



Opening Prayer

Jesus is here among us now as we worship God together. We pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit we hear afresh God's word to us, calling us to take the good news to all the world.

Hymn: STF 407 Hear the call of the kingdom <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjRmIEhkHnw>

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)

Let us pray together

Creator God

Who gives us sunshine and showers to enable plants to grow, we praise you for the gift of nature? Just as the rain falls on the soil and produces green shoots, we praise you that your spirit constantly inspires and nurtures us. When we fail to produce our best for you and shrink from our tasks, forgive our apathy, and refresh our hearts with your love.

For all the times we turn away from you

For all the wrongs that separate us from you,

Forgive and restore us.

The Lord hears our prayer and pours out his mercy upon us. Amen

Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 10.1-11, 16-20

Reflection:

There is a certain furniture manufacturer who for years, to my knowledge has advertising their sale, claiming it is about to end in the next few days and if you don't get up immediately and rush to their store and order your new three-piece suite, you'll miss out. Of course, the discerning viewer knows all too well that a very similar looking sale will be coming along next week, and the week after, and the week after. The modern method of purchasing good for many people today is to use online retailers and they will put below their fantastic, once in a lifetime offer "only 3 left in stock" and just to sock the message of urgency home, they will add the line "1067 units sold in the last three days" Why do retailers use this panic technique for selling? The fact is that we respond best, when put under pressure.

I feel quite guilty admitting that throughout my studies towards my degree, I had load of time to research and write my assignments. In fairness, I was working full time throughout my studies and on more than one occasion, I would work all day on Friday, come home, then write through most of Friday night, frantically typing as fast as my fingers would go, then get up on Saturday morning, drive to Manchester and hand in my completed work and breathe a sigh of relief. People will say "I work best under pressure" and I guess that's true, I can quite easily convince myself that I have plenty of time to complete tasks, but more often than not, I find myself racing at the last minute. I hope that I am not on my own.

There are times in life when we embark on a project of some significance and we feel to be fighting against time, and I keep having to remind myself that in history, perhaps one of the most significant pieces of work was the Gospel

story, when God was incarnated and Christ had the task of preparing twelve men to go out and transform the work, he sets aside just three years. In this short space of time, he picked a somewhat strange group of men, taught them, equipped them and tested them, he sends out the twelve on a kind of practice run according to Luke 9 and then he sends out a group of seventy-two in chapter 10. There is an urgency to the Gospel story, these people carry the future of the whole of Christendom on their shoulders.

I am due to leave the Ipswich Methodist Circuit in the summer of 2024 and I am now having to focus right in on what is achievable during that time. This is a particular challenge post pandemic, particularly at a time when numbers of people being infected by the virus are once again on the increase. I remember the 1980's when statistics highlight the rapidly reducing number of people attending acts of Christian worship, as a result of the "Mission England" campaign of 1984 "the decade of evangelism" was launched in the nineties. Thirty years on we are still struggling and there is a feeling that time is running out.

- Where do you see the Church you attend most often being in three years' time?
- Historically, we have judged the success or failure of an individual church by membership, attendees at worship, the state of the building, and the amount of money in the bank. Is that a fair picture of the state of Christianity in the world today.
- If you had just three years to turn the Church around, what would you do?

A time of prayer

We pray for God's guidance and inspiration for all church leaders and communities, for a strengthening of faith and a more effective sharing of the good news with others.

Compassionate Christ,

You wept over Jerusalem; with how many tears must you view the troubles and conflicts in your world. We pray for peaceful resolution of wars, for comfort for the sick, shelter for the homeless and refugees, for food for the hungry and tenderness for the young and old in need.

Loving God,

We pray for those who are grieving, those who feel lost, those who are without faith. May they all feel the touch of your hand upon their lives, healing, blessing and making them whole in your love.

We pray for our own concerns, placing our anxieties at the foot of the cross and looking upwards in thankfulness to share our joys with you.

Accept these prayers and the prayers of our hearts for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer Our Father

Hymn: StF 410 Lord, your church on earth is seeking <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnYUfhtz11Q>

Lord, your Church on earth is seeking
your renewal from above;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of your love.

We would heed your great commission:
sending us to every place --
preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.

In the streets of every city
where the bruised and lonely dwell,
let us show the Saviour's pity,
let us of his mercy tell.

In all lands and with all races
let us serve, and seek to bring
all the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King.

Freedom give to those in bondage,
lift the burdens caused by sin.
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
grant release from fears within:
light for darkness; joy for sorrow;
love for hatred; peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
as the Spirit gives new life.

Hugh Sherlock (1905-1998)

A prayer of blessing

May you find an opportunity every day to share the love of Jesus with a stranger, a friend or a neighbour, so that the kingdom of God on earth might increase more and more through the power of the Spirit.

And the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you and those whom you love, today and always. Amen.