

# Circuit service for July 24th, 2022

Prepared by Jon Skeet

## Introductory note

This service is intended to be suitable for all ages. I'm aware that over summer months, many Junior Church leaders are taking well-earned breaks, and sometimes that means young people have little they can relate to within church services. The three "talk" sections *can* be presented just as they are written, either in person or with the videos I've recorded, but they might be more effective as interactive sections, asking questions of the whole congregation (including *but not limited to* young people). As ever, hymns choices and other aspects of the service should be treated as suggestions – feel very free to adapt to local situations. You may wish to consider singing the Lord's Prayer; there's one arrangement in Singing the Faith number 762, but many others are available too.

May God bless your worship time together.

## Call to worship

Welcome to worship, wherever you are, however you are worshipping. We are one church across many buildings; one family across many homes; one people serving our one Lord.

In today's act of worship we will be thinking about prayer, including the passage in Luke's Gospel where Jesus prayer the Lord's Prayer. Of course, we'll be doing a lot of praying too!

St Augustine wrote "The one who sings, prays twice." And so we sing, rejoicing in our loving God and in God's glorious creation.

## Hymn: STF 99 (H&P 329) All creatures of our God and King

By St Francis of Assisi, translated by William Henry Draper. CCLI 1503.

*To be sung with gusto! I've deliberately omitted verses 5 and 6.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUZD0hgtSgE>

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:

*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

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:

*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

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:

*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

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:

*O praise him, O praise him,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

### **Responsive prayer of adoration**

Lord God, after a hot week, we are reminded of just how much power is in your creation,  
and how weak we are compared with it.

For your power,

**we praise you and adore you.**

God who created all of us, we see you in each other's eyes. We know that you know each of  
us better than we know ourselves, and love every one of us.

For your love,

**we praise you and adore you.**

Jesus, you walked in the world you created, and you died on the cross to save us. Your  
resurrection proves that your love conquers death.

For the example and saving power of Jesus,

**we praise and adore you.**

Holy Spirit, you are with us every day as we work for God's glory. We know you pray for us,  
and we are amazed at your power to change lives.

For the Spirit working in our homes and communities,

**we praise and adore you.**

**Reading:** Luke 11:1-4

## **Talk 1: The Lord's Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer comes up twice in the Bible – once in Matthew's Gospel in a section called "The sermon on the mount" and this passage from Luke. This version is a bit shorter than the one from Matthew, so if you were wondering where some of the familiar lines are, it's because they're in Matthew's Gospel... except for the bit right at the end, the *doxology*, the bit starting with "for thine is the kingdom" which probably wasn't in Matthew's version either.

If we were to go into the whole Lord's Prayer in a lot of detail, it would take a very long time. My dad once told me about a series of services about the Lord's Prayer, taking it one part at a time. The first week was on "Our". The second week was on "Father". I think it got a bit quicker later on, but I imagine it still took lots of services. I'm not going to go into much detail at all today, but I just want to give a quick reminder about what *is* in this passage from Luke:

- "Father" – we're reminded that every one of us is a child of God. God created us, and God loves us.
- "Hallowed be your name" – talking with God is a serious business! It's amazing that we *can* talk directly with God, and that we can think of Jesus as our friend... but we mustn't forget that God is, well, God!
- "Your kingdom come" – whatever we might think heaven will be like, God doesn't want us to sit around waiting to go to heaven. When we pray "your kingdom come" we're saying we want *our* world to be like heaven, full of love, and praising God. We're part of that change – so this is promising God we'll do our best to make it happen.
- "Give us each day our daily bread" – we recognise that everything we need comes from God, in the end. This helps us to focus on what's really important – I don't think Jesus would pray "Give us each day all our streaming services and a huge TV"
- "Forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" – forgiveness is a big and difficult topic, but in this line of the prayer we recognise where we haven't lived up to God's perfect example, as well as recognising that forgiveness between people is important.
- "And lead us not into temptation" – this is a really hard line to think about, because God doesn't "lead us into temptation" in the first place. But we can still ask for God's help in behaving how God wants us to, and not being tempted by other things in the world.

So after talking about it for a while, we should pray it! Let's join together in the Lord's Prayer.

*(Pray the Lord's Prayer together.)*

So now that we've looked at the Lord's Prayer, or at least the version in Luke's Gospel, and prayed it, is that all there is to prayer? Are we "done"? Of course that's not the way it is. Prayer isn't a "job" that we can tick off – it's something we all *need* to help us grow in our relationship with God. We'll sing a reminder of that now, and then listen to the second half of our passage from Luke's Gospel.

**Hymn: STF 523 It's me, it's me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer**

African-American traditional song. CCLI 3440308

Alternative: H&P 436, Father hear the prayer we offer. CCLI 2645661.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kyd1M3U5VsQ>

*Chorus (before the first verse and after each verse):*

*It's me, it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer.*

*It's me, it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer.*

1. Not my mother or my father, but it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer;  
not my mother or my father, but it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer.

2. Not my brother or my sister, but it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer;  
not my brother or my sister, but it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer.

3. Not the stranger or my neighbour, but it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer;  
not the stranger or my neighbour, but it's me, O Lord,  
standing in the need of prayer.

**Reading:** Luke 11:5-13

## **Talk 2: Asking God for things**

In the Lord's Prayer, we ask for a few things for ourselves – for daily bread, for forgiveness, and for God to help us to live the way God wants us to. But Jesus then goes on to talk about how God gives us the Holy Spirit when we ask. God is generous – far more generous than any of us are.

When we ask God for help not for ourselves but for others, that's called *intercession*. In church services, there's a pattern we often use for the kind of thing we ask for in prayer.

- We ask for God's help in the church, so that we can be God's people together, doing amazing things in God's power and in God's name, and telling more people about God's love.
- We ask for God to bless the leaders of the world, who have so much more power than we do, and who can often change lives with just a few words.
- We think of all the different countries of the world, and particularly anywhere that we know is really struggling.
- We ask for God to help everyone protect the planet better, fighting against climate change and other things that harm nature.
- Lastly we think about people in our community, particularly people who are ill, or those who have friends or relatives who have died recently.

You might be wondering how intercession "works" – does God keep a list of people and situations, and say "Well if *one more person* prays about that person, I'll heal them, but otherwise I won't"? I don't think it works that way at all. It's mostly a mystery to me – but I do know *one way* that intercession works, and that's by helping *me* to try to see the world from God's point of view. God already knows everything we're going to say in prayer; it's not like anything we could say would come as a surprise to God. But God can speak to *us* through prayer – and that can be surprising and challenging! So however we understand prayer making a difference in the world, it definitely makes a difference to *us*.

Let's offer our prayers of intercession now, and listen for God's voice as we do so.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Lord, we pray for your church. Help us to live as your servants, caring for each other and our communities, and bringing the Good News of your love and salvation to everyone around us. We pray for anyone taking the first steps of their journey with you. Help us to help them to discover more about you, catching glimpses of your glory.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for the leaders of the world. We are in difficult political times, with coronavirus, economic problems, and wars – as well as everything happening here in the UK. We know that leadership is difficult, but you know the way forward. Please speak your words of love and peace in the hearts of our leaders.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for the countries of the world. We pray for countries suffering from violence, poverty, injustice and war, particularly remembering Ukraine, after five months of Russian invasion.

After a very hot week, we think of everywhere facing difficulties due to natural disasters and climate change. Help us to care for your planet, working together across the world.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for people we know who need to feel your love, God. We pray for those who are finding the summer heat difficult; for people suffering from coronavirus or other health conditions; for those who have friends or family who have recently died. We spend a few minutes in silence as we bring our personal prayers before God. (*Silence.*)

All these prayers we bring in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.**

We celebrate that promise from Jesus that God hears our prayers in our next hymn, which reminds us of our call to seek God's kingdom.

Hymn: STF 254 (H&P 138) Seek ye first the Kingdom of God  
Words by Karen Lafferty. CCLI 1352.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9MTRPA0z-E>

1. Seek ye first the kingdom of God,  
and his righteousness,  
and all these things shall be added unto you;  
Allelu-, alleluia:  
*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,  
allelu, alleluia!*

2. Ask, and it shall be given unto you;  
seek and ye shall find;  
knock, and the door shall be opened unto you;  
Allelu-, alleluia:  
*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,  
allelu, alleluia!*

3. We shall not live by bread alone,  
but by every word  
that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord;  
Allelu-, alleluia:  
*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia,  
allelu, alleluia!*

### **Talk 3: what else do we pray for?**

So, today we've prayed a prayer of adoration, thought about the Lord's Prayer, and then made our prayers of intercession. What's left?

We often think of four prayers in Sunday services, as well as a blessing at the end and the Lord's Prayer. There's often intercession, confession, thanksgiving, and adoration. Those are a bit longwinded though – I often think of them as “please, sorry, thanks and wow”.

But those are just suggestions! Even though Jesus said “When you pray, say this” I'm sure he didn't mean that the Lord's Prayer is the *only* prayer we should ever say. He prayed lots of other times himself, for a start. We might pray for a particular church event, or some situation in our lives. We can pray with new parents for the life of their baby, loved so much by God. We can pray for a couple getting married. We can pray with people who are dying, and might be scared or in pain. We can even pray when we're *angry* with God, however unfair that might be – God can take it, and I'm sure God would rather we let go of our anger, while listening for God's voice of peace.

Sometimes I like to pray when I drive – with my eyes open, of course! At night I pray about the day that's just happened, and the one that's coming tomorrow.

There is never a wrong time to pray. God doesn't need fancy words – we can be ourselves with God. We just need to remember that prayer isn't a one-way street – if anything it's more about listening for God speaking in our hearts than it is about us talking.

So pray, anywhere and everywhere! Amen.

The prayers in this service aren't in quite the same order that we often have them, but we'll close with prayers of confession and thanksgiving. Our prayer of thanksgiving is taken from Psalm 138.

#### **Prayer of confession**

Lord God,

We are sorry for times we *haven't* come to you in prayer. We are sorry for times when we've presented a shopping list of demands in our prayers, but never listened for your will in response.

We are sorry for things we have done that make you sad, and opportunities we've missed to make “your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven”. You know our faults better than we know ourselves – but we still say sorry, and turn back to you.

We claim the grace offered through Christ: that as we repent, our sins are forgiven. Alleluia.

## **Responsive prayer of thanksgiving: Psalm 138 (from The Message)**

Thank you! Everything in me says “Thank you!”

Angels listen as I sing my thanks.

**I kneel in worship facing your holy temple**

**and say it again: “Thank you!”**

Thank you for your love,

thank you for your faithfulness;

**Most holy is your name,**

**most holy is your Word.**

The moment I called out, you stepped in;

you made my life large with strength.

When they hear what you have to say, God,

all earth’s kings will say “Thank you.”

They’ll sing of what you’ve done:

“How great the glory of God!”

**And here’s why: God, high above, sees far below;**

**no matter the distance, he knows everything about us.**

When I walk into the thick of trouble,

keep me alive in the angry turmoil.

With one hand

strike my foes,

**With your other hand**

**save me.**

**Finish what you started in me, God.**

**Your love is eternal—don’t quit on me now.**



In our final hymn, we're reminded what a *gift* prayer is. It's free, now and forever, for every one of us, however we're feeling. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

**Hymn: STF 531 (H&P 559) What a friend we have in Jesus**

Words by Joseph Medlicott Scriven. CCLI 2647164

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znWu2HCJ92c>

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.

**Blessing**

May our lives be blessed by prayer, so that we may feel ever closer to the love of God who blesses us every day, more than we can ever know.

We pray the grace together:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, ever more. Amen.**