



## Circuit Contact

Welcome to our Circuit Worship for September 26<sup>th</sup> 2021 -  
prepared by Rev Julie

Youtube Worship on the Trinity Church, Leek Channel from 10.30am

Worship in the following locations...if stated, please contact those named below if you wish to attend

Endon Methodist Church at 10am with Rev Eleanor Smith

Cheadle & Tean at Cheadle Methodist Church at 10am with Rev Julie Hassall

Trinity Church, Leek at 10.30am with Rev Richard Pope - contact the office  
on 01538 398483

Whiston at 10.30 with Mrs Eva Massey

Ipstones at 10.30 with Mr Peter Mitchell

Thornccliffe Final Service at 3pm with Rev Richard Pope

Boundary at 6.15pm with Mrs Eva Massey

Waterhouses at 6.30pm with Mr Les Poole

Rudyard Methodist Church Songs of Praise at 6.45pm with Rev Richard Pope

## Out and about

### Macmillan Cancer Support "World's Biggest Coffee Morning"

Rudyard Methodist Church

Fri 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 9.30am-12pm

All welcome any enquiries please contact

Suzanne Sheldon

07518 074185 or

suzsheldon@btinternet.com

**MACMILLAN**  
CANCER SUPPORT



### Macmillan Cancer Support "World's Biggest Coffee Morning"

Cheadle Methodist Church

Sat 25<sup>th</sup> Sept 10am-12pm

All welcome

**MACMILLAN**  
CANCER SUPPORT



### Rudyard Methodist Church Flower Festival

24<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> Sept 10am - 4pm

All welcome any enquiries please contact

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# Worship

Wherever song rises to heaven – **there God is heard!**  
Wherever love changes hearts – **there God is encountered!**  
Wherever faith shows itself in kindness – **there God is found!**  
Wherever prayer releases generosity – **there God is discovered!**  
Wherever nourishment is shared in community – **there the goodness of God is tasted!**



Praise to the living God who is known in many ways – and whose name is love. **Amen.**

**Song - [Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven \(PROM PRAISE OFFICIAL\) - YouTube](#)**

## **Prayer**

Loving God, we offer praise and adoration for the blessings of the week now past;

- For food which has sustained us
- For love which has warmed us
- For compassion which has surprised us
- For the word of encouragement
- For the opportunity to offer care to someone else
- For the unexpected encounter through which we have glimpsed heaven's light

*Spend a moment in quiet reflection, remembering the week before God, mindful of the ways in which we have been cherished, blessed and restored - Thanks be to God – **Amen.***

**Reading - [Romans 8:28-39 NIV - And we know that in all things God - Bible Gateway](#)**

**Song - [In Christ Alone Virtual Choir - YouTube](#)**

**Reading - [Mark 9: 38-50 NIV - Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us - Bible Gateway](#)**

**Hymn - [StF620 Thou God of truth and love - YouTube](#)**

## Reflection

In the centre of Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester there used to be a homeless man who sat with his dog and would offer to pray with people as they went by. I never knew anything of his story – all I can recall is the dismay of some of the local Methodist congregation at the man's audacity at offering prayer in that way. From time to time someone would try to find out what denomination he was (after all you really have to have a denomination to pray!), at times they would try to move him on. It would have been ok, I suspected if Methodists had gone out offering prayer (though, of course they never did) but not just some 'random' man.

I always remember that incident when I read this part of Mark's gospel story. The disciples, you recall have just finished arguing about which of them is the greatest. Now it seems they notice someone healing who is not part of their group! Shock, horror! Now John comes to Jesus and says '*well, whatever the order of our importance, this guy is definitely nowhere in the pecking line!*'

'He is not one of us!'

Jesus, as we might expect is having none of it, and responds '*whoever is not against us is for us*' He tells John to leave the man be, and that if he is doing the work of the Kingdom then that is ok with him.

Of course, this is Mark's gospel – so there is a sense of urgency about the story, and certainly by this point in the tale as the tide starts to turn on Jesus in terms of his public ministry. Maybe Jesus is only too happy to take Kingdom work, no matter where or how it appears, even if that happens to be through the most unlikely people. He continues (*if the two parts of this story actually belong together and were not joined at some point later to make a point*) by saying to the established group that they are under no circumstances permitted to cause people who are carrying out Kingdom work, healing, teaching, to stumble.

If they are tempted to do so, things will not go well for them! And, in order to prevent them from doing that they may well have to consider chopping off a hand or a foot...seems extreme?

Well, perhaps so – but we are left in no doubt about what Jesus thinks of people who stand in the way of others expressing faith in daily life in their own way, and to the benefit of the wider community. Though Jesus is not really advocating actual amputation his point is very clear. Anything which stands in the way of authentic expression of faith, even from those who are not 'one of us' will have to go!

I wonder what that says to us in our own day, who are so often keen to keep the Church as our domain, and are quite clear about who is inside and outside of that domain? I wonder what it says to our beliefs within denominations that the only 'proper' way to do things is the way we do them? I wonder what it would look like to be open to the authentic expression of faith in community without us having to claim or legitimise such things by labelling them as 'church owned?'

I thought of a couple of examples.

- I was very privileged in my student placement days to belong to a Methodist Church in Whalley Range, where the largely West African congregation of the Windrush generation left a lasting impression upon me in a really positive way. They had a very definite culture not of 'come and see how we do things here, and then you can do those things in just the same way', but rather it was a culture of 'come and bring your own spiritual offering, come and join us in doing something for the community, and do it in your own way!' It produced a vibrant and outward looking church which was perceived within the wider community as somewhere you could come to explore your spirituality – as somewhere which cared deeply about the needs of its neighbours far more than it ever did about 'raising money for the chapel'. I recall one evening in particular when they put a prayer tent in the high street at carnival time – they made West African street food which they gave away to passers-by, and they invited people to decorate the external wall of the chapel with prayer art in whatever way people wanted to! It was absolutely beautiful by the end of the evening, as people found their voice in art and were left to express their spirituality in whatever way God led them. I was very fortunate to have been placed there. I learned a lot.
- As a young teenager I attended a Methodist Church which was blessed with a coffee bar which was run by volunteers from the community – where anyone could just come and offer to help! What a rich variety of folk that openness brought. Again, the invitation not to 'come and see how we do things' but simply to come and offer yourself. It was transformative not just for the individuals but for the community at large, as that church became known as a place where people were free to pray, and chat, and serve coffee just as themselves!

I wonder what Jesus might say to the church of today, which often finds it so difficult to allow people to work, and pray, and serve, and heal, and teach in ways which are different to our own? What challenge might he have for our 'come and see' culture which so often does not connect with people where they are?

Maybe there is that sense of urgency in our own day, just as in Mark's – to listen, to let go, and to allow the Kingdom to be expressed freely, extravagantly, and beautifully. And maybe the things that stand in the way of that...well, ...you know what Jesus says! **Amen.**

## Prayers

Let us offer to God our prayers for all through whom the Kingdom is made visible;

- all who work tirelessly in community groups, charity shops, signposting organisations
- those who actively watch out for the vulnerable in communities
- all who through creativity, transform communal spaces, parks, village halls,

God hears our prayer, and offers us the opportunity to respond in generosity

Let us offer to God our prayers for all through whom the Kingdom is made visible;

- service men and women who work to maintain peace around the world
- aid organisations seeking to alleviate crushing poverty and malnutrition
- all who work in Mental Health first aid, seeking to bring comfort and relief

God hears our prayer, and offers us the opportunity to respond in generosity

Let us offer to God our prayers for all through whom the Kingdom is made visible;

- those whose creativity we are reluctant to embrace,
- all who challenge our assumptions of the ways in which God speaks
- those who feel rejected in their offering of time and gifts in community

God hears our prayer, and offers us the opportunity to respond in generosity

*Let us together pray for the breaking in of God's Kingdom...*

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,  
the power, and the glory  
for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

The logo for 'The Lord's Prayer' features the words 'The Lord's' in a smaller, gold-colored serif font above the word 'Prayer' in a larger, elegant, gold-colored script font.

**Hymn - [Beyond these walls of worship. Lyric Video \(StF 547\) - YouTube](#)**

## Blessing

May the God of surprises never stop blessing us in unexpected ways,  
May the Christ of encounter never stop inspiring us through the offering of others,  
May the Spirit of newness never stop challenging us to recognise the Kingdom in our neighbour,  
That we and all people might be blessed beyond our imagining! **Amen.**