



Merciful God

We cry out to you, in anguish and horror, at the situations we see across the world of warfare, unjust oppression and disasters, of precious lives lost, of grief and trauma beyond that which most of us can imagine.

Compassionate God, you came and dwelt among us; you know and understand the suffering of this world.

There is no place beyond your reach; you are everywhere, even in places where we fear there is no hope left.

Where we are tempted to despair, your spirit brings mercy, and justice, and healing.

You call us, again and again, in times of conflict and destruction, to be attentive to those who are most vulnerable.

Give us the compassion to weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn;

the discernment to recognize the limits of our own wisdom, and to avoid those actions and words which may cause further harm.

Inspire in us a renewed commitment to walk humbly with you, seeking the peace and flourishing which you desire for all of your beloved children,

Amen

(Based on a prayer from www.methodist.org.uk)



Basingstoke & Reading Circuit Prayers
December 2023 to February 2024

**Pausing to listen to God's voice,
our feelings,
the desire God is giving us.**



God in hiding, waiting in the dark, blowing over the formless void, speak a word of light and life, we pray, and make something out of this nothing once again.

God hidden in plain sight, divine treasure to be found in seeds and soils, yeast and dough, birds and trees, hunger and thirst, enemy and neighbour, bread and wine, open our eyes, give sight to our blindness and make us see you once again.

God hiding in me like water, underground rising, seeping out, bursting out, pouring out, come Holy Spirit come and make me full to overflowing once again.

(Extract from a prayer by Mark Slaney in Methodist Prayer Handbook 2023/2024)

Master, speak! thy servant heareth,
Waiting for thy gracious word,
Longing for thy voice that cheereth,
Master, let it now be heard.
I am list'ning, Lord, for thee;
What hast thou to say to me?

Master, speak! and make me ready,
When thy voice is truly heard,
With obedience glad and steady,
Still to follow ev'ry word.
I am listening, Lord, for thee;
Master, speak, oh speak to me!

Oh, fill me with your fullness, Lord,
Until my very heart o'erflows
In kindling thought and glowing word,
Your love to tell, your praise to show.

Oh, use me, Lord, use even me,
Just as you will, and when, and where
Until your blessed face I see,
Your rest, your joy, your glory share.

Verses from two hymns by Frances Ridley Havergal

Lectio Divina (Listening to God in the Bible)

from www.methodist.org.uk

Take a reading from scripture; the psalms or parts of the prophets or epistles are most useful for this style of prayer.

Read through the text very slowly.

When you are struck by a word or a phrase **STOP**.

Stay with the words that moved you, maybe repeating them slowly, allowing them to sink into your heart.

Only move on when you are quite ready.

Try to have an inner stillness so that you can perceive the gentle action of God.

"Holy desires are different than surface wants, like "I want a new car" or "I want a new computer."

Instead I'm talking about our deepest desires, the ones that shape our lives: desires that help us know who we are to become and what we are to do.

Our deep desires help us know God's desires for us, and how much God desires to be with us.

And God, I believe, encourages us to "notice" and "name" these desires, in the same way that Jesus encouraged Bartimaeus, the blind beggar to articulate his desire. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked."

James Martin SJ

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

⁵² "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Imagine Jesus asking you "What do you want me to do for you?"

Imagine Jesus asking your church "what do you want me to do for you?"

How would you prayerfully reply?