



Call to Worship - Psalm 79:5,8,9 : How long, Lord? Will you be angry for ever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire? Do not hold against us the sins of past generations; may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need. Help us, God our Saviour, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.

Hymn - STF320 - Father, whose everlasting love

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovJCsSIKAoQ>

Father, whose everlasting love
Thy only Son for sinners gave,
Whose grace to all did freely move,
And sent him down the world to save:

For all thou hast in Christ prepared
Sufficient, sovereign, saving grace.

Help us thy mercy to extol,
Immense, unfathomed, unconfined;
To praise the Lamb who died for all,
The general Saviour of mankind.

The world he suffered to redeem;
For all he has the atonement made;
For those that will not come to him
The ransom of his life was paid.

Thy undistinguishing regard
Was cast on Adam's fallen race;

Arise, O God, maintain thy cause!
The fullness of the nations call;
Lift up the standard of thy cross,
And all shall own thou diedst for all.

Prayer

God Almighty, we come to you in worship, We come to you in love, We come to you to be loved.
God of peace, we come to you in shame, We come to you in pain, We come to you to be heard.
God of patience, we come to you in longing, We come to you to you in frustration, We come to you to be calmed.

Timeless and eternal God, we thank you because we can come to you with our adoration and love even though we have made mistakes and behaved perversely. We thank you because the story of our ancestors is one of forgiveness and fresh starts. Our own stories tell of unexplained love and grace, tolerance and gifts of peace and hope.

In ancient times the Psalmist wrote poems of confession and lament. We lean on the past for ways of getting across our message of the need to be loved, held and stilled. We confess our troubled ways, our anger and disjointed relationships with one another, with you and even within ourselves. *Silence*

Hear our prayer, Father of everlasting love. We repent of our sinful ways and look to you in confidence and expectation because we know that Jesus Christ gave up his life to achieve our forgiveness and salvation.

We ask that this time of worship may be an experience of your Holy Spirit, moving and blowing freely in our midst, opening us to accept the assurance of our pardon. *Silence*

Lord Jesus, who prayed, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,' please pray for our forgiveness too. We know that you will be heard. *Silence*

'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.'
Lamentations 3:22-23

Lord's Prayer : Our Father, who art in heaven,

Introduction to theme - Allegiances

Allegiances are important in making things happen or stopping things from happening. They are part of how we work individually and collectively. They can be sinister, dangerous or violent, but they can also be enablers of clarity, safety and peace. With that goes prosperity in all senses of the word. Today is United Nations International Day of Peace when we are called to focus on peace. It is true that peace is a daily agenda item, but it is good to rethink what it means for us and how we are 'delivering' our part in peace.

Hymn - STF660 - Called by Christ to be disciples

Watch on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5f10N6umzc

Called by Christ to be disciples
every day in every place,
we are not to hide as hermits
but to spread the way of grace;
citizens of heaven's kingdom,
though this world is where we live,
as we serve a faithful Master,
faithful service may we give.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch>

?v=cTuz8KsZuUORichly varied are
our pathways,
many callings we pursue:
may we use our gifts and talents
always, Lord, to honour you;
so in government or commerce,
college, hospice, farm or home,
whether volunteers or earning,
may we see your kingdom come.

Hard decisions may confront us,
urging us to compromise;
still obedience is our watchword—
Father, make us strong and wise!
Secular is turned to sacred,
made a precious offering,
as our daily lives are fashioned
in submission to our King

Martin E Leckebusch (born 1962) © 2000 Kevin Mayhew Ltd

Readings : Jeremiah 8:18-9:1, 1 Timothy 2:1-7 and Luke 16:1

Hymn - STF423 – Forgive our sins as we forgive

Watch on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqG_iQwqEOE

'Forgive our sins as we forgive',
You taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace
To live the words we say.

In blazing light your cross reveals
The truth we dimly knew,
How small the debts men owe to us,
How great our debt to you!

How can your pardon reach and bless
The unforgiving heart
That broods on wrongs, and will not let
Old bitterness depart?

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls,
And bid resentment cease;
Then, reconciled to God and man,
Our lives will spread your peace.

Rosamond E. Herklots (1905–1987) © Oxford University Press

Sermon - We need help

(Psalm 79:9) *Help us, God our Saviour, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.*

No matter how we feel, there are not many days when nothing happens to make us feel uneasy or disturbed. These disturbances may not be major world events or great fallings out in the family; even the slightest disruption to plans or routines unsettle us. ***We need help to stay calm...***

Today is United Nations International Day of Peace. I would like to quote from the 2025 theme for this Sunday, from the United Nations website. There we read: 'In times of turbulence, tumult and uncertainty, it is critical for everyone to take concrete action to mobilise for peace. From peacemakers on the front lines of conflict, to community members, to students in classrooms around the world, everyone has a role to play. We must speak up against violence, hate, discrimination, and inequality; practice respect; and embrace the diversity of our world.'

The Psalmist is thought to have been addressing the dismal state of a people who had seen their city, Jerusalem, destroyed by the Babylonians, which they realised was partly the consequence of their own sinfulness, of losing sight of the way in which God had called them to live. He had promised them good things if they worshipped him but their loyalty had faded as they were attracted by the gods of other nations.

Jeremiah looked at the situation in the world of his day. Assyria was collapsing, Egypt wanted to dominate but Babylon was rising in significance. Jeremiah foresaw the Babylonian overrun to come. His imagery is real: a feeling of being hollowed out and empty like the ending of a glorious summer and the inevitable onset of autumn and winter.

Gilead was a fertile area well known for forests and spices. One product was a resin from balsam trees known for its properties as soothing and healing agent; has even that gone, laments the prophet? At the global level that really is how many of us feel today. There seems not to be any progress as nations jockey for position – Russia, Europe and America with Ukraine caught like a bird in the netting round the fruit cage in the garden. Is there nothing we can do? Likewise in the Middle East. Israel and her neighbours all have different spins on the truth and in the middle, lives are ruined, cruelty rampages on like a bull in a china shop and we ask, is there nothing left, nothing to sooth the wounds of so much hurt?

The hot topic at home is immigration. We all have different ideas of what we like or do not like about immigration and where the line is between what is legal and illegal, what is a matter for humanitarian concern and who should be deported. There are deals and arrangements but the problem goes on and the distress continues. No balm?

Peace – how we need peace. How God would be glorified were peace to come in all those situations at once and yet how much effort do we make to find our own peace and so contribute to the bigger picture by the ripple effect. That is what the Psalmist seems to be praying for and it is what the United Nations are calling for. The Psalmist sees forgiveness to be the route while the UN considers our part, individually, to be speaking up, showing respect and embracing a diverse world.

We can do those things so let us not lose heart. We can speak out wherever we are, show respect wherever we are and embrace the richness around us, wherever we are. We know what forgiveness looks like, thanks to Jesus's teaching and death. In the passage from Luke, Jesus told the story of the dishonest manager. The steward was not at peace. He had been a bit too peaceful and complacent in his management style and things had slipped. You would probably call him 'laid back' in today's language. The boss had noticed and he was going to be fired. The manager curried favour among the people he dealt with, further disadvantaging his employer to improve his position among those he might need to turn to in the future.

The technique worked in the most unlikely way. The boss commended his ingenuity and used him as an example of shrewdness in difficult times. In times to come, Jesus's followers would need to be shrewd when up against authorities and facing opposition. The fledgling Church thrived under the pressure of the threat of extinction by those who disliked what it stood for. Minorities often thrive in grim situations where there seems to be no summer, no balm, no substance because they know their future is in taking all the help they can get. The manager needed help so he made alliances that would secure the future, or so he thought and hoped. Jesus realised what he was doing and commended the principle if not the detail.

The next steps in resolving both the Eastern European and Middle Eastern crises will be to find the right alliances to bring about stability – so far, a challenging objective. Immigration is not solved by political standoffs but by joined up policies across countries, another description for alliances. These things require the consumption of some humble pie by us all, at every level because all of us add to the mood music with our statements and our attitudes.

For the sake of the glory of God, we need forgiveness as a starting point for deriving help. Paul, writing to Timothy, hit the nail on the head when he called us all to pray for everyone, especially for our leaders so that there may be peace in life. Only Jesus brings about salvation and ultimately, he can lead to the delivery of solutions in the worst of turmoil. Yes, we must all play our part, a contribution of which is surely to pray for our leaders, that they may recognise that they also need help. Our many alliances are important, even if some seem unlikely, none more so than the alliance we make with God in prayer and living in a world that is sceptical and godless.

Hymn - STF719 - We pray for peace

We pray for peace,
But not the easy peace,
Built on complacency
And not the truth of God.
We pray for real peace,
The peace God's love alone can
seal.

We pray for peace,
But not the cruel peace,
Leaving God's poor bereft
And dying in distress,
We pray for real peace,
Enriching all the human race.

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTuz8KsZuU0>

We pray for peace,
And not the evil peace,
Defending unjust laws
And nursing prejudice,
But for the real peace
Of justice, mercy, truth and love.

We pray for peace:
Holy communion
With Christ our risen Lord
And every living thing;
God's will fulfilled on earth
And all creation reconciled.

We pray for peace,
And for the sake of peace,
Look to the risen Christ
Who gives the grace we need,
To serve the cause of peace
And make our own self-sacrifice.

God, give us peace:
If you withdraw your love,
There is no peace for us
Nor any hope of it.
With you to lead us on,
Through death or tumult, peace
will come

Dedication of Offering : Lord, we bring our gifts for the church and we commit our energies and prayers to working for all that you may be glorified; bless our striving and our giving we pray, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

The Methodist Church issued this prayer following the scenes of violent disorder earlier in August:

God of love, We pray for your Spirit of peace to move in our communities, that those who are targets of hate might be safe and that people of good will might work together in love and respect.

We pray for your Spirit of healing, that those who grieve, might be comforted and those who are injured might be made well.

We pray for your Spirit of hope, that those who despair might see a way ahead and those who live in fear might find sanctuary and freedom.

Soften the hearts of those motivated by hate and help us all to love our neighbours as those made in your image. In Christ's name. **Amen**

Prayers of Gratitude and Intercession – for Creation time (Rev Julia Meason, Church of Scotland, Orkney)

"The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant." (Is. 24:4-5)

Lord, we praise You for Your goodness to us in making us part of your splendid creation: planet, waters, skies, flora, and fauna.

As part of our praise, we bring before You our concerns for ourselves and for Your beloved world. Today we pray for Eco-congregations, and those who are hearing the call for Christians to be seen to care for Creation. May they be beacons of change and hope in the midst of a wasteful society. May they challenge, inspire, and cajole those around them.

May the governments take seriously the threat of climate change and put their ambitious promises and goals into action. May they introduce policies which make for thriving of all God's creatures. Grant that fair trade becomes the norm – enabling communities to look after their environment, their communities, and their families.

The One "enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth", may we do as You do: may we notice the devastation of Your earth, the cries of your living creatures, groaning under the oppression of the sea of plastic suffocating them, the poverty of those forgotten and despised by the world.

May we stoop down with You to lift up, encourage and empower. We pray for ourselves who have so much power to speak up, buy less, buy more ethically, reuse, repair and recycle.

May we be willing to be used by You, sacrificing our comfort for the good of all. May we use our wealth, authority, and status wisely and generously. In Your powerful name we pray. Amen.

Please add your prayers for your church family and the needs of people known to you.

Pray for any special needs in today's news.

Hymn - STF160 - Powerful in making us wise to salvation Christopher Idle from 2 Timothy 3 © Christopher Idle/Jubilate Hymns Ltd

Powerful in making us wise to salvation,
witness to faith in Christ Jesus the Word;
breathed out for all by the life-giving Father—
these are the scriptures, and thus speaks the Lord.

History, prophecy, song and commandment,
gospel and letter and dream from on high;
words of the wise who were steered by the Spirit—
these are the scriptures; on them we rely.

Hammer for action and compass for travel,
map in the desert and lamp in the dark;
teaching, rebuking, correcting and training—
these are the scriptures, and this is their work.

Gift for God's servants to fit them completely,
fully equipping to walk in his ways;
guide to good work and effective believing—
these are the scriptures, for these we give praise!

Dismissal : Speak up against violence, hate discrimination and inequality; Practice respect; Embrace the diversity of our world.

The Grace : The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.