

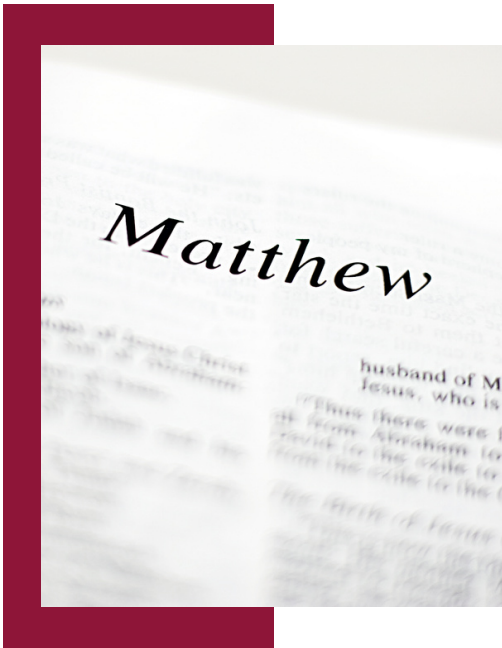


MATTHEW 5

SALT & LIGHT

Reflections and resources inspired by Matthew 5 from those in the South West Peninsula Methodist District

INTRODUCTION



Matthew 5:13-16

Salt & Light

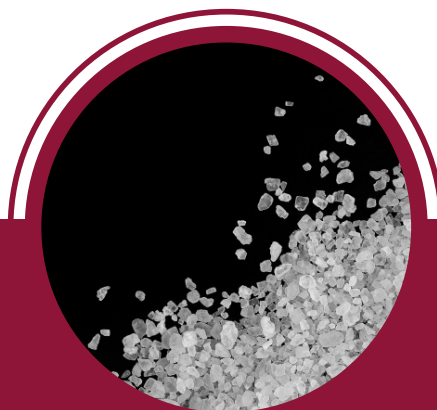
This booklet gathers together prayers and reflections inspired by Matthew 5:13–16, our South West Peninsula District's scripture focus for this Methodist year

Within these pages, you'll discover our shared mission, vision, and the principles that drive us forward. It's more than just a collection of articles, but reflections on who we truly are and who we were made to be by our Creator



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SALT & LIGHT	4
ESSENCE	5
LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE	6-7
A PRAYER - REV 7	8
BEING SALT & LIGHT - REFLECTION	9-10
SHINE!	11-12
SHARING THE DARKNESS AS WELL AS THE LIGHT	13-14
SHORELINE	15
YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD MATTHEW 5:14	16
RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP	17-19





SALT & LIGHT

This year across the District we are encouraging reflection on Matthew 5:13-20, where Jesus talks about us being salt and light. We hope that by engaging with these images, we might find ways to work out in our own settings and contexts how we might exercise kingdom influence, living as Jesus invites us to live.

Sometimes as people of faith, we are helped by the insight of how other people see us. In Matthew 5, Jesus offers those gathered around him a description of themselves: they are salt and they are light. In English, we miss something of the communal nature of the Greek text for “you”, and we miss the nuance of the second half of these verses where Jesus commands the light to shine out from us. This is an active description and powerful command of what happens when we are prepared to become the people God intends us to be.

Sometimes that insight releases and encourages us. Once, when meeting with our then local MP to discuss a proposed new Church site in a community which was often defined by its lack of resource, I was struck by her view of the Church. I had presented the proposals being careful to stress our openness to all faiths and none, and our willingness not to be seen to expand in order to prop up our “brand” of Christianity. The MP’s response surprised me by its clarity: “I can’t think of any other organisation that I would want more to do this work for the community; faith makes a huge difference.” What the MP noted as needed in the community was the influence of faithful Christians, willing to stick it out for the long term without self-interest, and with an openness to how God was already alive and at work in the lives and homes of those around them. The MP described perfectly the outworking of how Jesus imagined salt and light making the difference.

It’s my prayer that these resources might help to encourage you and your local Church and Circuit to go on finding ways to be offer distinctive love, joy and peace to your neighbourhoods, hamlets, towns and cities, and so bring hope where it is often lacking.

May God bless you as you go on being salt and light.

With every blessing

Revd Dr Dan Haylett

District Chair



ESSENCE

Being salt and light is less about effort and more about essence. Jesus doesn't say "Try to be..." but "You are..."—as if he's naming something already planted in us, waiting to be lived.

Salt works in hidden ways. It doesn't shout for attention. It simply does what it does—preserving, enhancing, drawing out goodness that might otherwise stay unnoticed. To be salt is to show up with a kind of steady, faithful presence that keeps hope from spoiling. It's the quiet encouragement offered at the right moment. It's the willingness to stay with someone in their difficulty without rushing to fix it. It's the courage to speak truth gently, adding flavour to conversations that have grown bland with routine or fear. Salt reminds us that small acts matter. A phone call. A prayer whispered for someone who will never know. A decision to stay kind when frustration would be easier. Salt is the ministry of the unnoticed—yet without it, everything tastes different.

Light is different. It's visible. It changes the atmosphere. Light doesn't exist for itself; it exists so others can see. To be light is to live with a kind of openness that allows God's goodness to be recognisable in us. Not perfection. Not performance. But authenticity—hope that refuses to hide. Light is the courage to let your life speak: your compassion, your convictions, your joy, your willingness to stand alongside those who are overlooked. Light is not about being the brightest. It's about being willing to shine at all—especially in places where shadows have settled.

Salt and light are everyday things. Jesus chooses images from the kitchen and the lampstand, not the temple or the throne room. It's as if he's saying holiness is found in the ordinary ... mission begins where you already are. Your life—your real life—is the place where God's grace becomes visible. To be salt and light is to trust that God can work through your particular presence, your particular gifts, your particular context—rural, coastal, urban, quiet, busy, hopeful, weary. It's to believe that your life, lived faithfully, can help someone else taste goodness again or see a way forward they didn't know was there.

Salt and light don't strive. They simply are—and in being themselves, they transform their surroundings. Perhaps the invitation is this: to live with enough courage, gentleness, and honesty that others encounter something of God through you—sometimes quietly, sometimes visibly, always with love.

Deacon Ruth Richey

Mission Area Lead



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Retreating to the East Neuk of Fife, we potted along the coastal path discovering caves, rugged ruins from the 18th century and several regular hollows on the open shoreline beyond St Monans- one of several small fishing villages in this corner of Scotland. The chill wind of February pushed us forward, as sea spray peppered our faces and curiosity led us to explore these rectangular grassy depressions; the remains of salt pans abandoned in 1823. During the previous century, a windmill powered the pump to fill these pans with sea water, that was boiled to leave the salt which became known as 'white gold'- the value of Christ in our lives, as explained by Jesus.

Artisan salt is now being harvested from this same shoreline: sea water gathered, heated and observed as crystals and salt flakes begin to form on the surface, sinking to the bottom, forming a pyramid of salt that, once dried, is greatly valued by several skilled chefs. It is a lengthy process, demanding skill, patience and strength to shovel the salt pyramids into the drying space. A beautiful product- useful and practical in many ways. Salt crystals, grounded and pure- present in the sea spray tasted on our lips, one chill February day in the East Neuk of Fife.

So salt, in this part of the world, became known as white gold: clean, bright and white- a light from the depths of sea water. Though this may- or may not- be the link Christ intended as he continued his teaching:

'Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works,
And give glory to your Father in heaven.'
(Matthew 5:16)





LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE CONTINUED...

As I wrestled with a call to full-time ministry, one morning I took an early walk up Warton Crag, N Lancashire, heading up the path along the contours of the Crag from the village, from which I could still see our house; then turned uphill through the woods where the path becomes rough and rugged. It was around 8.30am, clear and crisp following a frosty night in February, and, as I reached the point where the path forked, there was a light covering of snow lying on the ground- 'let your light shine' were the words that came into my head as I chose the left fork, eventually leading me to the summit.

Approaching the viewpoint from this direction means that first you arrive at the empty beacon structure- originally constructed as part of the coastal chain to warn of invading forces many years ago. A few yards further along the path and I could see clear across Morecambe Bay, with Ingleborough fell to the East, round to Blackpool Tower on the far horizon and the Lakeland fells to the West- unless the beacon was blazing with light, nobody in those places would ever see the beacon next to me. Actions speak louder than words; I followed the path to which I was being called- and continue to do so, to the best of my ability.

Sea water to salt, white gold to light:
purpose, pathway, vision and practical
application – all can be discovered when
time is spent wondering and wandering
with a special verse or two in so many
special places.

Revd Janet Park

Mission Area Lead & Deputy Chair



A PRAYER OF SALT AND LIGHT FROM REV 7

Living Christ,

You call us to be salt and light, not by standing above the world, but by becoming people through whom your love is quietly tasted and seen.

Make us truly human.

Free us from all that keeps us separate, and lead us to the place prepared for us— not only in your heart, but alongside one another.

May we discover that your kingdom is found wherever love is shared, hope is restored, and every person is welcomed as your beloved.

Bless REV7, its mirrors and its chairs, its laughter and its tears.

May every conversation become holy ground, every act of kindness a glimpse of your kingdom, and every person who enters leave knowing they are seen, loved and never alone.

Like salt, may we bring out the goodness already present.

Like light, may we reveal the beauty you have placed within every soul.

Gather us into your life, that we may become one in Christ, one with each other, and a living sign of your love in the world.

Amen.





BEING SALT AND LIGHT

Matthew 5:13–16

Sit for a moment with Jesus' words:

"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world."

Let them settle. Not as instructions, not as expectations, but as a gentle naming of something already true.

Imagine holding a small pinch of salt in your hand.
It is simple, unremarkable, almost invisible in its power.
Yet when it meets food, everything changes.
Flavour awakens. What was dull becomes alive.

Salt works quietly. It doesn't demand attention.
It simply offers itself, and goodness emerges.
Where in your life is God inviting you to be quietly present?
Where might your steadiness, your kindness, your listening be the small, faithful gift that brings out goodness in someone else?

Let the thought rest. No striving. Just noticing.

Now picture a single candle in a dim room.
Its flame is small, but the darkness cannot ignore it.

Light does not argue with the shadows; it simply shines, and the shadows shift.
To be light is to allow something of God's radiance to be visible through your ordinary life— your compassion, your honesty, your courage to show up.



BEING SALT AND LIGHT CONTINUED

Where is God inviting you to shine gently?

Not with brilliance or perfection, but with authenticity— a presence that helps someone else see their way.

Hold that question lightly. Let it breathe.

Salt and light are everyday things.

Jesus chooses images from the kitchen and the lampstand, as if to say:

Holiness is woven into the ordinary. Your life, just as it is, carries grace.

You don't have to become something else.

You don't have to earn this identity.

You simply allow what God has already placed within you to meet the world around you.

Take a slow breath. Feel the weight of Jesus' words settle gently:

You are salt. You are light.

Not because you try, but because God delights to work through you.

Let that truth rest in you like a quiet blessing.

Deacon Ruth Richey

Mission Area Lead



SHINE!

Matthew 5:13-16 The Message Version

"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt – seasoning that brings out the God – Flavour of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the bin."

Here's another way to put it: You are here to be light bringing out the God – colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this – as public as a city on a hill! If I make you light bearers you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket do you? I'm putting you on a lamp stand – shine!

Keep open house, be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God – this generous Father in Heaven."

Whilst The Message version is not a literal translation – it does give us a sense of what we are supposed to do – Shine. It then gives us practical advice as to what this may look like – "keep open house". I think its as much about being generous, as being authentic and genuine – as our guards come down when we are relaxed at home.

I was reminded by this passage, of a time when I was at the start of my travels to Australia and New Zealand and had decided to have a week stop off in Fiji.

The stay didn't go quite as planned – as within a couple of hours of landing at dawn and travelling on an open public bus to my accommodation, I was eaten alive by mosquitos. Within 2 days of being in the country, (a country I had never visited and knew no one), I could hardly walk. My legs and ankles inflamed to twice the size. Thomasi, (who was working at the hostel where I was staying), told me where the nearest clinic was, so I could be treated for the infection that was now across both legs. What a start to my travels! Thankfully, the meds I received kicked in quickly and I was back on my feet within a couple more days.



SHINE! CONTINUED...

Thomasi radiated Jesus. He was often heard singing hymns around the hostel. He was enthusiastic, optimistic and exuded Jesus. Toward the end of the week and completely out of the blue, he came to me and asked if I would like to meet his wife and children and stay at his house for the weekend. What a fantastic weekend I had. Not only did I meet his family, I met his Church family – which was holding a day long BBQ, (known as a hangi in Fiji, where heated rocks buried in an underground pit act as an earth oven). Plenty of eating, chatting and singing. What a joyful day.

My overriding memory of my weekend was a feeling of warmth, generosity, fun, joy and a sense of being welcomed into a family who loved Jesus. Thomasi was that light on a lampstand on a hilltop and he shone. There was no doubt about it.

So as I sit here writing this and thinking about Fiji – I remember the beautiful beaches, the amazing surf, the stunning sunsets of the 'sunny island in the sea', but above all that, I remember Thomasi and his passion for Jesus. His love for Jesus overflowed so much that it flowed out to me – a visitor passing through, that was welcomed into his home and invited to share his time, family and the love of Jesus, in a very tangible and authentic way. Inviting me to stay, was a simple gesture – however it made a lasting and profound impact on me, all those years ago. I don't recall any theological exposition between any of us that weekend– but there was an unequivocal feeling that God was very much loving me through the people I met, through Thomasi.

It's interesting that salt and light are linked to us using our homes – to demonstrate the love and generosity of God to others in a powerful way. You just never know how God can use this simple thing – to encourage, inspire and give others a feeling a feeling of joy and sense of belonging when they experience it for themselves, within the setting of our home.

Helen Pearce

District Social Justice Co-ordinator





SHARING THE DARKNESS AS WELL AS THE LIGHT

I come from the generation that used to use up a camera film roll and then send it off to be developed, in eager anticipation of receiving back a packet of photographs. Those pre-digital days when every picture had to be thought about because it cost money. We never had a dark room at home to develop photographs, probably because my father was not that interested, but it was out of the darkness that the picture (a recording of the light) emerged – and the darkness was essential to the process.

When I hear the amazing biblical passages about light (and you will be able to think of many of them), there are times when I want to remind myself of the significance of the darkness. In Genesis 1, God does indeed say, 'Let there be light', but he also purposefully separates light from darkness and names the darkness, 'night'. The psalmist affirms God's presence in darkness (ps 139:11-12). The gospel writers use the witness of those who are blind to ask the question, 'who truly can see here, who has insight?' – and is not those who have physical sight. In the fourth gospel, when Judas leaves on Maundy Thursday, John simply says, 'And it was night' – Jesus shared and was present in our human darkness, as he moved from the upper room to Gethsemane and Calvary. And then there are those Christian saints who have written of 'the dark night of the soul' as part of their spiritual journey. You get the picture.

As an ordained minister, I have served as a prison chaplain and a school chaplain, hearing people's often difficult stories, and I have sat alongside people with indifferent mental health, as well as those going through the crises of life. There is nothing unusual or special about me in all of that – it is the normal stuff of ministry and humanity. I have on many occasions been impressed by the resilience of young people whose lived experience is far more challenging than anything I went through. And as a hospital chaplain said in a service I attended recently, 'we don't take Christ to the bedside, we believe he is already there.'

And doubtless, many of you reading this book about being light in the world will also have known, or know, darkness.

SHARING THE DARKNESS AS WELL AS THE LIGHT CONTINUED

So, I am hoping that this small contribution might serve as a reminder of the importance, pastorally and missionally, of sharing the darkness – staying with people, listening to their stories without trying to resolve their challenges, acknowledging the points of darkness within ourselves – often as a necessary part of our sharing the light. I hope also that it may help us humbly remember, as people called to let the light of our good deeds shine out, that God is already present in situations of darkness, in expected places and people. As a Methodist liturgy says, “Let us give thanks....for what we have received from those we sought to serve”¹

Rev. Kevin Hooke

¹ Ministerial service of rededication, Methodist Church

Revd Kevin Hooke

Deputy Chair





SHORELINE

We pause to breathe, to notice the gift of light, and to bring ourselves before God. We give thanks for creation, and for Jesus, the light of the world.

Take a moment to be still. Notice the weather, the sky, the leaves, or the rhythm of your breath. Imagine a familiar shoreline, and picture Jesus beside you, offering what you need today: refreshment, strength, comfort and peace.

Jesus called his first disciples from the shoreline, and he still calls us to follow his way of radical love. Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world." We are called to live so that others may glimpse goodness, kindness and courage in us, and give glory to God.

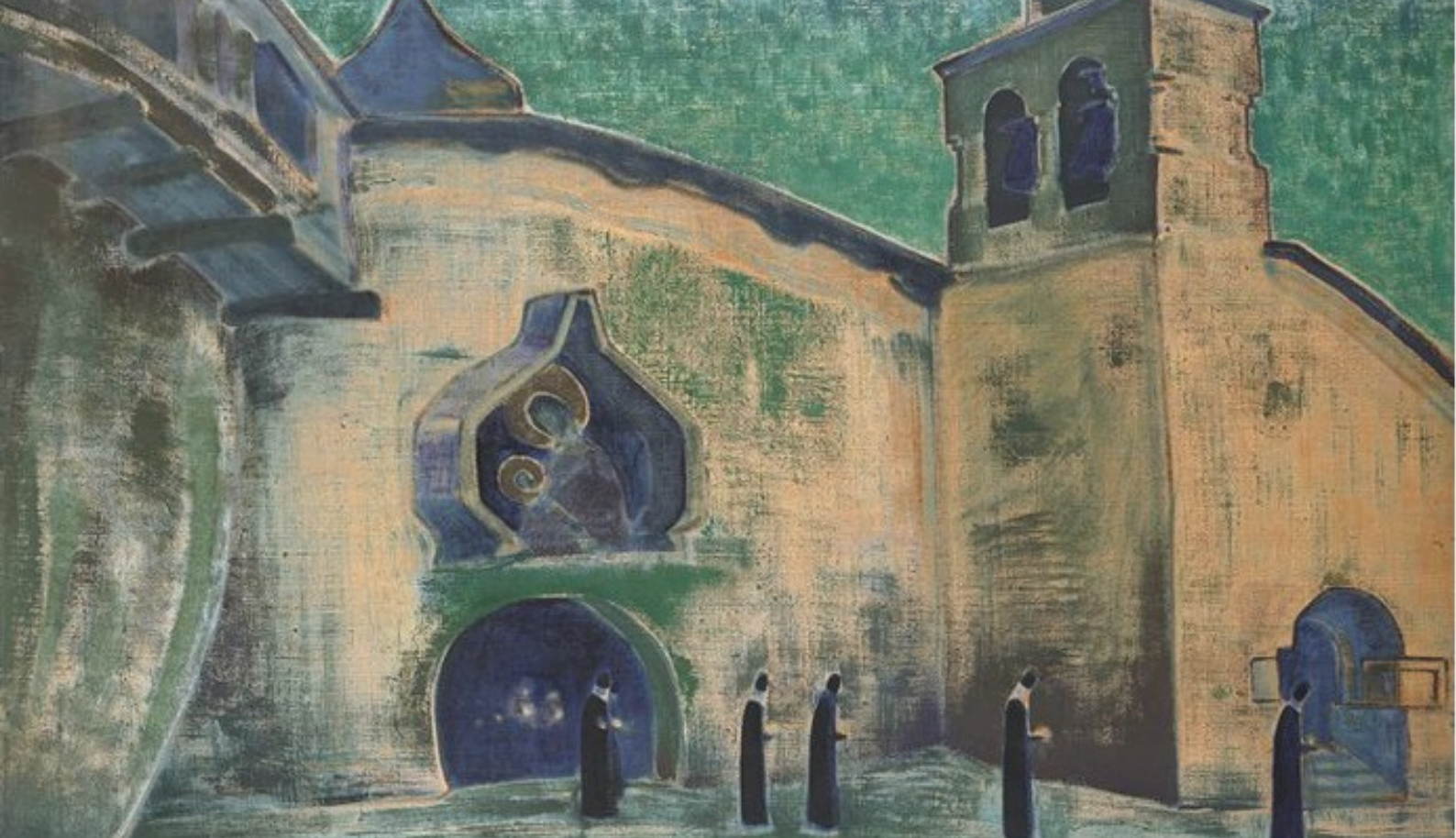
Our faith is not something to hide away, but to live gently and openly. Even small acts of compassion can season the world with grace, and quiet kindness can bring light into another person's day.

Let's pray

Jesus, walker of the shoreline, meet us in this moment. Fill us again with your life and light. Help us release what we regret, receive what we need, and follow you closely in our thoughts, words and actions.

We pray for the world, and for all who thirst for justice, healing and peace. Strengthen those who find today hard, and help us shine with your grace.

Amen.



YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

I was introduced to this picture a short while ago...it is by Russian artist Nikolai Roerich, 'And we bring the light', 1922, part of his 'Sancta' series. (Public domain)

I find it striking in its simplicity. As I study it, I imagine the daily routine of the monks, processing with their little lights in the gathering gloom, carefully guarding them as they make their way, (perhaps) to a chapel where the lights will contribute to the evening liturgy. Or maybe they are carrying the lights out from their collective prayers as they each return to their cell for the night. The tiny lights may be just pinpricks against the severity of the background – but I see them as symbols too of faithfulness, of prayer, of community.

The picture reminds me of a quote from Albert Schweitzer:

'Sometimes our light goes out but is blown again into flame by an encounter with another human being. Each of us owes the deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this inner light.'

We are like those who move in a procession on a march through the darkness. The lights we carry are much alike, although each is individually our own. And when they are blown out in spite of our efforts to protect them from sudden winds, we need each other in order to continue the procession, to see the way ahead. So we move on, our flickering light joining other lights in a communion of community that is indeed awesome and beautiful.

O Lord Jesus give light to our eyes, give light to our minds, give light to our hearts, give light to our hands, give light to our whole lives, that we may reflect your light to the world, today and all days.

Amen.

Revd Deborah Kirk

Deputy Chair

RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP

Prayer of Adoration

Holy and gracious God, Source of all light and giver of all goodness, we lift our hearts in wonder and praise.

You are the One who breathes life into creation, who scatters beauty across sea and sky, who stirs hope in weary souls and awakens courage where fear has settled.

Your presence is like salt— quiet, faithful, preserving what is good, drawing out the hidden flavours of grace in the ordinary moments of our days.

Your love is like light— gentle yet unshakable, shining through shadows, revealing paths we could not see on our own.

We adore you for the way you come close: not distant or demanding, but present in the small, the simple, the everyday. You delight to work through ordinary people and ordinary lives, kindling in us the glow of your compassion and the savour of your truth.

Holy God, receive our worship, our stillness, our longing, our joy. Make our lives a hymn of praise to you— salt that blesses, light that reveals your love.

Amen.



RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, you call us salt and light, yet we confess the times when our lives lose their savour and our witness grows dim.

Forgive us when we hold back kindness because we are tired or afraid. Forgive us when our words wound or our silence hides the truth. Forgive us when we shrink from shining because we doubt that our small light matters.

Restore in us the quiet strength of your Spirit. Season our lives again with grace, and rekindle the flame of compassion within us, that we may reflect your love in all we say and do.

Amen.

Prayer of Assurance

Hear the good news. The God who names us salt and light does not withdraw that calling when we falter. Christ comes to us with mercy, restoring what has faded, healing what is broken, and kindling hope where shadows have gathered.

In him, we are forgiven. In him, our lives shine again. In him, grace finds its way through us to bless the world.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.



RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP

Prayers of Intercession

For the world God loves

God of all nations and all people, shine your light in places overshadowed by conflict, fear, or injustice. Where bitterness has taken root, bring the salt of healing. Where truth is hidden, bring the light of clarity. Guide leaders, peacemakers, and communities toward justice, compassion, and peace.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For our communities and neighbours

God of everyday grace, bless the streets, homes, and workplaces where we live. Season our communities with kindness, with patience, with understanding. Be close to those who feel isolated, anxious, or overwhelmed. Let your light fall gently on all who need hope today.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who suffer

God of tender presence, we hold before you all who are in pain— those living with illness, those grieving a loss, those carrying burdens they cannot speak aloud. Let your healing flow like salt restoring what is wounded, and your comfort shine like a lamp in the night.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the Church

God who calls us to be salt and light, renew your Church in every place. Where faith has grown weary, refresh it. Where courage has faded, strengthen it. Where love has been forgotten, restore it. Make us a people whose presence blesses and whose witness illuminates your grace.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For ourselves

Compassionate God, you know the longings and worries we carry. Season our hearts with your peace, and shine your light on the next step we need to take. Make our lives a quiet blessing to those around us, that through us, others may taste your goodness and glimpse your hope.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.



GETTING IN TOUCH



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For inquiries, support, or more information, please feel free to reach out to the District Admin Team on the above details

