



Nine Days of Prayer *I hear you differently!*



The **Methodist** Church 



I hear you differently!

We live in uncertain times. Does faith in Jesus transform the world for us? How can faith change how we love and understand our neighbours? The time between the first Easter and Pentecost was a time of uncertainty when the disciples were left asking, “What does all this mean?”

Life is an uncertain endeavour and our faith in the risen Jesus involves ongoing discovery, which takes time and attention. The following prayers are designed to open up some space for our own reflection and questions. We are invited to breathe deeply and give space for silence and focus each day.

On the day of Pentecost, the crowd heard the apostles speaking and asked: ***“And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?”*** (Acts 2:8, NRSV)

The miracle was not so much that people were speaking in different languages, but rather that all those who were listening could understand each of them. I pray that as we live through this season together we will each discover a new way of listening to ourselves and to others that gives fresh insight; that we will all take a step closer to being able to love our enemies and, most importantly, discover the God who listens to us with profound attention.

Thy Kingdom Come is a global initiative, in which Christians are called to pray for the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost. We are invited to pray for God’s Spirit to move within the Church, equipping us to share God’s love with others and to pay attention to how God is speaking to us today.

To find out more about Thy Kingdom Come, visit www.thykingdomcome.global or www.methodist.org.uk/thykingdomcome

Using this book

Choose a time that works for you – each of these reflections lasts between five and ten minutes, though you might choose to listen for longer.

Choose a place that works for you – you might be someone who hears God in the bustle of the street or in your workplace, or maybe you hear God when you are working or walking outdoors. Some people prefer a place set apart to pray; create the space and focus you need by lighting a candle at home, or find a church that is open for prayer.

Reflect on the image for the day. Read the Bible passage and the hymn suggested from the Methodist hymn book, *Singing the Faith* – expressing what we believe and hearing God’s word to us through music and song is at the heart of our worship. Listen for a while.

Mission is more about how we listen than what we say. When we give each other and our environment attention, then we become aware of God’s ongoing presence. We see, and are seen, with fresh eyes. We come to understand the enormity of God’s grace... we crack open spaces of transformation and we are transformed!

You can use these daily prayers, readings and reflections at any time of the year.



Day 1

Luke 8:18 Consider carefully how you listen

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Luke 8:16-21

Singing the Faith: 450

Reflect on the Bible passage

This passage may feel harsh, a reprimand, a challenge. Jesus even seems to be rejecting his own family. But he also says that those who hear God's word and put it into practice will be his family. How will we be open to hear God's challenge in our lives today? Who have we been ignoring? Is there something that is nagging us or someone we need to attend to differently? How can we bring our faith into the light? How can we hear God's word and put it into practice?

Listen

Listen for a while to what God may be saying to you today.

How can we be aware of being held in deep attentiveness when God seems to be silent?

Pray

Listening God,
light up the world
through us today.
Help us to hear your word
and put it into practice.



Day 2

Luke 18:7 And will not God bring about justice?

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Luke 18:1-8

Singing the Faith: 703

Reflect on the Bible passage

In this passage, even someone who neither fears God nor cares about people is eventually able to do the right thing, albeit for the wrong reasons. The widow's persistence eventually wears him down! If this slovenly man hears the persistence of someone crying out in need, how much more does God listen to people desperate for justice? How can we be more attentive to the needs of others and more fired up for justice? How can we persist in demanding justice when powerful people seem deaf to our needs?

Listen

Listen out today for the voices of the silenced.

How can we persist in crying out for justice?

Pray

Listening God,
set fire to our complacency
turn anger into action,
indignation into protest
fill us with your radical passion for justice
prompt us to persist in the face of deaf ears.



Day 3

Luke 22:12 He will show you a large upper room, all furnished

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Luke 22:7-13

Singing the Faith: 654

Reflect on the Bible passage

Clearly, there is a backstory here. How did the man know to get the room ready? Was he expecting a password so he could recognise disciples and show them where to go? In such political uncertainty, this clandestine operation certainly feels risky. Would we be prepared to offer a welcome in such circumstances? This nameless man's generosity gave time and space for an event that transformed the world.

Listen

Listen out today for the impulse of a generous spirit.

How can we take the risk of opening the door?

Pray

Listening God,
dare us to reckless generosity
so that we say 'Yes' before we ask 'How?'
open the door on surprising conversations
and life changing encounters.



Day 4

Luke 23:23 Their shouts prevailed

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Luke 23:18-25

Singing the Faith: 273

Reflect on the Bible passage

Sadly, crowds that call for blood are not confined to history. There are many situations where those with power are unduly influenced by those who shout the loudest. The angry mob is as much a modern day phenomenon as those that called for the crucifixion of Jesus. What is our response to this and how do we resist trying to shout louder than the people around us, yet still find ways of being heard?

Listen

Listen out today for quiet wisdom in danger of being drowned out.

How can we silence the loud so that we can hear the whispers of the silenced?

Pray

Listening God,
don't let us shout today, either in frustration or anger.
Help me not to mistake volume for righteousness
break open spaces in arguments so that we can wait for wisdom.
In the face of destructive noise,
let quiet love be strongest.



Day 5

Luke 24:11 Their words seemed to them like nonsense

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Luke 24:9-12

Singing the Faith: 524

Reflect on the Bible passage

How many times have we tried to explain something and we just can't get people to understand what we are saying? And how many times have we heard people talking what seems like nonsense and it turns out to be true? Stories don't always come out in a coherent way, especially when they are of extraordinary or traumatic events. Which sources of news can we trust? Listening to the truth behind the words, finding the sense in the nonsense, being prepared to imagine the improbable is a vocational activity.

Listen

Listen out today for the meaning within the story you are hearing.

How can we discern truth within contradictory accounts?

Pray

Listening God,
when people tell us weird things
help us to listen without judgment,
carrying the message of grace
in the way we receive another's truth
willing to hear of your risen presence from unlikely witnesses.



Day 6

Luke 24:19 What things?

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Luke 24:13-27

Singing the Faith: 673

Reflect on the Bible passage

Twice in this story the unrecognised companion on the road asks two open questions which lead the despondent travellers into conversation: “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” and “What things?”

Jesus knew what every counsellor learns, that the open question encourages a deeper exploration of the truth. As he falls into step alongside them, Jesus helps them not only to hear the story but to find its meaning.

Listen

Listen for the answered questions, and ask some more.

How can we open up a conversation and fall into step with strangers?

Pray

Listening God,
help us to ask questions that open up conversation
as we fall into step with companions on the road.
Show us how to understand your story
and find meaning for our lives
day by day, step by step.

A full moon is visible in the center-left of the image, partially obscured by wispy, light-colored clouds. The background is a dark, deep blue or black sky. The clouds are more concentrated around the moon and towards the bottom of the frame.

Day 7

Acts 1:4 Wait for the gift

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Acts 1:3-8
Singing the Faith: 158

Reflect on the Bible passage

In this passage the disciples are to be content with a makeshift present. Jesus seems to have returned but vanished again, there are rumours and rumours of rumours. Is the kingdom coming or is it an illusion? When and how will Jesus return? They are told to be patient and wait. They are told not to stay gawping at the sky but to return to Jerusalem. I wonder if it is the same room in which they so recently shared bread and wine? Waiting and wondering. Is this the beginning or the end?

Listen

Listen deeply today and be content to wait and wonder.

How can we live patiently within anticipation?

Pray

Listening God,
it is hard not to know what will happen next
whether we are going to grieve or rejoice
what good news might look like
what bad news might imply.
Help us not to rush ahead but to live with unknowing
to dwell in your uncomfortable mystery.



Day 8

Acts 2:6 Each one heard them speaking in their own language

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Acts 2:1-13
Singing the Faith: 383

Reflect on the Bible passage

The day of Pentecost and the family of Jesus combine with the new family of Jesus to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only are there miracles of wind and flame and mysterious utterances, but also the gift of hearing a confusing array of sound as if people were speaking in our mother tongue. People are hearing in their own language, the way they listen has been completely changed. Not only are there words but understanding between people of different races and faiths.

Listen

Listen today to people who speak a different language.

How can the Spirit help us to understand strangers?

Pray

Listening God,
we speak in many tongues but your Spirit
gives discernment in the babble.
Help us to value diversity and complexity
seeing in people who don't go together
the wonderful possibility of your reconciling grace.



Day 9

Acts 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe

Pray

Listening God,
open my ears today
to the world, to the stranger, to myself.

Pause

Sit quietly, breathe deeply, let the day greet you kindly.

Read

Acts 2:14-47

Singing the Faith: 177

Reflect on the Bible passage

The Holy Spirit doesn't waste any time in transforming the hesitant and insecure Peter into someone who testifies confidently to a huge crowd! He suddenly sees what Jesus has been saying to make sense of the big story of faith. He is now able to declare with passion and authority in a way that stirs the crowd not only to listen but to make life-changing decisions.

Listen

Listen today for the prompting of the Spirit to be confident of God's grace and love.

How can we find the language to speak authentically about the transforming power of faith?

Pray

Listening God,
blow away the cobwebs of our insecurities
make us so sure of your love that we dare to live differently
so confident of a fresh start that we are unafraid of making mistakes
and so immersed in your Spirit that our doubts can surface and be aired.
Inspire us to listen and question
until such time as you gather us in, like chicks under your wing.

Our story • Your story
Your neighbour's story • God's story



Life is an intricate tapestry of stories. How can we better understand other people's? How can we better express our own? How can a deep engagement with these stories be helpful to our life and witness, and on what occasions can they be unhelpful?

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Our Calling

The **calling** of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in **Christ** and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission

It does this through



Worship



Learning and Caring



Service



Evangelism



The **Methodist** Church

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Reflections and prayers by the Revd Dr Barbara C Glasson, President-Designate of the 2019/2020 Methodist Conference, and Team Leader at Touchstone, part of the Yorkshire West Methodist District dedicated to interfaith work. Touchstone provides safe space for listening and peace building.

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