



Church Together

Praying For Mission

3rd April 2022



Welcome

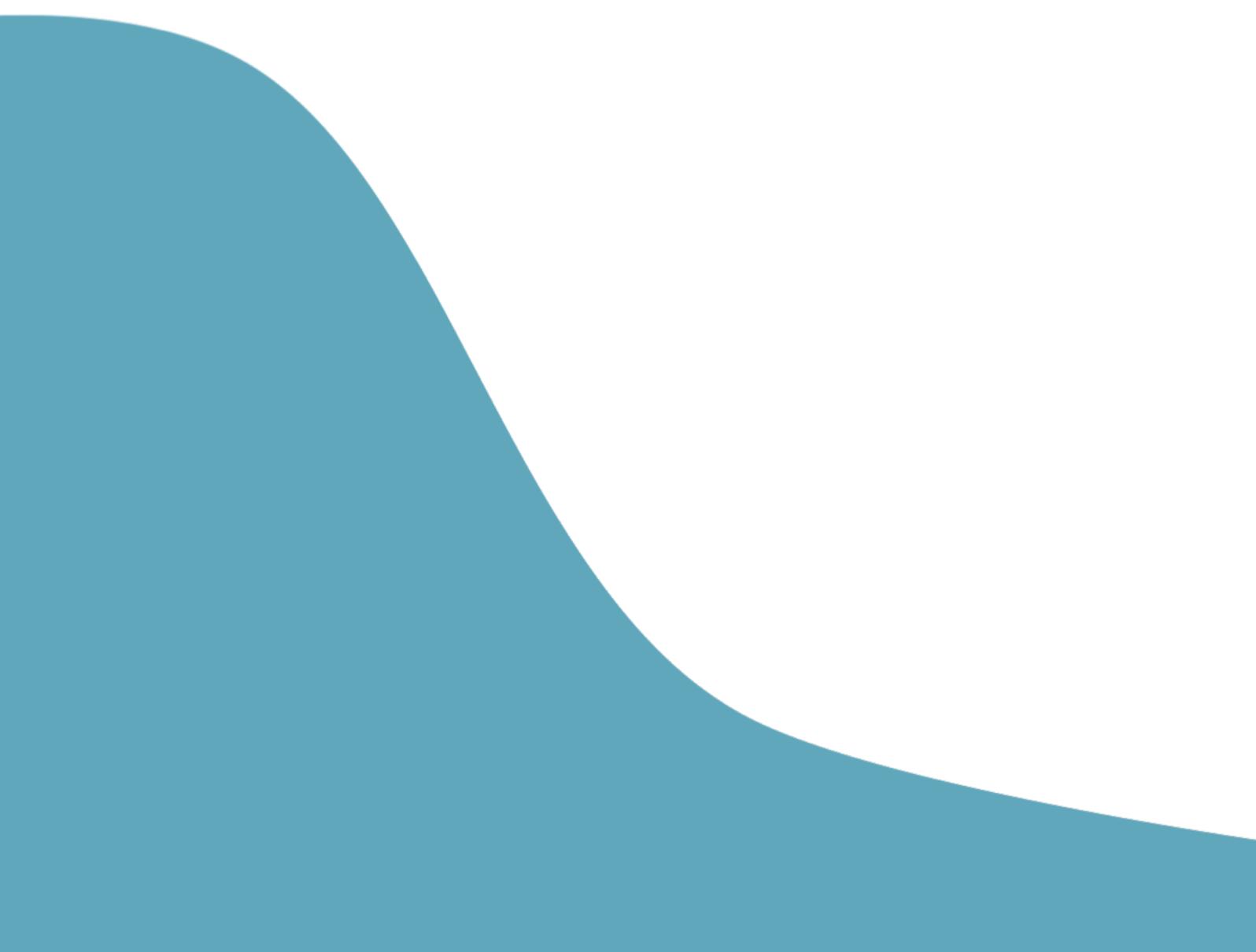
Welcome to Church Together.

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together.

Our flexible Sunday worship patterns blend together on – line services, home deliveries and emailed copies of Church Together.

Today's Service for this First Sunday in April 2022 will be looking at: **Acts 12 v. 1 – 19**

The theme for today's service is: **Praying For Mission**





Today's service that is set out in this edition of **Church Together** also includes **Communion**. We will be thinking about **Praying For Mission**. We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced on this **First Sunday Service in April 2022** and that you would indeed engage in **Praying For The Ongoing Mission Of Sharing The Good News Of Jesus**.

Call To Worship

Psalm 100 v. 1 – 5 NLT

Shout for joy to the Lord, O earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his.

We are his people, the sheep of
His pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is
good.

His unfailing love continues forever, And his faithfulness
continues to each generation.



**PRAY
WITH US**

Opening Prayer

Loving Lord God, whether we have rushed or taken our time in coming to church today, help us we pray to prepare ourselves to receive all that you will give us this day.

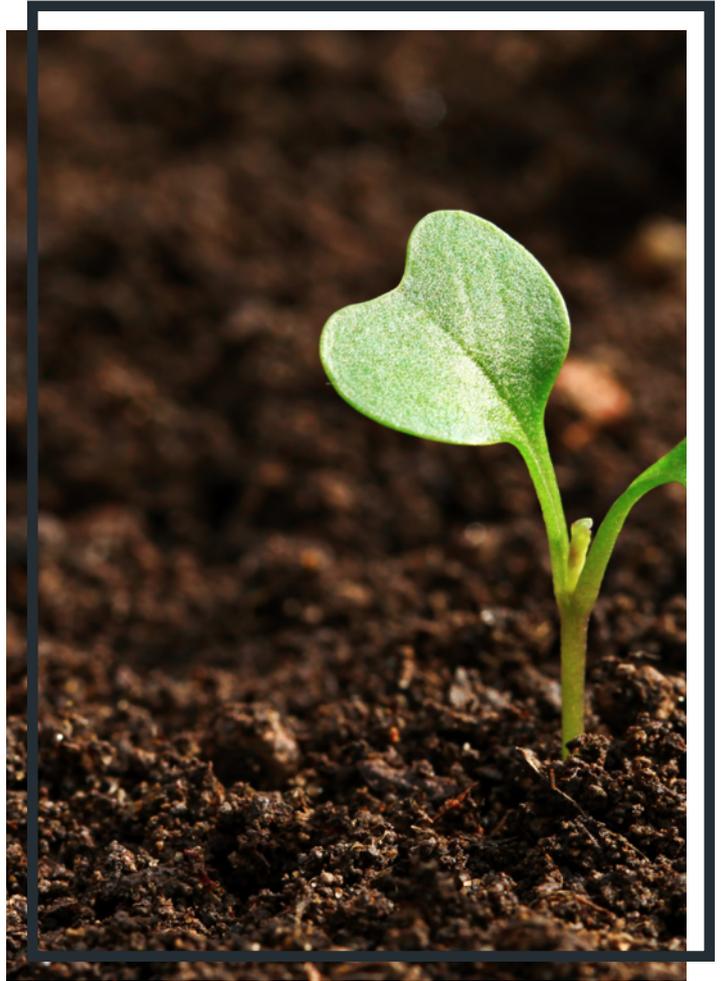
You have invited us to meet with you today; you have created space for time together that will affect all the other moments of the week. You have called us to take time to recall your great love and mercy. However Lord, our minds and thoughts might be elsewhere. We may have lists on our minds of things we want to sort out: of feelings and emotions that we want to gain and which will last us without too much effort.

Help us we pray, to spend this time together as we wonder at the scope of your love. You care for each of us as if you care for each one alone. Help us face you today, to receive what you want to give us and wonder at your eternal love.

Amen

Song Suggestion

Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning



Tithes, Gifts & Offerings

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

Now that we find ourselves once again holding services in Church, we are able to give of our finances to the work of the Lord when we are in church.

If you feel that your are able to, then please keep on giving with a cheerful and grateful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.



Bible

Reading

Acts 12 v. 1 – 19 NIV

Peter's miraculous escape from prison

12 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. 2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. 'Quick, get up!' he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

8 Then the angel said to him, 'Put on your clothes and sandals.' And Peter did so. 'Wrap your cloak round you and follow me,' the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel

was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

11 Then Peter came to himself and said, 'Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.'

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognised Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, 'Peter is at the door!'

15 'You're out of your mind,' they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, 'It must be his angel.'

16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. 17 Peter

motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison.

'Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,' he said, and then he left for another place.

18 In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. 19 After

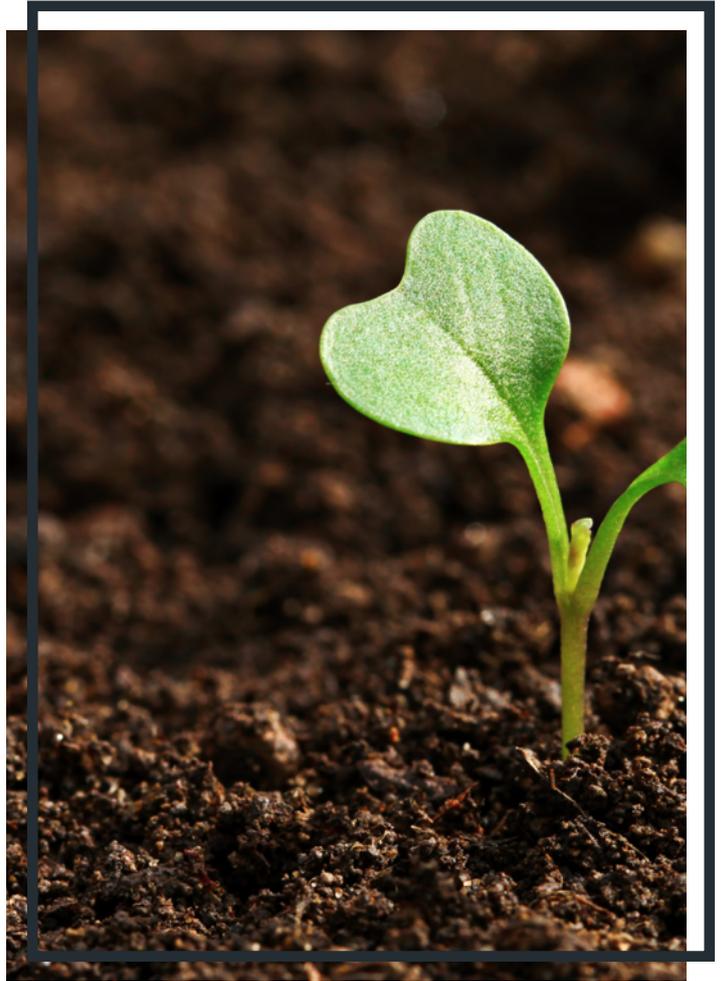
Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Herod's death

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

Song Suggestion

Restore, O Lord, The Honour Of
Your Name



Church Together Thought

Peter's escape from prison shows that nothing can thwart God's plan for our lives. God can always overcome the obstacles that stand in our way. He may even use supernatural means to deliver us – against all human odds and in response to prayer.

This does not mean we will never face difficulties in our walk with God though. Even as the early church enjoyed phenomenal success, it still suffered severe trials. We will always face obstacles as we seek to live out God's plan for our lives. But God's plan will always prevail. If we are living to fulfil God's will, ultimately there is nothing that can stand in our way.

Within the passage that we have read, we are told that some of the believers were gathered together in prayer, praying for Peter and the circumstances that they found him and themselves in. Prayer is always a powerful tool in the life of any Christian and as we see in the passage it was used for the

good of another, so that the Good News of Jesus could continue in its mission.

So, what can we learn from the passage in Acts **12 v. 1 – 19** that will help us to pray for the ongoing work of mission within the life of the church?

GOD'S LOVE AND PROTECTION IS WITH US

'Have you heard the news? Herod beheaded James'!

'No way! Not James! He was one of the inner circle with Jesus! Peter, James, and John. I thought for sure that God would protect James'!

'But that's not all. The latest polls show that Herod's approval rating went up after he killed James. So now he also has Peter in custody. Word has it that tomorrow, after the feast is over, he is going to execute him! There's a prayer meeting tonight at Mary's house, so that we can pray about what is happening'.

At the beginning of **Acts 12**, we read that James is dead, Peter is in prison, and Herod is basking in his popularity and power. At the end of the chapter, we read that Peter is free, Herod has been eaten by worms and is dead, and the Word of God keeps growing and multiplying, and many believers were being added to their number.

The writer of the Book of Acts, Luke, is showing us in this passage that the gospel is

unstoppable. If you oppose the gospel, you may temporarily win, but you will finally lose and lose big. If you stand for the gospel, you may temporarily lose, but you will finally win and win big.

God does not love us less when He allows tragedy into our lives. He loved James and John just as much as He loved Peter. But He allowed James to die and John to mourn the loss of his brother, but He delivered Peter. And He offered no explanation! Perhaps He was teaching the church that no man is indispensable to His cause. The death of James did not hinder the spread of the gospel.

Perhaps He was teaching them to trust Him when they did not understand what He is doing. But whatever the lessons, John and the rest of James' family would have been greatly mistaken to conclude that somehow God did not love them as much as He loved Peter. As someone has observed, we must always interpret our circumstances by God's love, not God's love by our circumstances.

Peter should have been terrified. One of his friends had been killed by people who were trying to stop the good news of Jesus spreading, and now he was under arrest too. But his friends were praying for him (**Acts 12 v. 5**). The result was a trouble - free night's sleep (**Acts 12 v. 6**)!

Let's pray for the safety of those who work as

missionaries around the world. Opposition to the gospel means that, for many of them, it is as dangerous today as it was all those years ago in Jerusalem.

KNOCKING ON CLOSED DOORS BRINGS SURPRISES

No prison can shut God out or keep His servants in if He wills to free them. God easily could have spared James if it had been His will. It was no big deal to God to get Peter out of the most secure prison that Herod could devise. Maybe Herod had heard from the Jewish leaders how Peter and John had mysteriously escaped from custody a few years before as we read in **Acts 5 v. 17 – 20**. He wanted to make sure that it did not happen this time, so he assigned four sets of four soldiers each to guard him around the clock. Two soldiers were chained by the wrist to each of Peter's two arms. Two more stood guard at the door of Peter's cell. Then there were two more guards, plus an iron gate that led into the city (**Acts 12 v. 10**). But to get Peter out of there, the Lord didn't need to send a myriad of angels. Just one angel easily did the job!

The angel appeared at night when it would have been pitch black, and suddenly the cell that Peter was a prisoner in lit up. But the guards did not wake up, even when the chains fell from Peter's wrists. Even though

he would be executed the next day, Peter was so sound asleep that the angel had to tap him on his side to wake Peter from his sleep.

We are told that the angel said: 'Get dressed and put on your sandals'. Peter, we are told, responded. Then the angel said: 'Put on your coat and follow me'. As they walked out of the prison, Peter thought that he was just having a vision! When they got to the final locked door the door swung open automatically! Peter didn't fully realize what had happened until the angel suddenly left him standing in the street. But the whole operation was a piece of cake for God, even though it was humanly impossible.

Before God saves us, we are like Peter, sleeping in the darkness of our own lives, insensitive to our sin, and not able to see the light of the glory of the gospel of Jesus. Our sins chained us so that we could not escape, even if we had wanted to. We were under God's sentence of death. Yet while we were in this desperate and helpless condition, God broke in with the light of His glory, woke us out of our spiritual slumber, and caused our chains to fall off so that we could willingly and joyfully follow Him out of this prison of death.

Since our salvation was totally from the Lord in His great mercy, He gets all the glory. We can only praise Him because He saved us.

We had nothing to do with it. God often waits until the eleventh hour to deliver us so that we will be motivated to pray.

In **Acts 12 v. 12 – 15**, we see that God answered the Christians' prayers in a way they didn't expect. And so, one of the great preachers, that is Peter, was free to go on with God's work of proclaiming the good news about Jesus.

Let's remember to pray for new missionaries who go to where millions of people do not know that Jesus has come to earth out of his love for them in order to save them and set them free. For many, it is this practical demonstration of Jesus' love – through missionary teachers, engineers, relief workers – that is the first glimpse that they have of what God can do and is prepared to do in order to save them.

OTHERS NEED TO LISTEN TO WHAT IS BEING SAID

In **Acts 12 v. 16, 17** we are told that amongst all the clamour, Peter could barely get his good news out. But before he went into hiding, he was able to speak about what God had done in response to the people's prayers and find ways for the message to spread (**Acts 12 v. 17**).

The picture of someone asking to be listened to is a prompt for us to pray. We need to pray for opportunities to tell the story of

what God has done for the whole world through Jesus – whether it is us talking to someone close to home, or those we support many miles away bringing joy to someone who has never heard before.

The angel struck Peter and he woke up so that he could be delivered. The angel also struck Herod, but he was eaten with worms and died. After Peter's escape, Herod mounted an intense manhunt, but he could not find him. Peter told the gathering at Mary's house to report these things to James (the half - brother of Jesus) and the other believers, who may have been hiding out elsewhere. He was not directed this time to go and stand in the temple and preach as we read in **Acts 5 v. 20**, and so he wisely used common sense and went into hiding. Meanwhile, Herod assumed that the guards had taken a bribe, so he had them all executed. After these embarrassing events, Herod went to Caesarea.

Due to some falling out, he was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, to the north, and had cut off their food supply. They gained an audience through Blastus, his chief of staff. On the appointed day, Herod took to 'his throne' and began delivering a speech. Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives an interesting parallel account of this event though. He says that Herod put on a garment made entirely of silver. When the

sun's rays hit it, it was so resplendent that the people were captivated. Either being carried away or perhaps to flatter him, they cried out that he was a god. When he did not rebuke them, he immediately got a severe and violent pain in his belly and died.

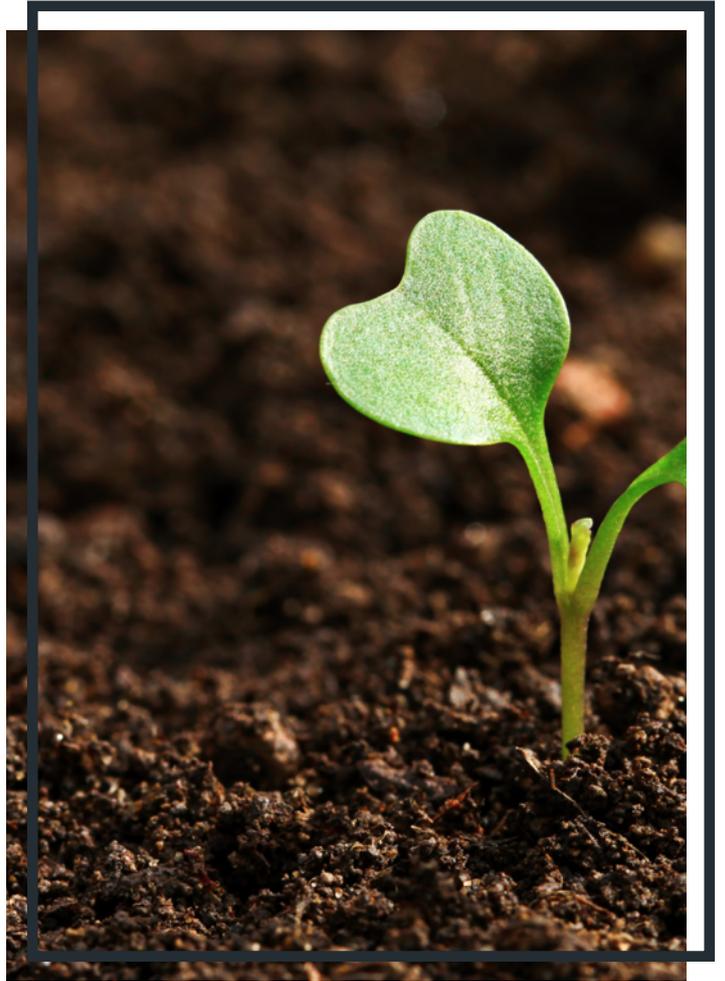
Luke closes this part of **Acts 12** by telling how the word of God continued to grow and be multiplied, and then mentions the return of Saul, Barnabas, and John Mark to Antioch.

This sets the stage for the expansion of the gospel among the Gentiles that comprises the rest of Acts. Herod and the Jews opposed God's Saviour and came under His judgment. The apostles and early church suffered much, and many died violent deaths, but the word of God continued to grow and be multiplied. God, it seems rewarded them abundantly.

Whatever the cost, may we all commit ourselves to the cause of the unstoppable gospel of Jesus Christ and may others listen to what is being said!

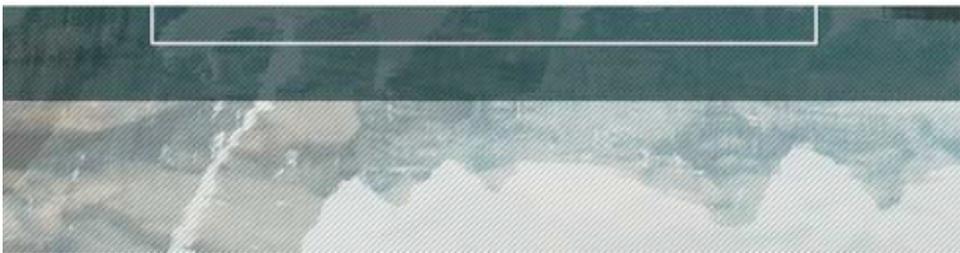
Song Suggestion

Go Tell It On The Mountain





THE POWER OF PRAYER



Communion

Today is a Sunday when we would normally share communion together. We come together today remembering the love and sacrifice that Jesus made on the Cross for our sins and for our forgiveness. We gather together here in Church or at home as the body of Christ in order to share the bread and the cup together.

We are able to do this by getting a small glass of red juice (fruit juice, squash etc.) and a small piece of bread and 'sharing these elements' at a time that is convenient to you.

(Normally as a church we will do this during the service at about 11.30am.)

Our normal practice is to say these words:

For I received from the Lord what I pass on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, (you might like to pray at this point) he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' (this is the time to eat the bread). In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' (now is the time to drink the cup). For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11 v. 22 - 26

If you would like to do this today with us, if you are at home, then please do so, and may the Lord's richest blessings be with you today.

Prayers Of Intercession

God our Creator, Father and Friend, we give thanks today for the wonderful gift of life, with all its joys and responsibilities, its experiences and its opportunities. We praise you for good health and daily food, for the shelter and care of our homes, the love and loyalty of our friends. We thank you for work honestly done, for games well played, for all the truth we have learned and the good that has been achieved. We thank you for the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. For forgiveness and salvation, for his presence with us always and for the service into which he has called us. Help us today, we pray, to thank you not only with our lips, in praise and prayer, but also in our lives full of hope and love; for you and for each other.

Heavenly Father, we pray for our country, the local community that we are part of. Give wisdom to those who lead and discernment to those who govern. Lord God, we pray that they will make the right choices for the good of all those concerned.

Loving Lord, we pray for all those who are facing tough choices at work or in their personal life at the moment. Surround them with your love, support them with your strength, console them with your comfort, and give them hope and courage beyond themselves, we pray.

We also this morning pray for the church, both here at

Salentine Nook and wherever the church may be found. We pray for any big issues and decisions that we and others need to make at this time, we pray particularly for the many opportunities that you give to us to share the Good News of Jesus with others. Take away any fear or hesitancy that we may have in proclaiming that Jesus is Lord of all.

Between us all Gracious Lord, we know of many people who are struggling today with illness, crises, big decisions and major changes in their lives. Loving God, we bring them before you this day, knowing that your care and loving compassion is greater than any that we could bring, help us though to show loving concern for them as we now pray, naming them in the stillness and quietness of our hearts.

Each of us this morning Lord, have things on our own mind, perhaps things we hesitate to mention to anyone else. Lord God, you understand us and know us totally, and we believe that you only want the very best outcomes for us. We offer ourselves to you now in the honesty of our own hearts.

These, Lord, are the prayers of your people this morning. We ask you to take each one of these prayers and answer them in your own time and in your own way. And in the meantime give us expectant and trusting hearts. For we ask all of these things in the name of Jesus.

Amen

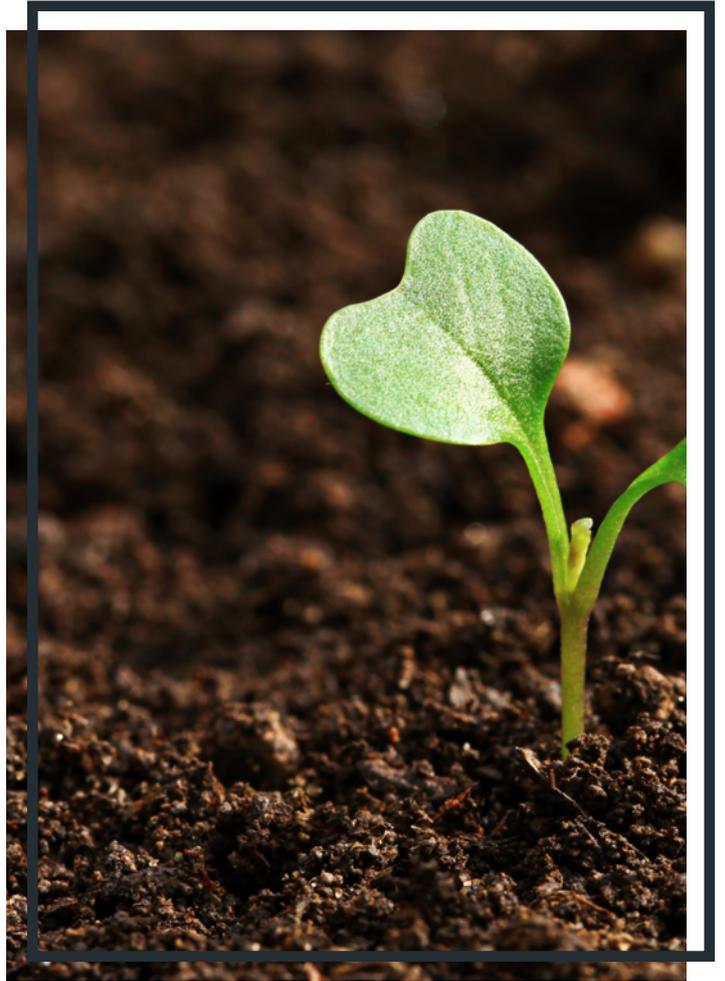
The Lord's Prayer

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.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
And the glory, forever and ever.

Amen

Song Suggestion

You Shall Go Out With Joy



Blessing

Now may the Spirit of God, Who brooded
over the waters And brought order out of
chaos, Find a home in our hearts And
settle our minds, both now As we leave
this place,

And into tomorrow, and may we Live
lives that are worthy

Of the glory of God, our Saviour.

Amen