

Call to Worship

Psalm 146 v 1 – 2

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Hymn StF 73

Fill thou my life, O Lord my God,  
in every part with praise,  
that my whole being may proclaim  
thy being and thy ways.

Not for the lip of praise alone  
nor e'en the praising heart  
I ask, but for a life made up  
of praise in every part:

Praise in the common things of life,  
its goings out and in;  
praise in each duty and each deed,  
however small and mean.

Fill every part of me with praise;  
let all my being speak  
of thee and of thy love, O Lord,  
poor though I be and weak.

So shalt thou, gracious Lord, from me  
receive the glory due;  
and so shall I begin on earth  
the song for ever new.

So shall no part if day or night  
from sacredness be free;  
but all my life, in every step,  
be fellowship with thee.

Horatius N. Bonar.

Prayer of Adoration

Loving, awesome, almighty, inspiring, comforting, parent God, we praise you.

We praise you with songs of praise, let us make music from our hearts in adoration of you. We praise you for your awesomeness. You are our sustainer. Direct our paths so that your will may be done, through the power of your inclusive and all-encompassing love. Strengthen us and sustain us to follow that path, to seek justice and to defend the oppressed. Guide us, O God, to engage with our communities and tune into the needs of your global family. Walk with us on the path of justice that we may protest against the wrongs of the world and live out your justice for all to see.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Forgive us, Lord, when we are too cosy and comfortable,  
safe in our own little corner  
and unaware of the needs around us.

Open our eyes and enlarge our minds.

Forgive us when we fail to speak up or take action  
to defend or protect others in need and  
when we would rather leave it to someone else.

Give us courage to speak and act for justice.

Forgive us when we only love our neighbour if they are  
'our sort of people'.

We are sorry when we are subconsciously selective  
about who is welcome in our churches and communities.

Help us to be inclusive and welcoming to all. Amen.

Lord's Prayer – please pray whichever version you prefer

## Readings

James 2: 14 – 17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Mark 7: 24 – 30

From there [Jesus] set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." And when she went home, she found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone.

### Hymn StF 257

Would you walk by on the other side,  
when someone called for aid?

Would you walk by on the other side,  
and would you be afraid?

*Cross over the road, my friend,  
ask the Lord his strength to lend,  
his compassion has no end,  
cross over the road.*

Would you walk by on the other side,  
when you saw a loved one stray?

Would you walk by on the other side,  
or would you watch and pray?

Would you walk by on the other side,  
when starving children cried?

Would you walk by on the other side,  
and would you not provide?

Pamela M. Verrall

## Reflection

I love this passage from Mark's Gospel because it shows to me that Jesus was learning in his ministry, was changing his mind about his mission, and widening his horizons. It demonstrates that God's plan for him was greater than the immediate redemption of the Hebrew nation, as previous prophets had focussed on, and on into the whole world.

Do you remember, at the very beginning of his public ministry, after 40 days in the desert, the devil tempted Jesus and said that if Jesus worshipped him, he would give him the world? Well, it would appear that the world is coming to Jesus. In John's Gospel, the woman at the well spreads the word among the Samaritans after her encounter with Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel we have the story of the healing of the Roman Centurion's servant, and here we have a Syrophenician woman reminding Jesus that there are people beyond his direct conversations who also need his help, healing and wisdom. Jesus is doing very real things for real people throughout the Gospels and his apostles continue this work after his Ascension as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The Epistles give us half the story of the early Church trying to live and love based on the oral written traditions that had come to them from the various sources.

The Epistle of James, thought to be one of Jesus' brothers and leader of the council of Jerusalem, is writing to the predominately Jewish Church, but a church based as far away as Cyprus, Phoenicia and Antioch in Syria. James, here, is telling the churches in no uncertain words, that

declaring that they are followers of Jesus, that Jesus is Lord, is not enough, because it can be done as a purely intellectual process. If they are truly expressing a faith, then they must do it from the heart, and if they can do so they can be saved and justified through faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone (to paraphrase Martin Luther). Genuine faith will create good deeds, good works, but only faith in Christ saves.

When the world is in such a state as it is when I am writing this, mid August, then we can see that actions, righteous actions, loving actions, unselfish actions, kind actions, generous actions are sorely needed, both at home and abroad. I have in my mind the cordons of people protecting people and property from rioters. I have in my heart the aid convoys and volunteer workers taking much needed supplies to Palestine and Ukraine, amongst other places of war, places of disaster, places where weather and earthquakes have torn communities and lives apart.

When such things happen, people often say things like: 'Why is this happening?' 'What have we done wrong?' 'Why are we being punished?' 'Where is God?' I remember it all being asked after the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, when we all struggled with the loss of life and devastation. I thought though of the really low points in my life when I was not sure of anything, except that God was with me and was comforted to realise that God would have been with each and everyone of the people affected, as they suffered, and hurt and died.

In the Gospels, many times Jesus heals at a distance, showing that even in his human form, his divinity enabled him to be in more than one place at the same time. We cannot do this, but the effect of our deeds, our works, our actions, as well as our prayers, can make a difference across the world, whether we have donated goods or money or time, whether we have spoken convincingly to people, whether we have started a good idea, or stopped a bad one. Wherever we have spoken and lived out the truth of Jesus, when we have loved our neighbour as ourselves, whether they are like us, completely different, or somewhere in between, our faith is not alone, not empty, not dead.

As Jesus learnt, grew and changed, may we always follow in his Way, striving to be good and true disciples, not tempted by worldly trinkets and false paths, and let our words and deeds reflect each other and God's glory.

#### Hymn StF 653

O Christ, the Healer, we have come  
to pray for health, to plead for friends.  
How can we fail to be restored,  
when reached by love that never ends?

From every ailment flesh endures  
our bodies clamour to be freed;  
yet in our hearts we would confess  
that wholeness is our deepest need.

How strong, O Lord, are our desires,  
how weak our knowledge of ourselves!  
Release in us those healing truths  
unconscious pride resists or shelves.

In conflicts that destroy our health  
we diagnose the world's disease;  
our common life declares our ills:  
is there no cure, O Christ, for these?

Grant that we all, made one in faith,  
in your community may find  
the wholeness that, enriching us,  
shall reach the whole of humankind.

Fred Pratt Green

### Prayer of Intercession

God of justice,

Be with us as we seek to work and witness for a society modelled on your “first will be last” kingdom.

We pray that we would put those who are poorest and most marginalised at the centre.

We pray that we would welcome the stranger among us.

We pray that we would pursue environmental renewal and climate justice.

We pray for a just economy that enables the flourishing of all life.

We pray that we would work actively for peace.

We pray that our politics would be characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness.

God, may these hopes guide our words and our actions and may your kingdom come. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### Hymn StF 415

The church of Christ, in every age  
beset by change but Spirit-led,  
must claim and test its heritage  
and keep on rising from the dead.

Across the world, across the street,  
the victims of injustice cry  
for shelter and for bread to eat,  
and never live until they die.

Then let the servant Church arise,  
a caring Church that longs to be  
a partner in Christ’s sacrifice,  
and clothed in Christ’s humanity.

For he alone, whose blood was shed,  
can cure the fever in our blood,  
and teach us how to share our bread  
and feed the starving multitude.

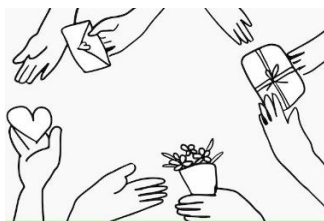
We have no mission but to serve  
in full obedience to our Lord:  
to care for all, without reserve,  
and spread his liberating Word.

Fred Pratt Green.

### Closing Prayer

God of justice,

open our ears to hear as you do,  
open our hearts to care as you do,  
open our lips to speak as you do,  
that we may offer our voices  
for those who are silenced,  
whatever their language, land or lot,  
and so may your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven. Amen.



All prayers from ‘Praise and Protest’ The Methodist Prayer Handbook 2024/25

Adoration – Thomas Hart, Youth President 2023/2024

Confession – Margaret Littlecott, worship leader, Northampton

Intercession – Joint Public Issues Team

Blessing – Jennifer Hurd, District Chair, Wales Synod Cymru