

A Month of Sundays November 2024



Preston Ribble Circuit

Sunday 3rd November 2024

Call to worship

Welcome, everyone.

Welcome to this place.

Welcome if you have lived here all your life.

Welcome if you arrived here yesterday.

Welcome if you are only passing through.

Whoever you are, wherever you are from, welcome.

Bible reading

Ruth 1: 1-18 – See part of the reading below

So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said,

‘Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.

May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,

if even death parts me from you!’

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Hymn Singing the Faith number 526

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.

Jan Struther (Joyce Placzek) (1901–1953)

Reproduced from Singing the Faith Electronic Words Edition, number 526

Words: © From Enlarged Songs of Praise, 1931, Oxford University Press.

Reproduced by permission. All rights reserved. Prayers of praise and
thanksgiving

God of all,
our journeys have brought us together
in this moment, in this place,
to share our love for your Word and your truth.
And so, side by side, we worship you,
and ask that you would guide our way,
hear our prayer, increase our love
and teach us how to serve you in our community and our
world,
generously and faithfully.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Reflection

How might it feel to return somewhere as a changed person? Perhaps you can think of occasions when you've been away for a while and felt very different on your return, for example after a first term at university, or going back to your parents' home after your wedding. When Naomi was forced to leave Bethlehem because of famine she travelled with her husband and two sons. She had been a woman who seemed to have everything going for her. Now, on her return, what did Naomi's old friends see? How had she changed? She returned as a widow, a perilous state to be in the ancient Middle East. And, worse, she had no living sons, leaving her in an even more vulnerable position. There was no one to whom she could turn to for financial support. No wonder she renamed herself Mara, meaning 'bitter'.

There is, however, one positive in the story – Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth – another young widow whose

dedication to her mother-in-law is both beautiful and commendable. In travelling to Bethlehem with Naomi, Ruth becomes a refugee, a stranger in a foreign land. And a widow... when she could have stayed in Moab and sought a new husband of her own nationality. How will the old friends of Naomi accept Ruth? How will they both survive? Why did Ruth stay with Naomi? We will never know the answer to the first question, and the second will be answered next week. The third... we can only surmise. Ruth was loyal and she demonstrated great faithfulness as well as the true meaning of love. The bible scholar Paula Gooder explains that love in the Bible is more about what you do than what you feel. Ruth lives her whole life as an expression of love for Naomi.

And it is this real expression of love that Jesus calls us to. Not just in our homes and families, or our friends and colleagues – Jesus' call to faithful love involves welcoming the stranger in our midst. It requires us to break down barriers and put aside any fears and prejudices we may have lingering in our hearts. Love for our neighbour requires hard work (and there is no suggestion that it was easy for Ruth). Love requires us to try and step into the shoes of our neighbour and seek to see the world through their eyes. This is not something that comes easily or readily for many of us. There are so many obstacles.

But, as Jesus reminded the scribe who came to ask him the most important of questions: loving God is demonstrated in our love for our neighbour. When we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength it follows that we will desire to not just love him but to love like him

– to love in the same way, with all that we are and all that we do – and that love is demonstrated in how we respond to the powerless, the poor, the unloved and unlovely. That’s who Jesus came to redeem and that’s who he also calls us to serve.

Ruth’s story is a story of the poor and the refugee. Ruth’s story is a story of faithfulness. It is a story of overcoming hardship. But most of all it is a story of love. The love that crosses barriers and boundaries. Just like the love that Jesus calls us to give.

Prayer

We pray for peace throughout the world. We remember especially the people of Sudan, where the Sovereign Council that was overseeing the transition to democracy has been dissolved and heavily armed soldiers deployed in the capital. We pray for Afghanistan where more than half the population – about 22.8 million people – face acute food insecurity, while over three million children under five could suffer acute malnutrition.

God of love,
may we love our world, each other and you.

We pray for our church and for other churches and places of worship in our community. May we enable people to encounter God, work together to build community, serve those in need and share your love widely. Help us to build each other up as we seek to strengthen your kingdom among us.

God of love,
may we love our world, each other and you.

We bring into your love all for whom we are especially concerned today, naming them in our hearts or picturing them in our minds. We pray for the sick and those who are worried, for the lonely and any who feel isolated, for the sorrowful and those who are recently bereaved, for ourselves, our families and friends.

God of love,
may we love our world, each other and you.

Jesus said, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength; and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

God of love,
may we love our world, each other and you.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Say the Lord's Prayer

A sending out prayer

Lord, send me out to love my family 'actually'.
Help me to love my friends 'actually'.
Give me grace to love my colleagues and classmates 'actually'.

Show me where I can actually love the strangers who cross my path.

Help me to love in whatever way 'actually' means this week.

Amen.

Sunday 10th November 2024

Call to worship

We are gathered together to meet one another.

Come, let us meet.

We are gathered together to remember and reflect.

Come, let us remember.

We are gathered together to pray and worship.

Come, let us worship.

We are gathered together to give.

Come, let us give of ourselves.

Give to the King of kings who gave his all for us.

Bible reading: Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing-Floor

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, 'My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing-floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing-floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating

and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.' She said to her, 'All that you tell me I will do.'

The Genealogy of David

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the Lord made her conceive, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him.' Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi.' They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Reflection

How do you feel when you hear the words 'Giving without obligation'? Does it make you feel exhausted at the thought, or maybe a sense of 'it's only for heroes and heroines'? Do we think back to the two world wars (and many conflicts since), when so many gave their lives to protect our nation?

Our two readings today focus on very different types of giving. Boaz, who recognised the need to look after a destitute family to whom he was related, and the poor

woman who, in comparison to those around her, knew the true meaning of giving an offering to God. Neither of them *had* to do what they did. Boaz was not the nearest relation, so it wasn't really his responsibility to care for Ruth and Naomi. Perhaps there was an ulterior motive – there is certainly a sense in the story that he had fallen in love with this foreign Moabite woman. Nonetheless, it was not his *duty* to care for her. He did it beyond the requirements of the law. And the poor woman in the Gospel reading was probably hoping that no one would notice how little she had to offer in comparison to the rich people who had gone to the treasury before her. Yet Jesus commends her offering, because, in comparison to what she possessed, she gave a vast sum – far more than she could probably afford and probably enough to have provided her next meal, which now may not come for a while. The even greater irony is that the scribes that Jesus was condemning were those who were supposed to be using their gifts to support those like the poor widow, but, more often than not, they were extorting money from them instead.

Any talk of giving is bound to be controversial. Some people only think of giving to God as what they put in the collection plate each week. And many people dread the 'stewardship campaign' when we are encouraged to give more... and more. Of course, as we know well, giving isn't just about money. In our work, in our leisure and in our church community, we are often asked to give our time and our energy as well as to give financially. Getting the right balance between giving of ourselves and allowing ourselves time to rest is hard for many Christians. Sometimes people feel under pressure to give more

because they see what others are able to do and they then feel they 'should'. The word 'duty' was relevant in the era of the two world wars, but it has become less used in our culture now, perhaps because, as a society, we are more focused on doing things for ourselves. Or is it because 'duty' is a very pressurised word? How do we balance this with our need not to burn out by giving? The unnamed woman in the Gospel reading is clearly giving not for show nor out of duty but out of her love for God. So, surely, this is where we make a start when we are thinking about our giving.

If we only give to God what we'll never miss, are we really giving at all? But if we're prepared to offer him everything because of our love for him, then whatever we are able to give becomes a valuable offering. To quote the American missionary to Ecuador, Jim Elliot: 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.' This seemed to be the attitude of the unnamed woman. May it be our response also.

Hymn Stf 132

- 1 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.
- 2 Under the shadow of thy throne
thy saints have dwelt secure;

sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defence is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.

4 A thousand ages in thy sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

5 The busy tribes of flesh and blood,
with all their cares and fears,
are carried downward by the flood,
and lost in following years.

6 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all its sons away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

7 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
be thou our guard while life shall last,
and our eternal home.

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

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Edition, number 132 .

Prayer of confession

Dear God,
forgive us when we are reluctant to give of our time and resources:

help us to be more like you.

Forgive us when giving feels like an obligation and not a delight:

help us to be more like you.

Forgive us when we are dismissive of small gifts and miss the love with which they are filled:

help us to be more like you.

Forgive us when we have abused the kindness of others and been greedy not grateful:

help us to be more like you.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Faithful God,
you forgive and bless those who come to you;
you fill those who are empty;
you support those who are struggling;
you encourage those tempted to give up on themselves
and you give each of us the opportunity for a new
beginning,
which we receive now in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Say the Lord's Prayer

A sending out prayer

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

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Sunday 17th November 2024

A call to worship

Call to worship

We raise our voices in song.

We join our voices with the trees of the field,
the mountains and the hills.

We join our voices with those who are near,
and those who are far away.

We raise our voices in song,
in praise of our Lord and God.

Hymn Stf 440

- 1 Amazing grace — how sweet the sound —
 that saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found,
 was blind, but now I see.

- 2 God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
 his grace my fears relieved;
 how precious did that grace appear
 the hour I first believed!

- 3 Through many dangers, toils and snares
 I have already come;
 God's grace has brought me safe thus far,
 and grace will lead me home.

- 4 The Lord has promised good to me,
 his word my hope secures;
 he will my shield and portion be
 as long as life endures.

5 And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
 and mortal life shall cease,
 I shall possess within the veil
 a life of joy and peace.

6 When we've been there ten thousand years
 bright shining as the sun,
 we've no less days to sing God's praise
 than when we first begun.

John Newton (1725–1807) (*alt.*)
Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words
Edition, number 440.

A prayer of adoration

We sing our song of thankfulness to you, Creator God,
for beauty, life and adventure.

We sing our song of praise to you, Lord Jesus,
for Scripture, forgiveness and hope.

We sing our song of appreciation to you, Holy Spirit,
for joy, fellowship and grace.

We sing our song of faith to you, Holy Trinity,
with all our heart and mind and strength.

Amen.

Say the Lord's Prayer

Bible reading: 1 Samuel 1:4-20

On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give
portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and

daughters; but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. So it went on year after year; as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?'

After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: 'O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.'

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.' But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.' Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.' And she said,

‘Let your servant find favour in your sight.’ Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, ‘I have asked him of the Lord.’

Reflection

Every day, we make hundreds of choices. Small choices – like what to have for breakfast or what clothes to wear. Slightly bigger choices might include – how we respond when someone is rude to us or how we reply to a difficult message. And sometimes, we have big choices to make. Do we accept a job we have been offered? Do we stay where we are or move house?

In the passage from 1 Samuel, Hannah, Peninnah and Samuel all have choices to make about how they will respond to their circumstances. Hannah has endured the pain of childlessness, year after year praying to God and seemingly receiving no answer. But she chooses to remain faithful to God and to continue to pray. And then, when perhaps she has given up hope, she conceives a child. Now, she had promised God that she will give up her son to serve in the temple. But Hannah still had a choice to make: did she keep this promise or break it? No doubt we would have understood completely if Hannah

had broken her promise – imagine the pain of longing for a child for so long, only to finally become pregnant and then give up her son. But Hannah chose to keep her promise, even though it must have been indescribably hard for her. When have we had to make hard choices?

By contrast, Peninnah, who seemingly has everything that Hannah so desperately wants, chooses to taunt Hannah, rather than be kind to her. Perhaps Peninnah was jealous of Hannah's relationship with Elkanah, or maybe jealous of her faith in God? We don't hear how Peninnah responded to Hannah's pregnancy. It's difficult to imagine that she celebrated with her. Have there been times in our own lives when, despite the fact that on the surface we might have seemed to have everything, we were still unhappy and found ourselves feeling jealous or resentful of what others had? I wonder what practices we might adopt to enable us to be grateful for all that we do have, and also to be able to celebrate with others in what they have?

Finally, it might be easy to assume that Samuel didn't really have a choice in what happened to him, because he was just a child. But Samuel had the choice of how to respond to being sent to live in the temple. Samuel's experience might remind us of those children who were evacuated from cities and were sent to live in the countryside during the Second World War, in what was known as Operation Pied Piper. Some children loved it and saw it as a great adventure, but this was not true of all – some found it incredibly hard. So, we don't want to idealise the experience of either Samuel or evacuee children.

What might we take from this passage about how we respond to the choices we are faced with? As we see from 1 Samuel 2, Hannah responds in song – not a song of lament, but a song of praise to God. How might we be inspired by this in our own lives?

A prayer of intercession

You could lead these prayers using two voices, one to read the bidding and one invite the response using the words: 'Show us the pathway...our God'.

You could also use hand actions in the call and response:
Show us the pathway that leads to life...
(hold hands out, palms facing up).
Defend us, O Lord
(cross arms over chest/heart).

As the year turns and darkness casts its shadows
keep us firm in the hope of light to come.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

As we remember the people who gave their lives for the
freedom of others
and their sacrifices on behalf of future generations,
may we live by their example of duty and courage.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God

Defend us, O Lord.

As we face the wounds of history,
reflecting together on the pain caused by war and conflict
and the scars of mistrust and aggression.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

We remember all who long for freedom and peace,
remembering today:
Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe unjustly detained in Iran;
women terrified by domestic violence;
migrants risking everything in search of a better life,
especially those in desperate circumstances at the
Poland-Belarus border
and we ask for a swift and just solution to this crisis.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

As the world heads for catastrophic temperature
increases
and people shut their ears to the truth
we pray for life-changing courage to act.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

We stand together with countries on the frontline of global heating remembering today the peoples of the Pacific Islands who are afraid of being swallowed by the rising sea.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

We pray for areas of conflict, remembering Myanmar, Sudan and Nigeria.
We pray for peace in all the pain of our broken and troubled world
and for faithful peace-building.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

When trust in politics and politicians has been shaken by sleaze and scandal
and leaders do not serve the people,
keep us mindful of your servant kingship.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

When many voices compete for our attention;
when we are tempted by easy answers to complex problems
and we are afraid of the cost of following you:

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

When we watch the suffering of those we love
and long for their healing and release
send your Spirit's presence to comfort all who are in pain.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

As we travel in the company of the saints
and with the memory of all whose faith has inspired our
own
we give thanks that we do not travel alone.

Show us the pathway that leads to life,
for you are our God
Defend us, O Lord.

A sending out prayer

Based on 1 Samuel 2:2
Lord, as we go into this week,
may we be confident that our lives
are built on the sure foundation
of you, our Rock.

Amen.

Sunday 24th November 2024

Call to Worship

You are all children of light and of the day,
we are not of the night or of darkness!
So then, let us not fall asleep as others do,
but let us keep awake and give our praise.

A gathering prayer

Creator God, who has furnished us with all that we have,
we give you praise and thanks.
Remind us of our gifts when we lose sight of them.
Show us where and how to share them.
Give us the courage to offer them freely, as you give to us.
What others may seek to destroy, help us to protect and
care,
and give us the conviction to stand fast when we are called
to do so.
This we ask of you, in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Bible reading:

Zephaniah 1.7,12-18

Be silent before the Lord God!
For the day of the Lord is at hand;
the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.

At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
'The Lord will not do good,
nor will he do harm.'
Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.
The Great Day of the Lord

The great day of the Lord is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.
That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.

I will bring such distress upon people
that they shall walk like the blind;
because they have sinned against the Lord,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the Lord's wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Matthew 25.14-30

The Parable of the Talents

'For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five

talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Reflection

It can be very easy to be disheartened by the darkness of Zephaniah. He doesn't offer much hope. At this time of year,

it is also dark and we are fast approaching the shortest day. In ancient times people did not know if the daylight would ever return again to its former glory; they just had to hope that it would. It might seem strange to us now, but in modern times we also have to hope – hope that humanity will address the human-made difficulties our gifted planet faces (floods, droughts, fires and more). Sometimes it is difficult to have much hope that they will. Yet Jesus shows us that by using well what God has given us, there is much in which to invest our gifts, talents and hope. And that includes money.

Christians sometimes have an uneasy relationship with money, feeling that it is somehow wrong to be anything other than poor. Yet here are two passages – in Zephaniah and Matthew – that tell us pretty clearly that it's not the possession of money that is wrong, but what we do (or don't do) with it. Neither silver nor gold will buy us into God's good books, and keeping money for ourselves (if you interpret the story of the talents literally) is just not on. The money we have, or something else that we could regard as 'in kind', is a gift from God; think of it as a loan if you like – which means it must be paid back. How might we do that? Can we use it to help the legacy of God's Garden survive into the future? If action inconveniences us, as it did the man who buried his talent, is that a reason for doing nothing? Does doing nothing make us complicit? Can we find a way of addressing Zephaniah's doom and bring back the peace, joy and beauty of the Garden of Eden to our tired and unhappy earth?

Hymn StF 102: For the beauty of the earth

1 For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies:

*Gracious God, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.*

2 For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light:

3 For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight:

4 For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
pleasures pure and undefiled:

5 For each perfect gift and sign
of your love so freely given,
graces human and divine,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven:

Folliott Sandford Pierpoint (1835–1917)
Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words
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Prayers of intercession

Creator God, we pray for your world. Have mercy upon it.

We pray for the countries being torn apart by war: for the fighting in Ukraine. And that there will be no escalation in the war between Israel and Gaza by other factions getting involved. Be with those working to seek the release of hostages.

Creator God, have mercy. Blanket your world with peace.

We bring before you your Church. Many countries victimise your followers. They face great dangers; imprisonment or death.

Creator God, have mercy. We pray your strength and safety upon believers in danger.

We pray your hand on the COP28 conference, beginning at the end of this month. Help all in the fight to combat climate change. Help us to maintain your creation for future generations.

We pray for the Icelandic people experiencing earthquakes and those evacuated due to the threat of volcanic activity.

Creator God, have mercy. Sustain your world.

We pray for all young people in education. Help those children skipping school due to bullying and violence. We

pray for teachers nurturing young talents. Open doors of opportunity.

Creator God, have mercy. Help all to grow in wisdom and knowledge.

We pray for the exploited. For all lured into modern slavery by false promises made by unscrupulous people. We pray against those using social media for their own ends, for those stirring up dissent.

Creator God, have mercy. Open the eyes of the vulnerable and bring awareness.

We pray good health on our King as he enters his 76th year. May he grow in wisdom.

We pray for our government, at odds with itself over the dramatic reshuffling. Bring cohesion to the corridors of power.

Creator God, have mercy. May those in power serve humbly.

We pray for our communities; for all those working towards making them safer places to live and work. We pray for the lost, the lonely and the hungry.

Creator God, in this winter season help us to use well all that you give us. Help us, your children, to bring light and warmth into the lives of those around us.

Amen

Say the Lord's Prayer

A sending out prayer

This earth, this good earth,

The sunlight, the moonlight,

The sky that reaches over us,

The soil beneath our feet.

We will hold all this in our hands with gentleness and love.

Amen.