



Circuit Contact

Welcome to our Circuit Worship for

26<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Prepared by Rev Denise Williamson

**Worship in the following locations:**

Wellspring Methodist Church, Cheadle - At 10:30pm - With Rev Julie Hassall

Endon Methodist Church - At 10:00am With Ms Beryl Stew

Ipstones Methodist Church - At 10:30am - With Ms Heather Hayward

Rudyard Methodist Church - At 11:00am - With Mr and Mrs Massey

The Gathering At St Andrews, Cheddleton - at 16:00pm

Trinity, Leek - At 10:30am - With Rev Denise Williamson - General Church Meeting

Waterhouses Methodist Church - At 18:30pm - With Rev Julie Hassall

Wetley Rocks Methodist Church - At 10:30am - Local Arrangement

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025 – Worship at Wellspring Cheadle– At 10:30am – Mr Roger Cutts**



**Hymn 24. Come, now is the time to worship [Come, Now is the Time to Worship \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)**

**Prayer**

God, Father, Son and Spirit,  
we take a moment to come before you;  
in awe of you.

Together you are beyond our understanding,  
three, but bound together in one purpose.  
As we come before you and worship you,  
bind us also into your purpose.

God, Father, Son and Spirit,  
Just as we are, Lord, we come to worship  
Help us to be part of the body of Christ where we are, in this place;  
to feel connected to all those worshipping this day at home, in our church and in all churches  
across the world;  
May we hear about  
Bringing the good news to the poor;  
Helping to set the oppressed free.  
To bring healing and wholeness to all.  
In your strength and in your name.  
May we love you with heart, mind, body and soul. Amen

**Luke 4:14-21** <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A14-21&version=NIV>

## **The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry**

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

## **The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth**

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’\*

## **Message.**

When the people in the synagogue in Nazareth heard the words that Jesus spoke to them, I wonder what they thought? Jesus would have been recognised from among his own community of Nazareth as someone who was gaining ‘celebrity’ if you like. As someone who preached and taught in the synagogues round about, word would have spread because of what he was saying. We are told that it was Jesus’ custom, his habit, to go to the synagogue on the sabbath day.

Jesus was given the scroll of the prophet Isaiah to read from. We don’t know if Jesus chose this passage from Isaiah or if it was the set passage for that day. After standing to read the scripture he then sat down -as was the custom, to explain, discuss, preach about the passage. It is thought that all eyes must have been fixed on him because he missed out a bit of the reading that followed what he read. He said to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour ..... But left out, ‘...and the day of vengeance of our God’

But if leaving out that key sentence about the Lord’s vengeance wasn’t a surprise then what Jesus said next certainly was. “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’.

This scripture from Isaiah is like a manifesto for Jesus a mission statement. He was the promised one spoken about in Isaiah. He had brought in God’s Kingdom forever -not just for a year of the Lord’s favour, but forevermore. But the manifesto wasn’t just for **him** to live out but for all who were there in the synagogue and for all of God’s people - for Israel and for everyone outside of the synagogue too -the gentile, the sinner, the enemy. The Lord’s favour would be for everyone if they followed the same plan -God’s plan.

For the people hearing Jesus speak in the synagogue, maybe their hope, their expectation was for something different. The day of the Lord’s vengeance was what many were waiting for. This Jesus was saying and doing things that were beyond their comprehension, but they longed for a freedom brought about by vengeance and not by healing the blind, giving good news to the poor, and

releasing captives. Did they think 'What is that all about?' I imagine very puzzled looks on the faces of those in the synagogue that day.

Is the Good News always what we want to hear? We all have our own agendas, our own manifestos. Good news may come in totally unexpected ways. Do we see things more through our own eyes than God's eyes?

Twenty-five years ago, after many many years of thinking and planning, the church to which Simon and I belonged to then decided to completely re-vamp the interior of the church. So, the old pulpit, communion rail and Dias were taken out -and of course the pews and it was all completely redecorated, carpeted, new chairs bought and new communion furniture installed. One of the things that the church believed would happen as a result of this transformation and upgrade was that new people, hopefully young people, would come flocking to the modernised church and as a result find God.

It didn't happen as they expected, and it took much longer than they expected too.

Of course, when the modernisation was first proposed some threatened to leave - how dare we take the pews out! But people didn't leave.

Sadly, at first the church didn't get any new people either. But then because of the new, modern environment preachers and worship leaders and Ministers began to take risks with worship -move the chairs around, sing new songs, make the worship more meaningful and appropriate to the needs of those in the church and outside it.

Some started a Drop-in Prayer Day once a month and new people began to come; Slowly.

Then a new minister was appointed who was LGBTQI+. At first there was concern and people threatened to leave -but they didn't. The appointment of a 'gay' minister attracted those who had been Christian all their lives but had never before been accepted in a church because of their own sexuality. They had struggled to find a place where the reality of the love of God was truly found.

However, those who had found it really difficult to accept the new minister started to talk and listen and befriend the newcomers and real friendships were formed. More people began to come and join because they had heard of the openness of the congregation and the realisation that all were really welcome. It was the genuine love and welcome and acceptance of the stranger that transformed the church and rebuilt it -not the re-modelling and updating of the premises.

Is the challenge every church needs to face today is to ask 'Are we really ready to hear God's word? Are we ready to open our heart to hear the good news? Are we ready to weep with repentance but then celebrate and share with joy all that God through his son has done for us? Are we willing to let go of our own manifesto and take hold of the Good News of God's love and acceptance of all?

Many in Jesus' day did not like what he was saying or doing. They did not accept this Good News was for all. They could not accept that they could be wrong about God's plan for them?

Following and accepting Jesus sometimes means that our lives are turned upside down. As churches, the body of Christ, are we ready to be turned around and take risks, go a different direction? If we do Christ goes before us, if we don't.....?

**Hymn 662 Have you heard God's voice? [Have you heard God's voice? Lyric video \(StF 662\) - YouTube](#)**

## **Prayers**

Creator God, as fire wreaks havoc across the planet, we pray for wisdom in how we use our resources. Guide us to be good stewards of your creation.

May we remain steadfast in our attempts to reduce our use of the worlds resources and reduce the pollution and toxic waste we produce.

May your kingdom come

**through our prayers, actions and words.**

God of justice and compassion

We long for a world in which all are free;

Where no-one is trafficked, enslaved and controlled.

We long to see your justice prevail, and for the crime of human trafficking to be eradicated.

Liberating God, help us to commit today,

To stand in solidarity with adults and children who have been deceived, coerced, trafficked and exploited.

To use our collective power to challenge those who can bring about change

To keep seeking justice, not just for the short term, but until we see true transformation that means all can flourish,

May your kingdom come

**through our prayers, actions and words.**

Loving God we pray for all those who have experienced only judgment and rejection in our churches. We pray for those in the LGBTQI+ communities who have come willing to learn more about you but have only met with coldness and distrust. Help us to remember that your son, The Christ died for all and no one is excluded from God's love and blessing.

May your kingdom come

**through our prayers, actions and words.**

Dear God, we thank you for the mission and ministry of Jesus, for the challenge he offers, the peace with which he fills us and his love which inspires us. We pray that we may find imaginative ways to share his love and to proclaim his good news. Bless the church throughout the world. Enable the stronger to support the more vulnerable that Jesus name may be known and honoured in every place.

May your kingdom come

**through our prayers, actions and words.**

Hear us for Jesus' sake.

**Amen.**

**Hymn 687 One human family God has made** [One human family God has made StF 687 - YouTube](#)

Blessing

**A sending out prayer**

God, you call us to be the body of Christ in this place.

Side by side, hand in hand, help us to stand together,

to stand with our neighbours,

to break free from all that holds us back

from making the world as you want it to be.

In Jesus' name.

**Amen.**