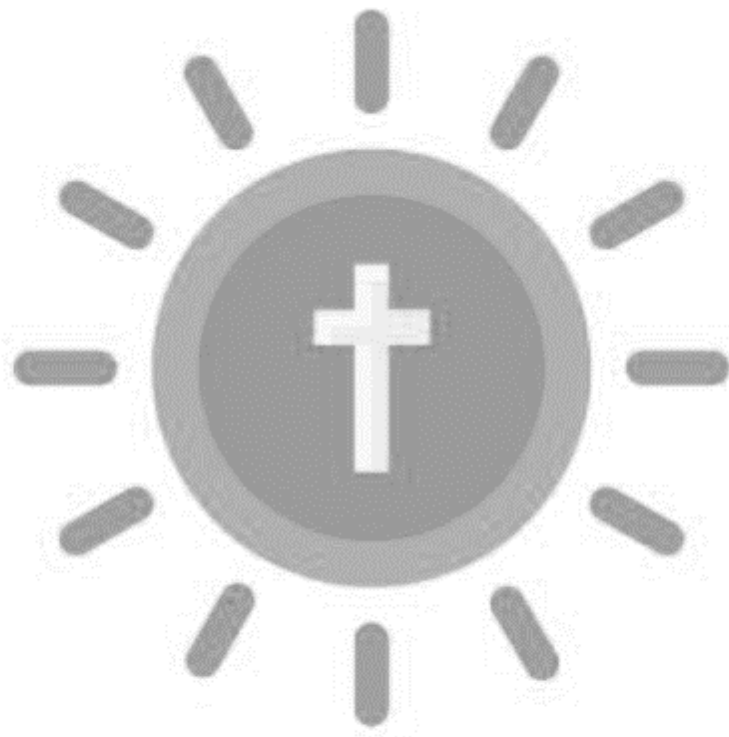


# A Month of Sundays July 2024



Preston Ribble Circuit  
Ministry Team

# Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## Call to worship

Lead us, Lord, to the good green grass and the life-giving water.

Lead us, Lord, to the promises of your word.

Lead us, Lord, to the gathering of your people.

Lead us, Lord, to your kingdom of joy.

**Amen.**

## Bible reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-5,9-10

### David Becomes King Over Israel

**5** All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. <sup>2</sup> In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

<sup>3</sup> When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

<sup>4</sup> David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years. <sup>5</sup> In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

<sup>9</sup> David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the terraces inward. <sup>10</sup> And he became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.

## Hymn Stf 20: Be still

- 1 Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here ;  
come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear :  
in him no sin is found —  
we stand on holy ground.  
Be still,  
for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here.
  
- 2 Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around ;  
he burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned :  
how awesome is the sight —  
our radiant King of light !  
Be still,  
for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.
  
- 3 Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place ;  
he comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace :  
no work too hard for him —  
in faith receive from him.  
Be still,  
for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.

David J. Evans (b. 1957)

## Prayers of intercession

Lord, just as you sent out your disciples of old to share the Gospel, we pray today for all people who serve in the field of mission, at home or abroad. For all those in ministry and leadership within the church. For all those making themselves vulnerable by sharing of you.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.  
Strengthen and protect your people sharing the Gospel.**

We pray for the conflicts and tensions raging throughout the world – hatred, bombings, corruption. We pray for all those caught up in such situations. And for the people working to bring about reconciliation.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.  
Diffuse hatred and bring peace to the world.**

When the disciples were sent out, they were instructed to take no food with them. We pray for all people who live each day not knowing where their next meal is coming from. For all those who rely on aid or food banks to put a meal on the table.

**Merciful God sufficient, we lift our prayers before you.  
Feed and nourish those in need.  
May all people know true freedom in you.  
Amen.**

## Reflection

What do we expect a leader to look like? What are our expectations formed by? - our culture?, our personal history? Sometimes we make assumptions about people – they cannot possibly be leaders because they are too young, the wrong gender or from a different ethnicity. It's known as 'unconscious bias' and many organisations are now recognising that it exists and are training managers and recruiters to be aware of their own unconscious assumptions about others.

If we look around our own world, we see that it is sometimes the leaders we don't expect who are shaking things up. Think of Greta Thunberg and

the many young climate activists she has inspired. They are challenging the complacency and inaction of governments and refusing to be silenced.

King David, despite his personal failings, was regarded as the 'model king' of Israel. In today's reading from 2 Samuel, we see him fulfil his God-given destiny as he is anointed and makes the city of Jerusalem his own. Yet we remember that as a young shepherd boy, he did not seem a very likely future king. But God saw beyond external appearances to the heart (1 Samuel 16.7b).

In today's Gospel reading, we see Jesus visiting his hometown of Nazareth, and teaching in the synagogue. But his hearers remember him when he was a boy, the child of Mary, the carpenter's son, and reject his teaching. They cannot see beyond their own 'unconscious bias' about what a leader and teacher should look like.

Think about the people around you. Are there people with gifts that could be nurtured and encouraged? Are there potential leaders in our midst? Ask God to show how you might be an encouragement to that person and resolve to do something about it.

## **Say the Lord's Prayer**

### **A sending out prayer**

Lead us, Lord, when we lose sight of you.  
Lead us, good Lord, through darkness to your light.  
Lead us through disappointment and failure  
to a place of new calling.  
Lead us though we often struggle  
and sometimes do not listen to your voice.  
Lead us, good Lord, deeper into your love for us.  
**Amen.**

# Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## Call to worship

Lord of all, we come to offer all that we have and all that we are – body, mind and spirit.

We come to offer you our joys and struggles.

We come to celebrate your extravagant love and abundant gifts, and to give thanks for your unending promises to us.

Lord of all, teach us to hold nothing back and to give our all as we serve you in the world.

**Amen.**

## Bible reading: 2 Samuel 6:1-5,12b-19

### The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

**6** David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. <sup>2</sup>He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. <sup>3</sup>They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart <sup>4</sup>with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. <sup>5</sup>David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

<sup>12</sup>Now King David was told, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.” So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. <sup>13</sup>When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. <sup>14</sup>Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, <sup>15</sup>while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

<sup>16</sup>As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

<sup>17</sup> They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD. <sup>18</sup> After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. <sup>19</sup> Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

## **A Prayer of Praise**

We praise you, Almighty God,  
with hands and hearts raised in thankfulness.  
We worship you with praise and thanksgiving,  
for voices to sing with joy and instruments to proclaim your glory.  
We are grateful for the many ways in which we can worship you –  
with our whole bodies  
or in the quiet contemplation of overflowing hearts.  
Thank you, O Lord, for your house,  
a place of prayer, and joy, and worship without limits.  
**Amen.**

## **Reflection**

What is the most valuable object you possess? Do you value it for its cost or for its associations e.g. the meaning it carries in your family? How do you treasure this possession? – do you keep it locked securely away? or polish it? or give it a prominent place in your home?

What about the most valuable possession of your faith community? The ark of the covenant contained the Ten Commandments, God's word to his people and a sign of his presence with them. What objects in our church building or home life speak to us of the holy presence of God?

David and the people are celebrating the most valuable object they possess, which was lost and is found (cf Luke 15). Their core symbol of God's presence is back with them. They are reunited with the Lord of hosts. They rejoice with extravagant, physical, multi-sensory worship involving the whole community, and with generosity, offering rich food to

folk whose normal diet was very plain. How might we and our faith community recognise and celebrate the things that mean most to us in our shared worship life?

Is our worship inward-looking or does it allow us to reach out to those beyond the walls of the building? Is it exclusive, putting others off? or does it make others feel welcome? Does our worship fuel us for the week ahead or do we leave it behind in the church building, putting it in a box until the next service?

And how do we worship extravagantly during the week? How do we show our love for God during the week? We may not dance down the streets in joy, but can we radiate our love for God in other ways, through a simple smile or an act of service? Are our lives as well as our worship always pleasing to God?

What will you offer to God this week?

## **Hymn StF 99: All Creatures of our God and King**

1 All creatures of our God and King,  
lift up your voice and with us sing,  
alleluia, alleluia!

O burning sun with golden beam,  
and silver moon with softer gleam :  
*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

2 O rushing wind that is so strong,  
and clouds that sail in heaven along,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
O rising morn, in praise rejoice ;  
and lights of evening, find a voice :

3 O flowing water, pure and clear,  
make music for your Lord to hear,  
sing 'Praise him, alleluia!'  
O fire, so masterful and bright,  
giving to all both warmth and light :



4 Dear mother earth, who day by day  
unfolds rich blessings on our way,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
The flowers and fruits that bloom and grow,  
let them his glory also show :

5 And all who are of tender heart  
forgiving others, take your part,  
sing, 'Praise him, alleluia!'  
All who long pain and sorrow bear,  
praise God, and on him cast your care :

6 And now, most kind and gentle death,  
waiting to hush our fading breath,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
You homeward lead the child of God,  
and Christ the Lord the way has trod :

7 Let all things their creator bless,  
and worship him in humbleness ;  
O praise him, alleluia!  
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
and praise the Spirit, Three in One :

St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226)  
*translated* William Henry Draper (1855–1933) (*alt.*)

## **Prayers of intercession**

Lord, words and actions have consequences. They can hurt or heal. Build or break. Herod's rash words and subsequent actions had dire consequences.

We pray for all people today whose words and actions have led to negative life-changing results. We pray for those who have succumbed to peer pressure. All who have been pressured into doing wrong and find themselves living with the consequences.

**God of all power, love and faithfulness, hear our prayer.**

We pray for people of all ages trapped in toxic relationships. For victims of abuse. For the lonely and the elderly in our communities. All those whose vulnerability is exploited by the actions of others.

**God of all power, love and faithfulness, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the church that it will stand and act upon your Word without compromise. We pray for all who minister and lead us. For all who you call to speak out. That we, your people will, like Amos, listen, hear and respond in the power of your Holy Spirit. We pray you will strengthen, guide and guard.

**God of all power, love and faithfulness, hear our prayer.  
May your love and truth direct us in all things. Amen.**

## **Say the Lord's Prayer**

### **A sending out prayer**

God of all, send us out into the world you have made.  
Help us to be the people you want us to be;  
help us to live in ways that show your love  
for us and for all people.

Keep us dancing, keep us singing  
and keep us walking in your ways.  
Keep us open, keep us generous  
and keep us ready to give our all for you,  
as you have given everything for us.

**Amen.**

# Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2024

## Call to worship

God of time and space, bigger than we can ever imagine;  
awesome and mighty, and yet so close to us.

Open our eyes to all that you have for us.

Open our ears to hear your call to us.

Open our hands to receive all that you have for us.

Meet us in this place today.

**Amen.**

## Hymn Stf 322: How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

- 1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
in a believer's ear!  
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,  
and drives away our fear.
- 2 It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
and calms the troubled breast;  
'tis manna to the hungry soul,  
and to the weary, rest.
- 3 Dear name — the rock on which I build,  
my shield and hiding-place,  
my never-failing treasury, filled  
with boundless stores of grace!
- 4 Jesus! My Shepherd, Brother, Friend,  
my Prophet, Priest, and King,  
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
accept the praise I bring.
- 5 Weak is the effort of my heart,  
and cold my warmest thought;  
but when I see thee as thou art,  
I'll praise thee as I ought.

6 Till then I would thy love proclaim  
with every fleeting breath ;  
and may the music of thy name  
refresh my soul in death.

John Newton (1725–1807)

## **A prayer of adoration**

God of grace,  
**we worship and adore you.**  
God of glory,  
**we worship and adore you.**  
God of gentleness,  
**we are healed by your presence.**  
God of all goodness,  
**we immerse ourselves in you.**  
**Amen.**

## **Say the Lord's Prayer**

### **Bible reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a**

#### **God's Promise to David**

<sup>7</sup> After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup> he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."

<sup>3</sup> Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup> But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying:

<sup>5</sup> "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? <sup>6</sup> I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. <sup>7</sup> Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I

commanded to shepherd my people Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”

<sup>8</sup> “Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. <sup>9</sup> I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. <sup>10</sup> And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning <sup>11</sup> and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders<sup>[a]</sup> over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: <sup>12</sup> When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands.

## Reflection

In today’s reading from 2 Samuel, God declines David’s offer to build a temple as his permanent dwelling. But the God who has travelled with his people out of Egypt and through the wilderness is not ready to be confined to a temple, even one made of the finest cedar money could buy. Instead, God promises that one of David’s descendants will build ‘a house for my name’. And it will be up to David’s successor, his son Solomon, to finally build and dedicate a temple to house the ark of the covenant.

There is a moment in CS Lewis’ story, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, when the characters hear that Aslan is on the move. The children – Edmund, Peter, Susan and Lucy – do not yet know who Aslan is. We are told: ‘the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different ... At the name of Aslan, each one of the

children felt something jump inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realise that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer.'

How do we react to a God who refuses to be confined; who refuses to be pinned down to the image and expectations we might have? A God who even refuses to be confined to the wonderful buildings we have created to house him? Do we feel scared, like Edmund? Brave and adventurous, like Peter? Uplifted, like Susan? Or giddily excited, like Lucy?

What can we do, in our personal and corporate church life, to make more space for the God who is on the move? How can we be more open to a God who refuses to be pinned down but nonetheless promises to be with us always, to the end of time: just as he promised to David and his descendants.

## **Prayers of intercession**

Lord, you took your disciples away from the crowds to rest and find refreshment. But it was not always easy, because the crowds followed and made demands on your time. We pray for your church today: for all ministers, worship leaders, youth workers. All those you have given the responsibility of leadership to. We ask that you enable them to find or regain a healthy balance amid the rhythm of life's rushing and resting.

**Lord of all righteousness and peace,  
we pray for a dissolving of hatred  
and a renewal of compassion and unity.**

We pray for the bereaved. And all those who are sick, in mind, body or soul. For all those burnt out by rushing here and there caring for others without giving thought for their own selfcare. We pray for all those anxiously awaiting long overdue operations.

**Lord of all righteousness and peace,  
we pray for a dissolving of hatred  
and a renewal of compassion and unity.**

We lift before you all those in our communities who are finding life transitions difficult and daunting. Refugees settling in new places. Young adults leaving care and forging their own life. Children leaving the familiar surroundings of junior school to head to bigger school after the holidays. Those leaving and looking forward to college or venturing into the rhythm and challenges of the workplace.

**Lord of all righteousness and peace,  
we pray for a dissolving of hatred  
and a renewal of compassion and unity.**

**Amen.**

## **A sending out prayer**

God of all our days,  
our beginning and our end,  
help us to walk with you;  
to trust you at every turning of the way;  
to follow where you lead us;  
and to go where you send us.  
In all the ups and downs of life,  
in times when we are certain about what we need to do  
and in times when we doubt that you are with us,  
open our ears to hear your voice;  
open our eyes to see you at work,  
and open our hearts to trust you in every step of our journey.  
**Amen.**

# Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## A gathering prayer

God has been with us through this week and has seen everything we have seen, and knows everything that has happened to us. Let us come to God now, bringing the whole of our lives to God in our worship, trusting that God is always fair and always loving.

## Bible reading: 2 Samuel 11:1-15

### David and Bathsheba

**11** In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, <sup>3</sup> and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite." <sup>4</sup> Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home. <sup>5</sup> The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

<sup>6</sup> So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David. <sup>7</sup> When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. <sup>8</sup> Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. <sup>9</sup> But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

<sup>10</sup> David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

<sup>11</sup> Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the



open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”

<sup>12</sup> Then David said to him, “Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. <sup>13</sup> At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.

<sup>14</sup> In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. <sup>15</sup> In it he wrote, “Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”

## Reflection

The Bible story understandably focuses on David, but what about looking at the situation from Bathsheba’s point of view? She is a woman from another country (wife of Uriah the Hittite), but she is following Jewish purity rules as she bathes following her period. While her husband is away risking his life for the people they live with, the king sends for her, sleeps with her and sends her home. Bathsheba has no power in this story – the choice to commit adultery rests solely with David – and she will lose her husband (and the baby David conceives in her) as a result of David’s fear of discovery.

We often focus on our own sins (with some justification), but do we also see those who are suffering because of our sins or, more generally, those who suffer as a result of the choice and actions of others, including ourselves? This might be: those made homeless by rent or mortgage rises they have no control over; garment workers in the developing world working in dire conditions to provide us with cheaper clothes; those who live in the areas most affected by climate change caused by the lifestyles and choices of richer countries. The unfairness of people suffering from the sins and choices of others comes out strongly in this passage.

Our challenge is to discern when we are in the position of Bathsheba and Uriah – i.e. suffering due to the choices of those in power over us –

and when we are in the position of David, making choices that suit us but cause pain to others. In today's globalised society, we can be in David's place without knowing much, if anything, about those we are impacting. But we have a responsibility towards them that God will judge.

On the other hand, if there are situations where we are the ones suffering, we should strive to act like Uriah – live with integrity and do what is right, regardless. Ultimately, we are responsible to God for the choices we make and the impact we have on others.

## **A prayer of confession**

Lord, you never avoid your duty – but we often do.

Like David, who did not accompany his men to war, we opt out of what doesn't appeal to us.

Then, one sin leads to another until we are overwhelmed; maybe not in the same way as David,

but in little ways that let you and ourselves down.

We are sorry for this dereliction of our duty to you, Lord, and humbly ask your forgiveness.

**Amen.**

## **Hymn StF 416: There's a wideness in God's mercy**

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy  
like the wideness of the sea ;  
there's a kindness in his justice  
which is more than liberty.

2 There is plentiful redemption  
in the blood that has been shed ;  
there is joy for all the members  
in the sorrows of the Head.

3 There is grace enough for thousands  
of new worlds as great as this ;

there is room for fresh creations  
in that upper home of bliss.

4 For the love of God is broader  
than the measures of the mind ;  
and the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.

5 But we make his love too narrow  
by false limits of our own ;  
and we magnify his strictness  
with a zeal he will not own.

6 If our love were but more simple  
we should take him at his word ;  
and our lives would be illumined  
by the presence of our Lord.

Frederick William Faber (1814–1863)

## Prayers of intercession

Lord, what you can do with so little! Yet many of us feel our contributions to be so meagre.

We lift up, Lord, all who feel they have nothing worth bringing to your table.

We think of the broken, in mind, body and spirit.

Broken by ill health. Broken by bereavement, divorce or separation.

Those broken by poverty, redundancy or bankruptcy.

**Lord, we offer you our prayers for the broken. Take. Touch. Bless.**

Lord, you multiplied the loaves and fishes, producing a big lunch for thousands.

We bring before you those supplying our loaves and fishes today.

We pray for fishermen struggling to maintain their livelihoods.

We lift up all farmers and the harvest of crops.

We think of the effect of climate change which, if nothing alters, will mean major adaptations for farmers in how and what they can farm.

Many places are experiencing the effects of climate change now.  
We think of high temperatures, wildfires and floods.  
All these destroy lives and livelihoods.  
We lift before you all those affected.

**Lord, we offer you our prayers for fishermen and farmers. All those involved in the food chain. And the effect of climate change on the world. Take. Touch. Bless.**

Lord, we pray for your church. Pray that all in leadership will be guided by Godly wisdom at all times.  
However they attend church, whether it be walking through the door or via social media, we pray your church will always be welcoming, offering warm hospitality to those who are seeking.

**Lord, we offer you our prayers for the church, for your people of all ages. Take. Touch. Bless.**

**Amen**

## **Say the Lord's Prayer**

### **A sending out prayer**

Caring God, we ask you to be with us this week.  
Open our eyes to see people as you see them,  
make us a blessing to all who are affected by our choices,  
whether they are right in front of us or far away.  
Help us to live by the values of your kingdom,  
which is fair and just,  
and to value all people as made in your image.  
**Amen.**