



Call to Worship

We meet together to worship our God,
and find that he is already here.
God waits for us to turn to him,
to turn away from other things,
to find him and to keep our eyes fixed on him,
living to his glory. **Amen.**

Gathering Prayer

Our ever-present God,
we pray that as we worship
you will reveal yourself to us.
By your grace forgive us
and call us back to you when we are lost.
In the fire of your Holy Spirit, warm us,
by the wind of your Spirit, move us,
with the love of Jesus, fill us. **Amen.**

Hymn - StF 137 New every morning is the love

1 New every morning is the love
our waking and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.

2 New mercies, each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

3 If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

4 The trivial round, the common task,
will furnish all we need to ask,
room to deny ourselves, a road
to bring us daily nearer God.

5 Only, O Lord, in thy dear love
fit us for perfect rest above;
and help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray.

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Holy God, you are awesome and majestic, beyond our comprehension and imagination. You are the creator of all things, the ruler of all nations, the judge of all people. You are the source of all wisdom, the giver of all grace, the defender of all justice. You are faithful and compassionate, merciful and forgiving, loving and good.

We praise you for who you are and what you have done for us in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Holy God, we thank you for your living Word, which discerns the intentions of our hearts. We thank you for your Word incarnate, Jesus, who has suffered and been tested as we are. Give us the humility to ask for the grace and mercy we need in difficult times.

Amen.

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed. We have doubted your goodness, questioned your justice and ignored your will. We have been impatient with your timing and ungrateful for your blessings. We have been selfish and proud, harsh and unforgiving, greedy and wasteful. Forgive us, O God.

Amen.

Loving God,
you do not treat us as our sins deserve but as your beloved children.
You do not hide your face but reveal yourself to us in grace and truth.
You do not abandon us in our troubles
but sustain us by your power and presence.
Help us to receive your gifts with gratitude.

Amen.

Old Testament Reading | Job 23.1-9,16-17

23 Then Job answered:

² 'Today also my complaint is bitter;^[a]
his^[b] hand is heavy despite my groaning.

³ O that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his dwelling!

⁴ I would lay my case before him,
and fill my mouth with arguments.

⁵ I would learn what he would answer me,
and understand what he would say to me.

⁶ Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
No; but he would give heed to me.

⁷ There an upright person could reason with him,
and I should be acquitted for ever by my judge.

⁸ 'If I go forward, he is not there;
or backward, I cannot perceive him;

⁹ on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him;
I turn^[c] to the right, but I cannot see him.

¹⁶ God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty^[a] has terrified me;

¹⁷ If only I could vanish in darkness,
and thick darkness would cover my face!^[b]

Hymn - StF 644 When our confidence is shaken

When our confidence is shaken
In beliefs we thought secure;
When the spirit in its sickness
Seeks but cannot find a cure:
God is active in the tensions
Of a faith not yet mature.

In the discipline of praying,
When it's hardest to believe;
In the drudgery of caring,
When it's not enough to grieve:
Faith maturing, learns acceptance
Of the insights we receive.

Solar systems, void of meaning,
Freeze the spirit into stone;
Always our researches lead us
To the ultimate Unknown:
Faith must die, or come full circle
To its source in God alone.

God is love; and he redeems us
In the Christ we crucify:
This is God's eternal answer
To the world's eternal why;
May we in this faith maturing
Be content to live and die.

Gospel Reading | Mark 10.17-31

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother."' ²⁰ He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money^[a] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' ²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' ²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is^[b] to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' ²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said to one another,^[c] 'Then who can be saved?' ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

²⁸ Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' ²⁹ Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,^[d] ³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'

Hymn - StF 250 Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day His is sounding,
saying, "Christian, follow me."

As of old apostles heard it
By the Galilean Lake,
Turned from home and toil and kindred,
Leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship
of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us,
saying, "Christian, love me more."

In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still He calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us- by Thy mercies,
Savior, may we hear Thy call;
give our hearts to Thine obedience,
serve and love Thee best of all.

Sermon | Where are you, God?

Job is not the only person to have ever cried out, 'Where are you God?' It's what people say when they are overwhelmed by troubles – even if they claim not to believe in God. They may even ask 'What did I do to deserve this?,' which may be a subconscious acknowledgement of the ancient story of Job's claim to innocence. To read of Job's problems should put our own into perspective, but that is no consolation when darkness has overcome us. Last week marked [World Mental Health Day \(10 October\)](#). Issues of mental health have been increasingly highlighted over recent years, with the Covid lockdowns exacerbating many longstanding problems. What can we, as people of faith, offer to those who are struggling to make sense of life and to those who are asking the big questions?

Many of us may identify with Job and have experienced times of darkness when we weren't sure if God was there. While Job feels God is hidden from him, the writer of Hebrews assures us that we cannot hide from God. Eventually Job does have his conversation with God, who restores him. Being listened to plays a huge role in finding a way out of the dark times. 'It's good to talk' is an advertising slogan with roots in encouraging the sharing of problems. More recently, ITV has run a 'Britain Get Talking' campaign to help people with mental health.

It's okay to 'be a Job' and to speak out our complaints against the world and against God. Jesus knew about suffering, about being a refugee, vilified, persecuted, arrested, tortured, executed. He went off alone to pray: he needed to talk to his Father. Where do you seek God in your tough times?

The expectation that God is to be found in blessings and prosperity runs through Job and today's Gospel reading. Yet in both cases the lesson is that faith (in what we cannot see) will be rewarded by restoration in the future life. Meanwhile, God is more often found in chance encounters with others, in unexpected places. While Job's three friends had offered more criticism than support, Jesus takes the longer view. He doesn't criticise the rich man, or his disciples or Peter because he understands their viewpoint: worldly security is important. Even he will cry out on the cross as everything, including life, is taken from him.

In church life, there is often a lot of talking but not so much genuine sharing that could open the path to help and healing. There will be times when confession and repentance are appropriate. In other cases, there may need to be forgiveness of those causing the hurt. As we create safe spaces for truly listening, where God can be challenged and sought, we can trust in Christ's mercy and grace, offering what we can, while signposting to additional resources for support.

As we have already established, Job reflects on his difficulty in identifying where he can find God. This is additionally pertinent right now. This is a situation that many in our world find themselves as they ask the question: "Where is God?" Is God ignoring the conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon and Ukraine? Do those who find their lives devastated by Hurricane Milton find it easy to recognise the presence of God in their lives?

God is present and active in our world - sometimes we just have to try a little bit harder to see it. Without taking sides it can surely be agreed that the conflict in the Middle East is caused by humans and this results in human suffering. It is the love of God which prompts people to respond to this suffering in a practical way. The United Nations appeal for funds to provide relief is a global appeal which will receive global support and the gifts which people donate are gifts of love to relieve suffering. It is in their giving that God can be found.

It is only too easy to blame God for suffering but we rarely give him credit for inspiring and equipping people to provide help and support. Immense preparations are already in place in Florida. God has been active in the preparation and will be active in providing relief for those who need it.

In a world with so much suffering, signs of hope are signs of God's activity. The tiny country of Montenegro has granted both Ukrainians and Russians protection status. Around 10% of Montenegro's population is now Ukrainian with some form of legal status. Often the signs of hope in conflict are very individual. It is worth reflecting that God can be active through national governments.

This demonstrates how the Word of God is living and active. Today's texts provide an opportunity to ask in what ways this is so. Job and Jesus' words to the rich man remind us that God's Word may call for costly responses. The texts also remind us that we experience the living nature of God's Word in the questions it raises. Jesus (the Word of God in human form, according to John's Gospel) was constantly asking questions. Across the four Gospels, Jesus only answers two questions directly, more often replying to a question with another one.

Finally, I invite you to look at each other! We may look different and have varying preferences and opinions but, by his Holy Spirit, God is within each one of us. Be prepared to listen to your neighbour who says their path has become unclear for whatever reason, and help them to find God.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Where are you, God?

Do not be far from us, Creator God, when we look at the wonderful world you created. Help us to recognise the damage we have caused over centuries through greed for food and the rush for industry and vain progress. When we see the destruction of huge forests and the extinction of rare and precious species, we can't see you. When we see the seas warm and the ice melt, we can't see you. When we see temperatures rise and heatwaves, storms, floods and fires, we can't see you. Show us the small things we can do to bring change and help us to respect and enjoy all creation.

Do not be far from us, for trouble is near.

We are not silenced by darkness; we approach God's throne with confidence.

Do not be far from us, Loving God, when we feel lost, powerless and unable to help in the face of the deep and damaging suffering of others. Help us to recognise the harm caused by abuse, addiction, poor family relationships and poverty. When we see people suffering because of lack of food or shelter, we can't see you. When we see children damaged and hurt in their homes and communities, we can't see you. When we see the result of conflict, war, hatred, mistrust and prejudice, we can't see you. Show us what to do to bring help and support and give us the words to say on behalf of those who have no voice.

Do not be far from us, for trouble is near.

We are not silenced by darkness; we approach God's throne with confidence.

Do not be far from us, Healing God, when we are feeling troubled, when we see sickness in others and when we face the loss of those we love. Help us to feel and know that you are always with us and walk alongside us through the hardest and most challenging times. When we see people suffering pain through illness and enduring difficult treatment, we can't see you. When we see those who have lost someone close to them and can't recover or see a future of hope and happiness, we can't see you. When we ourselves go through sickness and other personal struggles, we can't see you. Show us how we can share your love and healing hope with others, and teach us to trust you in all that we face.

Do not be far from us, for trouble is near.

We are not silenced by darkness; we approach God's throne with confidence.

Do not be far from us, Peaceful God, when we remember the people of Israel who look back to this time last year and the horrors of attacks, death and kidnapping. Help us to pray for your peace when we think of the suffering of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and of the people of Lebanon. When we hear the fixed views and lack of compassion from those who order attacks and promote conflict, we can't see you. When we hear the news coverage and see suffering at arms' length, not really feeling the true pain of all involved, we can't see you. Show us what we can do to promote peace in all situations and make us determined to keep praying for the peace that only you can bring.

Do not be far from us, for trouble is near.

We are not silenced by darkness; we approach God's throne with confidence.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Hymn - StF 673 Will you come and follow me?

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown?
Will you let my name be known
Will you let my life be grown in you
And you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer in you
And you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
If I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
And never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
And do such as this unseen
And admit to what I mean in you
And you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
If I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
And never be the same?
Will you shape the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound
In you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true
When you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
And never be the same.
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In you and you in me.

Sending Out

On each day of the week,
look for God, and find him:
in your friends,
in your family,
in the people you pass by,
in your quiet times,
in laughter,
in the natural world;
for he is everywhere,
and look inside yourself
for he is there! **Amen.**