

# Prayers of Thanksgiving



Welcome to the fourth and final 'Prayer 2020' resource pack. Without a doubt, this year has been different to anything we could have imagined, however thanks be to God, there have been no restrictions on prayer!

Whilst this season of Harvest may feel different to previous years, there remains an opportunity to bring our thanks to God for His provision and care in our lives. The Apostle Paul is sometimes referred to as the 'Apostle of Thanksgiving', and therefore here are just some of his encouragements to say 'thank you':

- *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- *"Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 5:20)
- *"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you."* (Colossians 1:3)

This final prayer resource pack contains a variety of resources including:

- **A Prayer for Harvest**
- **Sowing & Reaping** - A series of reflections on the Parable of the Sower.
- **The Harvest is Plentiful** - Information on the BUW Missional Training Programme "Forge Cymru".
- **Lord for our Land** - Two events inspired by Prayer.
- **Challenge and Change** - Some of our churches share their experience of challenge and change during this year.

We invite you to use the reflections, prayer points and corporate prayers to encourage your church to make this a season of prayer and thanksgiving.

It has been good to journey together in prayer throughout this year. We trust that you and your church have known the blessing of renewed and refocused prayer and hope that you will continue to pray with us. A praying people will surely know the blessing of God.

## A Prayer for Harvest

Creator God,

We give you thanks for seedtime and harvest, sunshine and rain.

Thank you for the beauty of flowers, trees and birds, as well as the abundant produce of crops in the fields and food on the shelves in our shops.

We acknowledge the source and give you thanks.

Father, as we reflect over the last six months, we also confess that fear has often gripped us causing anxiety and worry as we have and still are, facing the Covid 19 pandemic.

We think and pray for those who do not have the health care and provisions we are so privileged to enjoy.

Lord Jesus you stood in the boat with your disciples and subdued the storm that was all around them.

We invite you today to help us see the storms of life through eyes of faith and not fear.

Faith, that as we fix our eyes on you, you will create opportunities and challenges to us personally, and to your Church in Wales today and into the future.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

AMEN

Sue Wilson, Knighton & Knucklas Baptist Church

**... in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.  
Philippians 4:6**

# 'Sowing & Reaping' – Reflections on the Parable of the Sower.

## The Seed on the Path

The farmer sows the seed liberally across the land accepting that it will fall where it may. He's done it this way year in and year out: freely scattering the seed. May we also sow the seeds of salvation just as freely, accepting they will land where they will. Jesus tells us, some seed fell on the trodden down pathway which meandered across the field; a path the farmer had walked on many times when sowing. Such seed stood little chance of sprouting since the soil was too hard and the birds too quick. It was gone as soon as it fell. But still the farmer scattered liberally...

**Prayer:** *Lord of the Harvest, we pray that as we share Your Word this harvest time we will resist the urge to predict the response it might receive and instead simply scatter the seeds of Your gospel far and wide, accepting wherever they may fall. May we not lose hope but keep on sowing. We pray against the Devil's work of robbing people of the opportunity for salvation. May Your victory over evil transcend into the lives of all - that ears may hear, eyes may see and hearts may be softened to the wonder of Your grace.*

Rev. Jenny Gough

## The Seed on the Rocks

"Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture." In this heart, God's Word brings forth a crop of pleasant experiences and joyous emotions. Why are they joyous? They are welcomed by others and they believe that Jesus will solve all their problems! Sadly, however, no profound impression is made on their hearts, and so when temptations and persecution come, the little devotion that has been gained withers and disappears. These people are excited (faithful to all meetings) and full of joy (they believe that life from now on will be a bed of roses). But they "believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away." What tests do they experience? Being rejected by friends and family. The problems of life persist. Here is a heart without depth, which does not cling to the Bible.

**Prayer:** *Father, help us not to let our feelings keep us from truly knowing you. Your Word doesn't teach us that life is a 'bed of roses', but your promise is to be with us in all situations. When the trials of life come, and we are persecuted and mocked, make us able to cling to the Bible and experience the power of your Spirit.*

Rev. Aled Maskell

## The Seed amongst the Thorns

The soil here is nurturing both: the seed and the thorns. The seed needs room to grow to produce the intended crop and the thorn is protecting its own crop.

In our communities we often come up against the thorns: all the things that distract us and appear to be working against us. It may be day to day worries and fears in this strange time, it may be unemployment, it may be the lure of Sunday shopping, it may be the empty pews ... But what about the 'prickly people': the ones who criticise and condemn and take offence where none is meant? If we could show them that they are loved – both by God and by us – then maybe they would not need the thorns and the extra space anymore, and we could grow side by side.

**Prayer:** *Father, we pray for those in our communities who feel the need of thorns to protect themselves. Help us to see beyond the thorns, and to love and value them for the person inside; the hidden person created in Your image. Help us to welcome them just as they are and leave You to soften the thorns.*

Rev. Maggie Rich

## Sowing the Seeds

As I look back over fifty years of Christian ministry, I realise that I've always emphasised the importance of sowing the seed of the Gospel. One Welsh hymnist has written about the way God has placed the seed in the sower's hand. Why? So that it can be sown.

I have a wonderful story about a dear lady from Calfaria, Skewen, who came to me one day and said "I agree with your emphasis on sowing the seed of the Gospel", but added, "I would have liked to have had a ride on the combine harvester."

The parable of the sower emphasises three truths:

- Sowing the seed in Wales today is hard work – three quarters of the seed fails. We sow in tears.
- But it's also essential work. We remember Jesus' commission – go and preach the Gospel. One Welsh hymn emphasises that "It's we who work the fields, it's we who sow the seed."
- It's also honourable work – there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. May we honour the Son by continuing to sow - remembering that our tears should not hinder the sowing.

As the Psalmist says, "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy."

**Prayer:** *Help us, Lord, to persevere in your work, leaning on You, the One who bears all the burdens, remembering that it's You who also gives the growth.*

Rev. H. Vincent Watkins

## **'The Harvest is Plentiful'**

Many of us will be well acquainted with these familiar words of Jesus and fully understand the importance of 'workers' who will go and reap the harvest. Now more than ever, our churches need people who will present the good news of Jesus to our neighbours, families and friends in Wales.

We know how hard the soil can sometimes be. Many times, we have scattered seed only to see it snatched away or fall on shallow ground. Indeed, too often we have felt ill-equipped for the task or unsure where to start.

In September 2020, the Baptist Union of Wales begins a new series of missional training opportunities available to every church. This training, led by Cameron Roxburgh from Forge, Canada, offers a new opportunity for churches to train and equip themselves for mission in 21st century Wales.

Two training options have been offered, 'Ethos' starting in September and 'Explore' in October. The 'Explore' track is still open to churches if you would like to register. Please pray for God's blessing on the churches and Ministers who are beginning the training this Autumn.

More information and details on how to register are available on our website or via the link below:

<http://www.buw.org.uk/forge-missional-training-2020/>

### **Caleb Prayer for Wales**

**O High King of Heaven,  
Have mercy on our  
Land.**

**Revive your church.  
Send the Holy Spirit for  
the sake of the children.**

**May your Kingdom  
come to our nation.  
In Jesus' mighty name.**

**Amen.**

## **"Lord, for our land ... be pleased to hear our prayer."**

When the Baptist Union first called us to commit to a year of prayer at the beginning of 2020, nobody knew that our lives were about to change radically. This lockdown period has been a very strange time for everyone. It has also been a time of immense challenge for our churches as congregations have been forced to look for alternative ways to enable fellowship.

Whilst we have been confined to our homes and the doors of our chapel buildings have been closed, the Year of Prayer has continued. On Tuesday 23 June, a special 'Prayer for Wales' prayer meeting was held. Many people from all over Wales joined together via Zoom to pray together. It was a real encouragement to see so many people, from all over the country, joining together in worship and prayer.

Worship was led by members of Capel Gomer Swansea, Peniel Carmarthen and Caersalem Caernarfon. Isaiah Grandis shared the devotions and explained how much he had enjoyed and benefited from the Forge Cymru taster sessions before Rhun Murphy led us in a time of prayer for Wales. During this time of prayer, we prayed for our church, for our children, for those who are alone and for those who have yet to experience the love of Jesus Christ.

We would like to thank everyone who took part and attended the meeting, as well as Simeon Baker and Aron Treharne for sorting the technological side (which was far beyond me!) Personally, it was a huge encouragement and blessing to be part of the evening.

**Rev. J. Derek Rees**

Isaiah 40:31 declares; "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

The above verse calls us to place our hope in Jesus and assures us that as we trust Him will find strength to follow Jesus through this life. It was in the light of this reality that the English-speaking churches of the Union came together as one to seek God, that we might know his blessing and power working in and through us.

As we came to prayer, we were aware of the issues that we have all faced over recent months through the impact of Covid-19 and witnessing the Black Lives Matter campaign. Both these issues have been life defining moments in our history. Therefore, it was only right to come to the God of history and seek his presence in the midst of these situations, that we might continue to be effective in our witness and devotion in a changing landscape.

We therefore considered three areas of prayer which included personal renewal, justice and mission. Each section was introduced by different people, followed by worship and prayer led by voices from all parts of Wales.

Many will know this year has been a year of prayer for the Union and it was good to conclude before the summer as we began, looking to Jesus and finding fresh strength to walk with him through the remainder of the year. Our thanks to everyone who was able to attend this virtual gathering.

**Rev. Jonathan Forman**

# Challenge & Change

"No one would have believed," are the opening words of Jeff Wayne's musical album War of the Worlds, and the sentiment is definitely true for 2020! The "lockdown" has certainly challenged everyone and, of course, the Church, but has it 'changed' the Church too?

Like many other churches, we too had to find new ways of communicating with and supporting one another. Zoom and Facebook have been great for us, added to telephone calls and hard copies of information and teaching. Although we have not gathered "face-to-face" everyone has felt supported and cared for.

As the focus now turns to the reopening of church buildings, what have we learned about ourselves and being God's Church? Is our desire to simply get back to 'normal' as if nothing has happened, or has God spoken to us in ways He has not been able to do previously, because we were too busy running the institution, attracting consumers, rather than being focused on being a community making disciples of Christ? Humbly before God, we are going to take some time to reflect and evaluate all that we are as a community of Christ's people. The online Bible studies have been very positive and there is a desire for them to continue. The challenge of Kang-San Tan, General Director of BMS, during one of the BUW zoom meetings, certainly should challenge all of us: "Do we need to consider a change in our focus, from a Church focused mission to be a mission focused Church?" May Christ's call to "Go and make disciples" and to be a "mission focused Church" impact and saturate all that we endeavour to be as His Kingdom communities.

**Rev. Terry Broadhurst, Bethesda, Haverfordwest**

The Gospel is a TIMELESS message but we need TIMELY ways to spread the Good News to our families, friends, neighbours, communities and people further afield. That is the lesson we at Tabernacle Baptist Church, Newbridge, and many other churches, have learned during the Covid-19 crisis.

Face-to-face worship and fellowship, of course, is essential. However, during Lockdown we have introduced and developed an online ministry which we know God wants us to take forward as we seek to introduce new people to Christ – people who would not normally think of setting foot inside a church or chapel!

This includes recorded Sunday services, Bible studies and daily devotions on Facebook and a young people's group who produce weekly "Dancing through Quarantine" video clips. Our Sunday School now meets "live" via Zoom on Sunday afternoons. We also have a "live" fellowship evening on Fridays in which up to 18 people take part. For those people who cannot access social media we produce and distribute CD's of the Sunday services and morning devotions. Feedback so far has been very encouraging. These are not merely "stop-gap" measures to get us over the crisis period but we believe God is shaking us up to face the new challenges of a very different world in which we are now going to live!

*Prayer request: Please pray that God will open new doors of opportunity for our churches to use social media wisely and effectively for further spreading of the Gospel.*

**Rev. Peter Cho & Mr Geoff Champion, Tabernacle, Newbridge**

About 3 years ago as a church, we began a journey to become 'A church without walls.' It has become a well-used idiom; but what if we did become a church without walls, what would this look like?

In some ways, we have been prepared for this time, literally becoming a church without walls, where our present focus is not our corporate gatherings, but our communities and neighbourhoods. Being church where we have been planted.

We feel, rather than Covid 19 taking us off course, that now, somehow, we are more where we are meant to be.

A quote that has lived with me for most of my adult life by Jamie Buckingham says "God never puts a desire in our hearts, or beckons us to walk on water, unless he intends for us to step out in faith and at least make the attempt, whether we achieve or not is almost immaterial; the passing of the test lies in whether we try, in whether we are willing to be obedient to the inner call to greatness and the onward call to spiritual adventure."

*Prayer request: Pray, for a longing to be pioneers and adventurers, spiritual 'argonauts' in search of an inheritance and adventure.*

**Rev. Kurt Francis Ruthin Christian Fellowship**

Hans Küng wrote that improvisation and experiment should be a way of life for the Church. However, doing so means embracing change and its associated challenges. The Church family at Hengoed have accepted a ministry of change for the last decade, constantly exploring what Church looks like in our area - a challenge that was readily accepted, in response to a clear call from God. However, what we were not prepared for was the sudden and radical changes that COVID-19 imposed upon us. It struck at the heart of our open-door ministry of radical inclusion. And yet, we had been talking for some time about the need to change worship, which would frequently be stopped to accommodate the needs of people drifting in off the street. Whilst we were always willing to welcome and serve, we also wanted protected time to worship the Living God.

So, lockdown has gifted us the opportunity to experiment worshipping together via social media, something we have decided to continue after social distancing ends, as it facilitates worship without disruption. When we reopen, we will explore different and creative ways of enabling the community to explore their spirituality each time they drop in and visit.

**Prayer:** *In Luke 8:22-39: Jesus calls his disciples to travel with him to different places, exposing them to significant challenges on the way. At this time, let us pray for those who:*

*Are frightened of leaving the safety and familiarity of the shore on which they have lived and served for years;*

*Are in the midst of the storm of crossing over, embracing change and realising that it is not always a comfortable place to be;*

*Have arrived on the other shore of change and are overwhelmed at the challenges that confront them;*

*That we may know the One who calls us, is the One who accompanies us and is the One through whom all things are possible.*

**Rev. Kath Miller, Hengoed Newydd**