

**Cheshire South Circuit**   
**Worship at Home - Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026**

### **Call to Worship**

In this Lenten season, loving God, you call us to a time of reflection and contemplation. This is a time to ponder where our wandering steps have separated us from you. This is a time to consider all of who we are and where you want us to be. This is a time to establish a proper relationship with you. Let us worship together. **Amen.**

### **A prayer of praise and adoration**

Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name.

*Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. (Ps 34:3)*

Dear Lord, We adore you, because you are great and greatly to be praised.

*Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. (Ps 145:3)*

All we have to do is look around to see your greatness displayed; creation shows us your wonderful work, your power and beauty in all things.

*For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! (Romans 11:36)*

When we slow down from the busyness of life, we notice more of your greatness. We hear you in the birds singing, and sense you in the gentle wind. We glimpse your goodness in the miracle of new life. The morning sunrise reminds us of your mercies that begin afresh every morning. As we go about our day, we will admire how great you are by pausing to enjoy what you created.

*Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. (Lamentations 3:22)*

In the holy name of your son Jesus we pray, **Amen**

### **A prayer of thanksgiving**

Heavenly Father, Creator of all things, We thank you for placing us in this world, just as you placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, to cultivate, care for, and steward the life and blessings you have entrusted to us.

Lord, we thank you for your abundant provision and for the freedom we have in you. Yet, we confess that, like those before us, we are often tempted to disregard your boundaries, believing the enemy's lies that we know better than you, or that forbidden paths will satisfy our deepest needs. Forgive us for the times we have doubted your goodness, and for when we have chosen our own desires over your clear commands. We confess that we have sought to define good and evil for ourselves, rather than trusting in your wisdom, and in doing so, we have separated ourselves from you. Holy Spirit, strengthen our discernment. Help us to recognise the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in our own lives - the things that look tempting but lead away from your presence. Give us the grace to obey you, not just when it is convenient, but as a commitment to you, the author of life.

We reject the path that leads to spiritual death and, instead, we choose to walk in your truth and abide in your presence. Thank you for the grace of redemption that covers our disobedience and restores us to fellowship with you. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

**A prayer of Confession** Lord Jesus, forty days alone, a wilderness of thoughts, tempting and inviting thoughts, which could so easily have distracted you from your task, your mission, your vision. Yet you emerged, stronger and more attuned to all that had to be done, despite a time constraint that to our eyes would have seemed hopeless. We too live in stressful times. Demands are made of our time, which leave so little for the important things of life. We are easily distracted in the wilderness of our lives, by every call to go this way or that, to turn stone to bread, leap from mountains, and do all that would keep us from the truth. We listen to the voices of this world, and ignore the one who endured all this and so much more, and emerged triumphant, that we might not have to suffer so. Forgive us, Father, when we get distracted from our task. Forgive us those times when we try to be all things to all people, and fail to be anything to anyone. Forgive those things we have done which have caused you sadness, and those things we should have done that would have brought you joy. In both we have failed ourselves, and you. Bring us back to that place where our journey began, when we said that we would follow the way that you first trod. Lead us to the Cross and meet us there. **Amen**

**Assurance of Forgiveness (From Psalm 32)**

### ***Mercy embraces us***

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.....

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin....

Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. **Amen**

### **Hymns & Psalms no. 130** *Forty days and forty nights*

**1** Forty days and forty nights  
Thou wast fasting in the wild;  
forty days and forty nights  
tempted still, yet undefiled.

**3** Shall we not thy sorrows share,  
learn thy discipline of will,  
and, like thee, by fast and prayer  
wrestle with the powers of ill?

**2** Sunbeams scorching day by day;  
Chilly dewdrops nightly shed,  
prowling beasts about thy way;  
stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.

**4** What if Satan, vexing sore,  
flesh and spirit shall assail?  
Thou, his vanquisher before,  
wilt not suffer us to fail.

**5** Watching, praying, struggling thus,  
victory ours at last shall be;  
Angels insister to us  
as they ministered to thee.

*CCL821965 George Smyttan and Francis Pott*

### **Readings: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 (NIV) Eating of the tree of knowledge**

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

### **Matthew 4:1-11 (NIV) The temptation of Jesus**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

## **Message**

God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, with the responsibility of looking after the garden, and told them not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Rather than putting in place a barrier to prevent them from eating the fruit of that one tree, God gave them a choice - and so the possibility of choosing wrongly. Their wrong choice was a result of being tempted by the serpent, the devil in disguise. They were led to doubt the true goodness of God.

We, and all people in our modern global village world, also have choices. Sometimes people choose wrongly. It is too easy for people today to be tempted and tricked into believing the wrong thing. This, sadly, is the reason behind so much of the discord and conflict in the world. Misinformation from sources which do not align with God's goodness and truth have led to a disturbing increase in fear of others. Instead of embracing one another in love, respect and compassion, many are tempted to wrongly identify our fellow human beings as "the other" - as a threat. We, as Christians, alongside believers of other faiths, and those who profess no faith - but are like-minded, should strive to work together to redress the imbalance of influence - so that God's message of peace, justice, tolerance and love speaks louder than the tempters' voices. So - let this Lenten season be a time of reflection, contemplation and prayer - and an opportunity to gather the strength to speak out against the tide of temptation which causes so much strife and suffering in our world.

## **A Prayer of Strength and Obedience**

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to face temptation, proving he understands our struggles. When we find ourselves in our own wilderness of temptation, give us the courage to resist, using the sword of the Spirit - your Word - just as Jesus did.

Lord, forgive us for yielding to pride, selfishness, and the temptation of worldly, easy ways. Strengthen us inwardly to reject quick fixes and, instead, trust in your timing and provision. We pray for a deeper hunger for scripture to shape our hearts and minds.

Help us to worship and serve you alone, rejecting idols of power, wealth, or comfort. Thank you for the grace available to us all in and through our trials, and for the victory Jesus won, allowing us to stand firm. In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

## **Hymns & Psalms no.134) *Forgive our sins as we forgive***

**1** 'Forgive our sins as we forgive',  
you taught us, Lord, to pray,  
but you alone can grant the grace  
to live the words we say.

**2** How can your pardon reach and bless  
the unforgiving heart  
that broods on wrongs, and will not let  
old bitterness depart?

**3** In blazing light our cross reveals  
the truth we dimly knew,  
how small the debts are owed to us,  
how great our debts to you!

**4** Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls,  
and bid resentment cease;  
Then reconciled to God in all,  
our lives will spread Your peace.

*CCL821965 Rosamond E. Herklots*

## **A prayer of Intercession based on prayer written by Mrs Margaret Appleton (thischurch.com)**

Lord Jesus, you called us to renounce evil and we remember today that, at the start of your ministry, you were tried and tempted by the forces of evil. You resisted the chance to be popular instead of faithful; to choose fame instead of service and power instead of sacrifice - but you set us all an example to follow by choosing the way of the Father. Teach us how to recognise the approach of evil in all its forms and to be on our guard against it. You faced temptation in your life and because of this may we never be ashamed of temptation in our own lives - but save us from the weakness that gives way to it. Grant us all the strength to stand up against all that is evil and

keep us firm in times of trial and temptation knowing that your support and love are always close at hand. Make us resolute in obeying your will and seeking your kingdom that we may stay true to you and proclaim your salvation. ***Lord of Lent, Renew Our Lives***

Lord Jesus, we pray for your blessing on all who confess belief in you that they may witness powerfully to your unselfish love and humility. We offer you our thanks that we can pray openly to you. We remember and pray for those who are denied this opportunity and are persecuted for their faith. We pray for all believers wherever they may be and may they be strengthened by the power of your love. Help each one of us to see our priorities and not be led astray. Too often we fail to live up to our ideals; we compromise for comfort; we become too concerned about material things and seek our own glory. We fail to put our trust in you, trusting only in our own schemes and plans. During this time of Lent help us more clearly to see the ways by which we follow you and as we come to you for refreshment and renewal help us to forget ourselves and find true happiness in serving you. As we re-examine our lives through self-discipline and prayer may we enter your stillness, be sensitive to your call and know your will for us. ***Lord of Lent, Renew Our Lives***

Lord Jesus, we pray for all people who hold positions of authority that they do not misuse their power to the detriment of those they are supposed to be helping. We pray for all the world's leaders and for our own leaders who are responsible for making decisions about our future. We pray that they will be given the insight and integrity to govern wisely according to your will, being fully aware of the true needs of the people. Lord Jesus, look with compassion on all those whose minds are full of anxiety and bewilderment and for whom everyday is one of despair. We pray for those who are experiencing severe financial difficulty at this time; many elderly people and young families trying to exist on very limited incomes: those people faced with losing their homes and those who have lost their jobs. We pray that you will turn their despair to hope and free them from fear and self-hatred. Whatever the future may bring them, may they know that you are the rock on whom they depend and that your love will help to ease their burden.

***Lord of Lent, Renew Our Lives***

We pray for all people everywhere in their varying needs. Into the gentleness of your healing love we bring before you the lonely, the hungry, those living in poverty and those without hope. We remember all those who are ill and in pain: those recovering from surgery - giving thanks for the work and dedication of our doctors and nurses: for those involved in crippling accidents. We have in our hearts some people and situations known only to ourselves, some known to our church and some only through the news who are in need of our prayers and we remember them also in our prayers. May your healing touch support and strengthen them and we pray that you will remove from them all that hurts, harms and hinders.

***Lord of Lent, Renew Our Lives***

Lord Jesus, we pray that you will bless and protect our homes, our families and our friends, and our communities. Help us to build bridges of tolerance and understanding and respect between the different generations, cultures, and diversity of peoples. May our homes be havens of peace and rest - a place to call our own and a community in which we can feel safe and secure.

Help us to be mindful of those who have no homes, families or friends. Make us grateful for all that we have so that we may use every endeavour to ensure that every person has a home to call their own and feels wanted within their own community. Give us patience and compassion, and help us to offer others our time and our experience with true sincerity and love.

***Lord of Lent, Renew Our Lives***

We pray for all those who are mourning the loss of loved ones that you will comfort and strengthen them in their time of need. Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember before God all those who have died and light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ, which eternally shines and brings hope. Confident in the promise that those who believe in you will live though they have died, we give you thanks for all who have left their earthly body and now share with you the joys of heaven.

***Lord of Lent, Renew Our Lives***

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Closing Prayer**

God of faithful surprises, throughout the ages you have made known your love and power in unexpected ways and places. May we daily perceive the joy and wonder of your abiding presence and offer our lives in gratitude for our redemption. **Amen.**

***This worship service was prepared by Sally Graham***