

## Prayers during week commencing 16 August 2020

Have you missed saying the creeds as part of worship?

This week we invite you to pause and look again at the Nicene Creed. It is familiar to many of us, but perhaps in church we do not have long to reflect on the words. What do you notice as you read the words today?

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Source: English translations of Nicene Creed © 1998, English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC), and used by permission. [www.englishtexts.org](http://www.englishtexts.org)

Further information about the history of this creed and the language translation can be found on the source website:

<https://www.englishtexts.org/the-nicene-creed>

Our prayer sheet this week was prepared by Bill Offler & Tricia Mitchell

## SHARING IN PRAYER FOR OUR DISTRICT AND OUR WORLD

May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah* \*  
that your way may be known upon earth,  
your saving power among all nations.  
Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you.

Psalm 67: 1-3 (NRSVA)

**This week as we pray for our circuits:** we invite you to pray for Circuit Leadership Teams guiding churches in these changing times.

<u>Day</u>	<u>For our District</u>	<u>For our Wider World</u>
Sun 16 August <b>Ps 67</b>	Ministers and families moving into our District this month	Methodist Churches around the world at prayer today.
Mon 17 August <b>Ps 105: 1-11</b>	Churches preparing to open for worship	Young people receiving 'exam' results after disrupted studies.
Tues 18 August <b>Ps 107: 1-16</b>	Darlington Circuit	Ministers moving station while many churches remain closed.
Wed 19 August <b>Ps 107: 17-32</b>	Middlesbrough & Eston Circuit	Families relying on Universal Credit or Foodbanks to survive.
Thurs 20 August <b>Ps 107: 33-43</b>	Stockton Circuit	Those quarantining on return from travel or after testing.
Fri 21 August <b>Ps 110</b>	Castle Eden Circuit	The people of Lebanon still reeling from the explosion in Beirut.
Sat 22 August <b>Ps 111</b>	Stokesley Circuit	Those discriminated against or excluded for who they are.

\* The word *Selah* is used in Psalms and Habakkuk. We cannot be sure what it meant and interpretations vary. It may mean pause, reflect; exalt, praise; be silent; or it may be a musical instruction such as 'instruments only' or 'louder'. Take one of these meanings and read Psalm 67 again adopting your chosen meaning where *Selah* appears. You might do the same with another meaning later in the week.

## Lectio divina during week beginning Sunday 16 August 2020

Lectionary Reading: Matthew 15: 21-28

### The Canaanite Woman's Faith

21 Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' <sup>23</sup>But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' <sup>24</sup>He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' <sup>25</sup>But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' <sup>26</sup>He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' <sup>27</sup>She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' <sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly.

### Space to note what is important for you under the lectio divina headings

LECTIO: READING	MEDITATIO: MEDITATING
ORATIO: PRAYER	CONTEMPLATIO: CONTEMPLATION

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What a difficult story! Jesus is apparently disinterested in someone's distress, restricts his mission to the Jewish people and uses some rather questionable language. What a strange story for Matthew to recount.

We can compare it to Matthew 8:5-13 or John 4:7-42 where Jesus interacts from the start much more positively with Gentiles. We can understand that within the time and space limitations of his earthly ministry he had to begin somewhere: and that he spent that time preparing his followers for a much wider mission Matthew 28:19. Is 'only' (v 24) to be understood as a very temporary condition?

Did Jesus really hope she would go away, as the disciples did? He didn't agree to their request that he send her away and when the woman persisted he spoke with her. Was this delay to test her persistence, the disciples' understanding, or both: if so, it worked as the woman wasn't put off by it but kept on asking for his help.

We live in a culture in which dogs are largely seen as acceptable animal companions. But to some cultures dogs are unclean animals and Jesus' use of the word, even if applied to Gentiles in general and not to the woman in particular is difficult. In using it, was Jesus displaying the prejudices of his first century Jewish culture against an ancestral enemy? He isn't shown using this kind of language elsewhere about either male or female Gentiles so we need to be careful about charging him with racism or sexism revealing Jesus as a man of his times. Why did he use the 'dog' illustration? We don't know, but the woman was not only unfazed by it, but added to it, quick-wittedly turning it to her own advantage. Her daughter was healed.

Other Lectionary readings:

[Genesis 45: 1-15](#); [Psalm 133](#); [Romans 11: 1-2a, 29-32](#)

### Finding a rhythm of prayer and reflection in lockdown.

**Suggestion:** If you feel closer to God through nature make a special effort this week to make a space each day to pause with nature – perhaps you can see birds from your window, have houseplants to care for or you may have access to a garden, park or roadside verge. Take time to be still, to notice what you see, whether the big picture or the tiny details. Thank God.