

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit



Worship at Home - Sunday 12th January 2025

Call to Worship

God, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace, mark us with your images, and raise us to live our baptismal vows empowered by the Holy Spirit and the example of Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

A prayer of praise and adoration

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.” Psalm 28:7 (NIV).

O God you are unique. You alone make an agreement, a covenant with us, you alone love us and care for us, and you alone call us to walk with you. Help us today to see you are here, help us today to learn more of you, help us today to follow you alone. Change our hearts and our minds, so we might really be your special people. Through Jesus Christ your son. **Amen**

A prayer of thanksgiving

Lord God,

Thank you for your amazing power and work in our lives, thank you for your goodness and for your blessings over us. Thank you that you are able to bring hope through even the toughest of times, strengthening us for your purposes. Thank you for your great love and care. Thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you that you are always with us and will never leave us. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice so that we might have freedom and life. Forgive us for when we don't thank you enough: for who you are, for all that you do, for all that you've given. Help us to set our eyes and our hearts on you afresh. Renew our spirits, fill us with your peace and joy. We give you praise and thanks, for you alone are worthy. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

A prayer of Confession

Father God of everlasting love,

we confess that we have been unfaithful to our covenant with you and with one another. We have worshipped other gods - money, power, greed, and convenience.

We have served our own self-interest instead of serving only you and your people.

We have not loved our neighbour as you have commanded, nor have we rightly loved ourselves.

Forgive us, gracious God, and bring us back into the fullness of our covenant with you and one another.

We pray in the name of Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Assurance of Forgiveness

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his love for those who

fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:8-12)

Rejoice, then, and give thanks as we receive forgiveness and healing in Christ's name. **Amen.**

Hymns & Psalms no. 27 *Let us with a gladsome mind*

1 Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind:
*For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

2 Let us blaze his name abroad,
For of gods he is the God:
For his mercies...

3 He with all-commanding might,
Filled the new-made world with light:
For his mercies...

4 He the golden-tressed sun
Caused all day his course to run:
For his mercies...

5 And the silver moon by night,
Mid her spangled sisters bright:
For his mercies...

6 He his chosen race did bless
In the wasteful wilderness:
For his mercies...

7 All things living he doth feed
His full hand supplies their need:
For his mercies...

8 Let us then with gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind:
*For his mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

John Milton (1608-74)

Readings: Isaiah 43:1-7 (NIV)

Israel's Only Saviour

1 But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. **2** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. **3** For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. **4** Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. **5** Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. **6** I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—**7** everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Psalm 29

1 Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.
3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.
4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic.
5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox.
7 The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning.
8 The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
9 The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, “Glory!”
10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.
11 The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

Luke 3:15-17

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. **16** John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Message

We are at the beginning of a new year. Was the last year a good one or not for you? Mine was a bit of a mixed bag, with some highs and some lows. The New Year is a time when we have the opportunity to step back and perhaps try to re-set many things. Today's passage from Isaiah is a good place to start if we are thinking of a re-set, or a fresh start for the New Year. In this passage, God is reminding Israel that he had created the people and made them special to him. God redeemed Israel and summoned them by name to be those who belonged to him. God protected Israel in times of trouble. We too are special and important to God. He also summons us by name and calls us his own, giving us his name - "everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made". Maybe the coming year will be a good one for us, and maybe there will be trials. We can rest assured, however, that whatever comes our way in the next twelve months - and beyond, we can know that we will not be alone. God will be with each one of us for each and every step as we travel through both good times and bad times.

The Lord will always be with us. And you, me, and all God's people will one day be gathered when Christ comes to rule in peace over the earth. This is a promise from God - and he is faithful in his promises. Psalm 29 speaks to us of God's power. The voice of God holds the power to break the mighty cedars of Lebanon; he is powerful - and is in control. Throughout history God has revealed his power through mighty miracles over nature, and he promises to continue to reveal his power. The same power which raised Christ from the dead is available to help us through the trials and difficulties we face in our lives.

Whenever you feel weak and limited, do not despair. Just remember that God can give you strength. We are, each and every one of us, so dearly loved by God, and he makes his power available to us to overcome our hardships. Our short passage from Luke's gospel again speaks of power. John the Baptist is foretelling the coming of Christ - "one who is more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie" John tells of how there will be a baptism with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is here, now, with each one of us. We have the power of the Lord to help us with our journey of repentance, reformation and renewal, and also to guide us and protect us in our daily living. Nobody goes through life without hardships of one form or another. It is part of our being that we will encounter trials and tribulations. But as believers we are empowered to overcome. Whatever your last year was like - whether it was mostly glorious and blessed, or whether you had innumerable difficulties to deal with - I wish everyone a 2025 filled with much happiness and minor hardship only. Mainly though, I wish you all a year brim-filled with the power of our Lord. **Amen.**

A prayer for strength through daily difficulties

Lord Jesus Christ, by your patience in suffering you experienced earthly pain - and gave us the example of obedience to your Father's will. Be near us in our times of weakness and pain. Sustain us, we pray, by your grace, that our strength and courage may not fail. Help us always to know that whatever happens in our lives here, there will be eternal joy, peace and justice for all in the future - just as you have promised. Amen.

Hymns & Psalms no. 86 *Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord*

1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of his word;
In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy name – the Lord, the Mighty One.

4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and for evermore

CCL 821965 Timothy Dudley Smith

A prayer of intercession

Sisters and brothers, our baptismal vows call us to compassion and mercy on behalf of those in need.

We pray for our planet; may we see greater action to protect the balance of nature, to tackle climate change caused by our human actions, and protection for wildlife.

We pray for the nations; your people in so many parts of the earth are suffering - war, famine, oppression, injustice and more. Show us how we can act to help alleviate such suffering.

We pray for our communities; our counties, our towns and villages, our streets and localities. Help us to be good neighbours, caring and supporting those around us.

We pray for our friends and families; we thank you that we have people around us who are dear to us.

Lord God, you revealed your Son in the waters of the Jordan and anointed him with the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim good news to all people. Sanctify us by the same Spirit, that we may proclaim the healing power of the gospel by acts of love in your name. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

Loving Father, We thank you for the opportunity of worship and reflection. As we reflect, we ask for your peace to fill our hearts. May the hope of Christ dwell within us, encouraging us in times of trial, and inspiring us to spread joy wherever we go. Help us to be bearers of your love in a world that often feels heavy with burdens. Let our lives be a testament to your faithfulness and grace. May we carry your light into the darkness, shining brightly for all to see. We pray this in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

This worship service was prepared by Mrs Sally Graham