live in me from day to day
by His love and power controlling
all I do or say.

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour
so that all may see I triumph
only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self forgetting –
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859 – 1928)

Blessing:

May the love of Jesus Christ bring us wholeness,
the grace of God the Father grant us peace,
the breath of Holy Spirit fire us with passion
and the unity between them give us strength
for this and every day. **Amen.**

Some material is adapted from 'Roots For Churches'

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