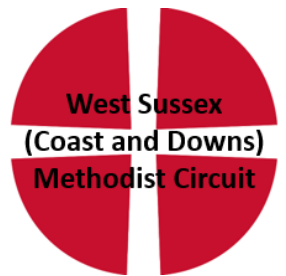


Worshipping Together

West Sussex Coast and Downs Circuit

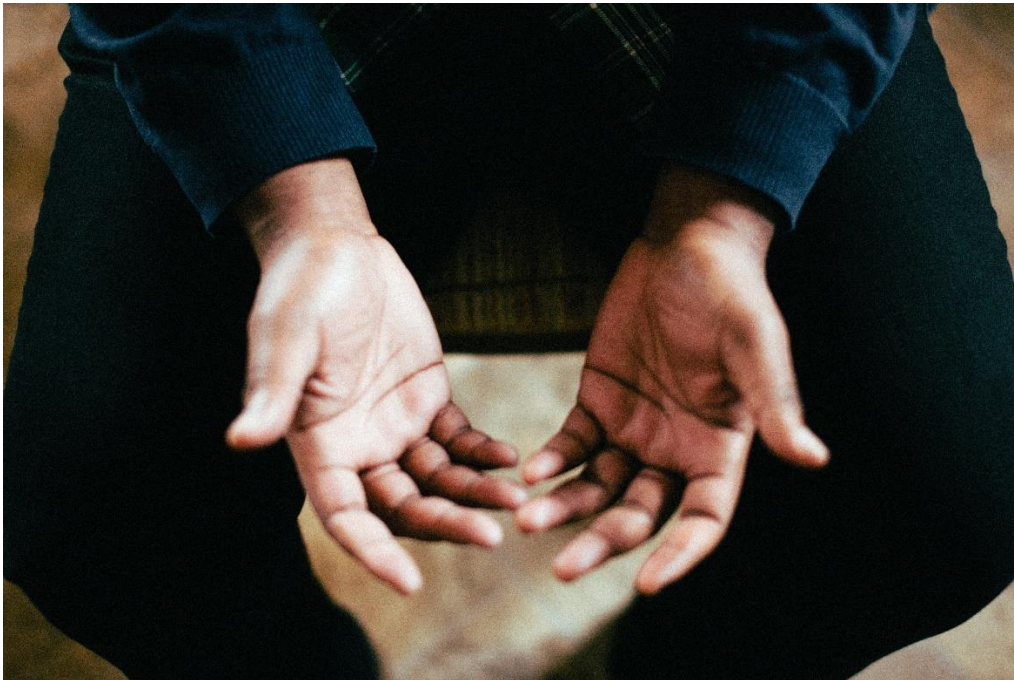
November 2021



Prayer

This month we take time to reflect on one of the foundational practices of the Christian life – Prayer. Why prayer? What should we pray? How should prayer make a difference to my life?

We begin with how Jesus taught his disciples to pray, and then explore other passages of scripture that will help us reflect on praying for guidance, for the church, and finally prayer as reorientation – a means by which God reveals real hope to us.



Worshipping Together comprises an act of worship for the month, with a different set reading and reflection for each week, shared as a starting point for your own reflections. As you worship and draw closer to God, may God draw close to you, speak to you and journey with you beyond the words of these pages, strengthened by God's ever-present Spirit.

We invite you to use **Worshipping Together** at a time that suits you, in whatever way works for you, to spend time with God knowing that you are **Worshipping Together** with others across the circuit family.

Please share these resources with others.

Also available at: www.westsussexcoastanddownscircuit.co.uk

*As you prepare to worship, you may like a period of quiet, or to light a candle.
Become aware of God's already present presence.*

Gathering prayer¹

Lord, you are here, waiting for me –

longing to hear my prayer, wanting me to be here in your presence.

Lord, I am here, waiting for you –

longing to hear you speak, wanting to worship you with all that I am.

Lord, we are here, ready to go –

to live a life of prayer, to serve in your name, so that others might know you.

Lord by your grace alone can I enter your presence.

Fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit,

that I may pray without ceasing

and bring glory to the name of my Saviour. Amen.

Sing the following hymn, or a favourite of your own: Lord of all hopefulness²

1. Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,
be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

2. Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

3. Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

4. Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

¹ From 500 More Prayers for all occasions by David Clowes, p.19, No.26

² Lord of all Hopefulness by Jan Struther (Joyce Placzek) (1901–1953), StF No.526

Prayers of praise³

How can I not praise you, Lord of my life?
For in Christ you have given me all things.
In Christ you have given me hope,
In Christ you have given me faith.
In Christ you have given me love.
In Christ you have given me peace.
In Christ you have given me sisters and brothers.
In Christ you have given me a new purpose.
In Christ you have given me forgiveness.
In Christ you have given me the Holy Spirit.
In Christ you have given me new birth.
In Christ you have given me yourself.
In Christ you have given me all things.
How can I not praise you, Lord of my life? Amen.



³ From 500 More Prayers for all Occasions by David Clowes, p.34, No.59.

*Below are readings and reflections for each week through November.
This month we reflect on the importance and purpose of prayer in nurturing faith
and our relationship with God.*

*These reflections are mere starting points, and you are encouraged to ponder
and pray through and beyond what is written, as you listen and respond to God.*

The Lord's Prayer

Week beginning Sunday 7th November

Reading: Matthew 6:7-15

**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, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

When Jesus shares with his disciples the Lord's Prayer, he does so saying do not make your prayers complicated or shallow. Jesus calls on the disciples to pray from the heart, and to pray knowing God already knows their needs.

Do you ever wonder what to pray? Do you find yourself in a place of not knowing how to find the words to speak to God? I remember a time in my life when I couldn't pray, but sitting in a congregation hearing others praying this prayer, I felt God saying to me, 'I know you can't find the words right now, but this congregation is praying this prayer for you as well as for me.'

God knew my needs, and through that moment, I knew I was not alone, God was with me, and so too was the community I was worshipping with. Our prayers be they the words of the Lord's prayer or our own words, are not just for ourselves, not just for God, but also for one another – the community of God's people.

Reflect: How do you pray when you can't find the words?

Pray: Pray through the Lord's prayer line by line,
reflecting on the phrases as you go.

Praying for Guidance

Week beginning Sunday 14th November



Reading: Psalm 25:1-7

**Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for
you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.**

Psalm 25 is a wonderful prayer of David, who seeks to centre his day, his life, his service, in God. In centring himself in God, focusing on God's will and way, David seeks God's guidance and wisdom for living.

In our busy world it can be easy to go about in our strength – especially if things are easy. I was talking to someone the other day who shared a story of someone saying to them, 'I come to church when I need it, but if things are easy, I don't need to'. When things are easy, do you carry on in your own strength, or keep seeking God?

In verse 7 David testifies to God's goodness and steadfast love. David's prayer teaches us that we should pray not out of our strength, but out of a desire to seek God's strength. Our faithful living is strengthened and nurtured by seeking the guidance and wisdom of God.

Reflect: How do you need God's guidance today?

Pray: Come before God in prayer, bring before him what you need guidance for, and humbly listen out for God's guidance – you might hear a voice, have a feeling or a nudging, or a name, place or bible verse come to mind. All are some of the many ways God can speak and give us guidance.

Praying for the Church

Week beginning Sunday 21st November

Reading: Philippians 1:9-11

Philippians is a letter from Paul to the church in Philippi. Paul was in prison, writing to the Philippians to thank them for a gift they had sent him when they learnt he had been imprisoned. Some call Philippians the 'letter of joy' because it is a theme that flows throughout the letter.

Here at the start of the letter Paul tells the Church in Philippi that he is praying for them, and what he is praying. In saying what he is praying, Paul is perhaps also preaching to the people – *I'm praying you will overflow with love for one another. I am praying you will deepen in your knowledge of God. I pray you will seek God's guidance for the right way to live.* Anyone who hears that letter would, one would hope, recognise that for that prayer to become a reality, the people have a part to play in making it become so.

When we pray for one another, our church, the church of God, we are not praying for something separate to ourselves. We are praying for something that we have the joyous privilege of being part. When we pray for the church, we also have to be listening to hear God revealing to us the part we have to play.

Reflect: What part are you playing in building up God's church?

Pray: For your church, its leaders and its people – and for more joy!



Prayer of Reorientation

Week beginning Sunday 28th November

Reading: Jonah 2

I was done.

Overwhelmed, submerged, a ton of pressure on top of me,
descending deeper and darker, I could not find my way up.

Swirling, swooning, sweating.

Drowning, dreading, dropping.

I hit rock bottom.

How did I get here? How did it happen so fast?

I'm still here in this hell. Still in the depths with no strength to rise.

Yet the miracle is – I'm still here.

The Lord has preserved me – a quiet place of waiting in the belly of the beast.

A little hope stirs that there's a reason for it;
that God will lift me out of this; that I am not done.⁴

Jonah ran, sank & nearly drowned. Jonah thought hope had gone, and then, a little hope stirs. As we continue to navigate pandemic, there have been times when hope has been harder to grasp than others. Jonah's story reminds us that no matter how dark things get, hope can always stir among us, enabling us to re-orientate ourselves to focus on God who always offers us hope.

There is also another story that reminds us hope is always stirring. Today is the first Sunday of Advent, a season of the church year that reminds us that something is coming. And that something is hope, it is light, it is redemption. Into the darkness of the world a light is coming and has come - to bring hope to the world.

Reflect: How have you known hope lead you to God?

Pray: That this advent season you would know the strengthening stirrings of Hope in Christ.

⁴ Meditation from 'Together we pray' p.46. published by Saint Andrew Press 2018.

Centring Prayer⁵

Centre and Source,
 You are always living and breathing,
 painting the landscape
 and announcing a new day with You.

In You, I find my strength and song;
 in You, I celebrate all that is good and well;
 in You, I place my trust.
 You know me more than I know myself.

Let my prayer rise to You,
 and with it my open heart and mind,
 to know and love You
 always more. Amen.

**Hymn for Reflection: Father hear the prayer we offer⁶**

1. Father, hear the prayer we offer:
 not for ease that prayer shall be,
 but for strength that we may ever
 live our lives courageously.

2. Not for ever in green pastures
 do we ask our way to be;
 but the steep and rugged pathway
 may we tread rejoicingly.

3. Not for ever by still waters
 would we idly rest and stay;
 but would strike the living fountains
 from the rocks along our way.

4. Be our strength in hours of weakness,
 in our wanderings be our guide;
 through endeavour, failure, danger,
 Father, be there at our side.

⁵ Prayer from 'Together we pray' p.28. published by Saint Andrew Press 2018.

⁶ Father hear the prayer by Love Maria Willis (1824–1908) Singing the Faith No.518

Prayers of Intercession⁷

For all whose image of your creation
is marred by pain and suffering

Your kingdom come, your will be done

For those who wake each morning
to shellfire and destruction

Your kingdom come, your will be done

For those who sleep each night,
unsure what the next day will bring,

Your kingdom come, your will be done

For children dispossessed of childhood
and transformed into soldiers

Your kingdom come, your will be done

For orphans wandering lonely roads
to uncertain futures

Your kingdom come, your will be done

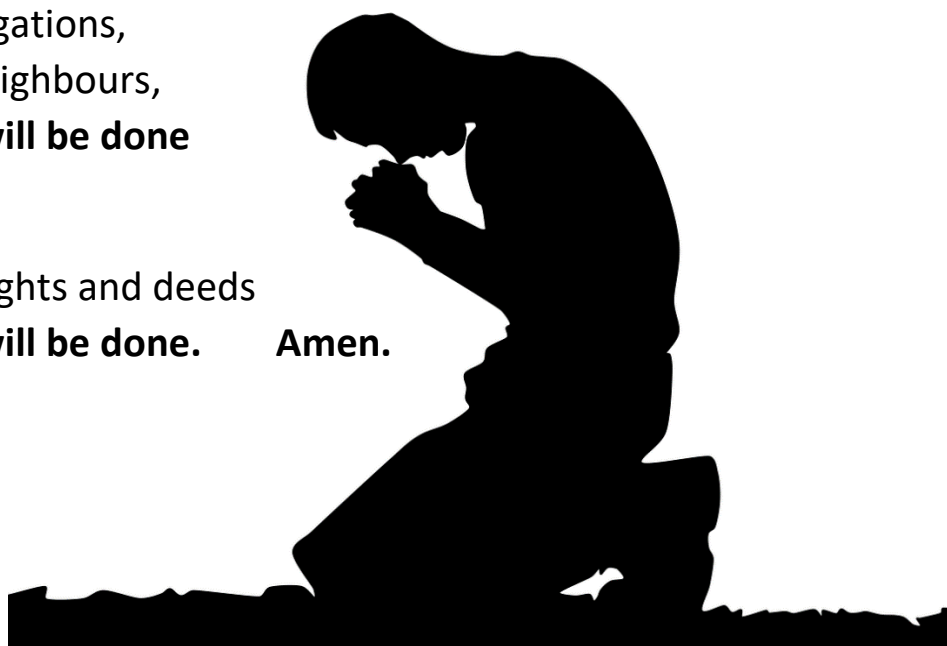
For each persecuted family
carrying your Cross

Your kingdom come, your will be done

For your church, our congregations,
our communities and our neighbours,
Your kingdom come, your will be done

In our daily living,
our actions and words, thoughts and deeds

Your kingdom come, your will be done. Amen.



⁷ Adapted from www.faithandworship.com, © John Birch.

Sing the following hymn, or a favourite of your own:

What a friend we have in Jesus⁸

1. What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear !

What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer !

O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer !

2. Have we trials and temptations,
is there trouble anywhere ?

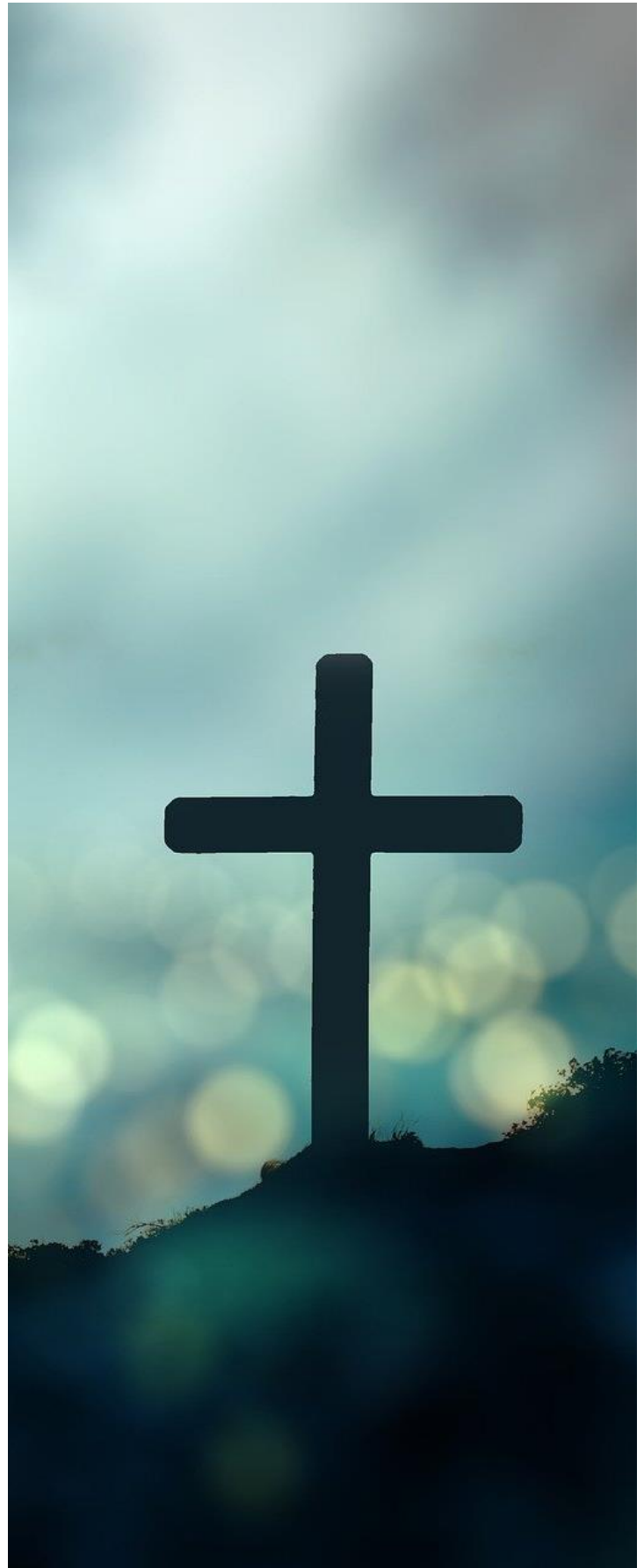
We should never be discouraged :
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share ?
Jesus knows our every weakness :
take it to the Lord in prayer.

3. Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care ?

Precious Saviour, still our refuge —
take it to the Lord in prayer !

Do your friends despise, forsake you ?
Take it to the Lord in prayer ;
in his arms he'll take and shield you,
you will find a solace there.



⁸ What a friend we have by Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819–1886), Singing the Faith No.531

Closing Prayer⁹

Father in heaven,
Thank You for the 'kingdom come' moments of today;
for stomachs and souls replenished,
for hurts healed,
for obstacles overcome,
for hopes rekindled.
And if in some way
I have played a part
in the hallowing of your work,
then receive this prayer
as my blessing to You.
In Jesus name, Amen.

God the creator made you.
God the Saviour heals you.
God the Spirit sends you.
Go now, for God is with you. Amen.

Blessing¹⁰

May God's kingdom come
and God's will be done
and may we, through grace,
with or without words,
know the way,
show the way,
be the way.
Amen.



⁹ From 'Together we pray' p.3. published by Saint Andrew Press 2018.

¹⁰ From 'Together we pray' p.3. published by Saint Andrew Press 2018.



**Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I will say, Rejoice.
Let your gentleness be known to everyone.
The Lord is near.**

**Do not worry about anything,
but in everything by prayer and
supplication with thanksgiving let your
requests be made known to God.**

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all
understanding, will guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Philippians 4:4-7

Acknowledgements

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