

# 13<sup>th</sup> September 2026 – Morning Service

Martin Rider

## Call to Worship: Psalm 103: 8-12 (NIV)

The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.  
He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbour his anger for ever;  
he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

## StF 36 – There's a quiet understanding

Our opening hymn was written by Edward Russell Smith, "Tedd" to his friends. He was born and raised in Ontario, Canada, but became an American citizen and served as pianist for Billy Graham's Crusades for more than thirty-five years, travelling the world as a result.

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| 1) There's a quiet understanding<br>when we're gathered in the Spirit,<br>it's a promise that he gives us,<br>when we gather in his name.<br>There's a love we feel in Jesus,<br>there's a manna that he feeds us,<br>it's a promise that he gives us,<br>when we gather in his name. | 2) And we know when we're together,<br>sharing love and understanding,<br>that our brothers and our sisters<br>feel the oneness that he brings.<br>Thank you, thank you, thank you, Jesus,<br>for the way you love and feed us,<br>for the many ways you lead us;<br>thank you, thank you, Lord;<br>thank you, thank you, Lord. |
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*Tedd Smith © 1973 Hope Publishing Company*

## Opening Prayers

Almighty God, you spoke the universe into life; you made the earth on which we live and not only created human beings, but gave us stewardship of this beautiful planet. Through your great faithfulness, you sustain us and all living things and in grace, you call us to be your earthly sons and daughters, offering us a covenant of love and faithfulness.

You know everything about us our virtues and vices, our joys and woes, and you love us so much that at the right time you took human form and lived among us as Christ Jesus, so we might experience life in all its fullness. His death and resurrection broke the power of sin and death, offering us everlasting life through faith in him, not anything we deserve or can earn.

We come to offer heartfelt thanks for the many blessings we have received from you. Most of all, thank you for loving us even when we don't love our neighbours as we love ourselves and do not love and serve you wholeheartedly, as we know we ought. Forgive us when we say and do things that cause offence to and hurt our neighbours and help us to lead better lives, for Jesus said if we repent in his name, you will pardon us.

Merciful Lord, as you hear and answer our prayers, we believe that you have forgiven us and call us to follow you. May we do so, serving our neighbours joyfully and faithfully, in order that we may honour you always, in Jesus' beautiful name. **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. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

## StF 430 – My lips shall praise you

Our next hymn was written by Noel and Tricia Richards. Noel was born in Llantrisant, near Cardiff in 1956 and was inspired to become a hymn-writer and composer after he saw Graham Kendrick at Colston Hall when Noel was fifteen. He married Tricia in 1978 and they have complemented one another in producing several albums of fine hymns and worship songs

*Ch) My lips shall praise you,  
my great Redeemer;  
my heart will worship  
almighty Saviour.*

1) You take all my guilt away,  
turn the darkest night to brightest day,  
you are the restorer of my soul.

2) Love that conquers every fear!  
in the midst of trouble you draw near,  
you are the restorer of my soul.

3) You're the source of happiness,  
bringing peace when I am in distress,  
you are the restorer of my soul.

*Noel & Tricia Richards © 1991 Thankyou Music*

## Prayers of Intercession

Lord of all, thank you for this beautiful planet upon which we live, for it ought to allow everybody to live in the abundance of your creation. However, the earth has been abused by our foolishness, greed and, worst of all, our indifference. The effects of climate change are becoming abundantly clear, with series of heatwaves and drought resulting in water-shortages, reduced crops and wildfires, here and abroad. We pray for our world, especially where extreme weather poses an ever-stronger threat, with melting icecaps and severe flooding. Show us how to use resources thoughtfully and carefully, so we may play our part in helping the world recover from the damage we have done over several centuries. Help us preserve a habitable world for future generations. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our Saviour, hear our prayer for the victims of the collapse of an ice shelf on the Tibetan and Nepalese border with catastrophic consequences, for those caught up in earthquakes in Columbia, Venezuela and Japan and for victims of wildfires here and abroad. Bless and protect the rescuers, emergency and recovery teams as well as relief-workers. We pray that you will keep them safe, strengthen and comfort them. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Lord, we ask you to inspire leaders of nations to turn away from violence when they can't have their own way and seek justice and mercy for those they govern. We ask for swift and just conclusions to wars that are being waged at present, especially in the Holy Land, Ukraine, Lebanon, Iran, Congo, Sudan and Somalia. In grief, we remember all victims of conflicts, discrimination, injustice and violence, praying that they find peace, safety, refuge and security, so they can rebuild their lives. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of shalom, of healing and wellbeing, we remember the sick, lonely, fearful, troubled and broken in our community, for those whose lives are coming to an end and people who mourn the loss of loved ones. In a time of silence, we offer names of people for whom we are especially concerned, confident that you already know their needs and will reach out to them...

Help us to offer them practical support and friendship, but also enfold them in your merciful arms, that they may find healing, hope, comfort and an enduring peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, we pray for this church, churches in local Circuits and the World Church, that we may serve you in Spirit, love and truth. Unite us all in mission, so we help build up your kingdom with acts of grace and goodness. May we find ways of bringing good news to a world that dearly needs it. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Abba, heavenly Father, bless us, our families and friends. Keep us safe and fill our hearts to overflowing with your love. Then help us share it freely with both friends and strangers, in Jesus' wonderful name.  
**Amen.**

### **Reading: Genesis 50: 15-21 (NIV)**

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?' So they sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: "This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly." Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. 'We are your slaves,' they said.

But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

### **StF 613 – God, how can we forgive**

The writer of the next hymn, Revd. Ruth C. Duck, was a pastor in the United Church of Christ, and Professor of Worship at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois. As a scholar of worship and liturgy, Ruth adapted older hymns to include language that was more inclusive. She edited and contributed to the ground-breaking contemporary language hymn collection, "Everflowing Streams—Songs for Worship" and spent many years, teaching congregational song, healing and reconciliation. This hymn is set to 'Leoni', a Jewish Yigdal, the melody having been transcribed by Meyer Lyon, Cantor of the Great Synagogue, Duke Street, London during the late Eighteenth Century and used by Thomas Olivers for his hymn, 'The God of Abraham praise'.

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| 1) God how can we forgive<br>when bonds of love are torn?<br>How can we rise and start anew,<br>our trust reborn?<br>When human loving fails<br>and every hope is gone,<br>your love gives strength beyond our own<br>to face the dawn.         | 3) Who dares to throw the stone<br>to damn another's sin,<br>when you, while knowing all our past,<br>forgive again?<br>No more we play the judge,<br>for by your grace we live.<br>As you, O God, forgive our sin,<br>may we forgive. |
| 2) When we have missed the mark,<br>and tears of anguish flow,<br>how can you still release our guilt,<br>the debt we owe?<br>The ocean depth of grace<br>surpasses all our needs.<br>A priest who shares our human pain,<br>Christ intercedes. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

*Ruth C. Duck © 1996, The Pilgrim Press*

## Reading: Matthew 18: 21-35 (NIV)

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?'

Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'

'Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.'

'At this the servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.'

'But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.'

'His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back."

'But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.'

'Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.'

'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

## Address: "Lord, how often should I forgive?" (Matthew 13:21)

Forgiveness is not easy: victims of the Holocaust or of the destruction of the World Trade Building in New York twenty-five years ago last Friday, of the Hamas attack on 7th October, 2023, or the inhabitants of Gaza who suffered the resulting fury of the Israeli State will never forget what happened. Some, however, have still found it possible to forgive, simply because they realise the futility of holding onto their anger when many perpetrators are long since dead. It is far better for them to witness to man's inhumanity to man and to try to prevent a repeat of the atrocities. Our readings consider the nature of forgiveness – even why we ought to forgive, even though it is extremely difficult.

The Old Testament account of the death of Jacob is an uncomfortable reminder of strong feelings that can split a family when a parent dies. Some years ago, when I was asked to conduct the funeral of a tenant at Bridge Court, I was painfully aware of bad blood between her two sons and despite my best efforts, one of them tried to attack the other and a running battle occurred between members of the family at the graveside. It was the only time I have seen a funeral director break down in tears as I interred Marion. The aggressor ran off before the police arrived, but there was no reconciliation and I have been left unhappy memories of a good woman and my personal failure as a mediator.

In Genesis, Joseph's brothers were understandably alarmed when Jacob died, for, years before, they had sold Joseph into slavery in a pique of envy, but he had prospered and by then had the means to exact a heavy retribution for their crime. Thus, they pleaded for forgiveness, not only in Jacob's name, but as servants of the God of their father, too. Clearly, Joseph recognised their fear, besides their repentance and he wept, for he realised that he had complete power of life and death over them. The brothers also wept and offered themselves as his slaves, but Joseph refused to judge them, saying, "**Do not be afraid! Am I in place of God?**" Instead, he pointed out that their malicious act had been turned to good by God, for the benefit of his chosen people. Therefore, he not only forgave them, but promised to support them. Joseph offered his brothers grace, **chen** (pronounced 'kane') in Hebrew, unearned and unmerited love.

Now when Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive somebody who sinned against him and suggested that seven might be enough, he must have thought he was on safe ground, for rabbinic teaching stipulated that only three offences ought to be pardoned. Imagine his surprise when Jesus replied, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.” Indeed, some translations say ‘seventy times seven’, though if you are thinking that you’ll exact revenge when somebody offends you for the four hundred and ninety-first time, forget it, as what Jesus really meant was ‘Keep on forgiving without keeping a record of wrongdoing’. The reason is to give everybody the chance to repent – to try to put matters right, not just saying ‘sorry’ – right up to the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour!

Remember that when he was nailed to the cross, suffering the worst kind of abuse we can do to another, our Lord prayed, “Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing!” At Calvary the penitent thief received forgiveness at the point of death, showing God gives us every chance to repent. Jesus offered grace to a man who had acknowledged that his crucifixion was deserved: that same grace is available to us and every sinner, but as the Lord’s Prayer reminds us, we are called to offer forgiveness to those who offend us.

The parable of the unforgiving slave – servant in some versions of the Bible – starkly reminds us that our need of God’s forgiveness far exceeds the forgiveness we need to offer people who have wronged us. A talent was a silver coin worth three thousand shekels, or approximately £1000 today. Thus, ten thousand talents represented £10 million, though as 10000 was the highest number in Greek calculations, Jesus could equally have said £10 billion! Whatever the actual equivalent, it is more than you or I could afford to repay! Although the king took pity on the slave, his grace was not mirrored by the debtor, who had a fellow slave thrown into prison because he could not repay the hundred denarii he owed to the forgiven man – a five hundred thousandth of the original debt! Little wonder that the king was so outraged by the unforgiving slave that he imprisoned him until the debt had been paid in full. If we expect the Lord to show us mercy, we must be merciful to others in return. Amen.

### **Hymn – O the bitter shame and sorrow**

Our penultimate hymn is an old one, but I make no apology for choosing it. Theodore Monod was born in Paris on 6th November, 1836 and died in the same city sometime during 1921. He studied Law at the University of Paris, then trained as a Protestant minister at the Western Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania. Theodore became Pastor to a French Canadian congregation at Kankakee, Illinois. He returned to Paris in 1864 he served as a Pastor in the French Reformed Church. This hymn was written in 1874 and Theodore Monod gave it to Lord Mount-Temple, who sent it for publication in the 1877 “Hymnal Companion to the Book of Common Prayer” and, later, in the 1889 supplement to the 1875 edition of “Hymns Ancient and Modern”.

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| 1) O the bitter shame and sorrow,<br>that a time could ever be<br>when I let the Saviour’s pity<br>plead in vain, and proudly answered:<br>all of self and none of thee!               | 3) Day by day his tender mercy,<br>healing, helping, full and free,<br>sweet and strong and, ah! so patient,<br>brought me lower, while I whispered,<br>less of self and more of thee! |
| 2) Yet you found me; I beheld him<br>bleeding on the accursed tree,<br>heard him pray, ‘Forgive them, Father,’<br>and my wistful heart said faintly,<br>some of self and some of thee! | 4) Higher than the highest heaven,<br>deeper than the deepest sea,<br>Lord, thy love at last has conquered;<br>grant me now my supplication:<br>none of self, and all of thee!         |

*Theodore Monod*

## Address: Corrie Ten Boom

Here is a true story of forgiveness. Cornelia “Corrie” Ten Boom was a Dutch watchmaker who, along with her family – all members of the Dutch Reformed Church, harboured hundreds of Jews amid the Nazi Holocaust to protect them from arrest during World War II. It’s believed their efforts saved nearly 800 lives. Eventually betrayed by a fellow Dutch citizen, on 28th February 1944, the entire family was imprisoned. Her father died soon afterwards in Scheveningen prison, near the Hague.

Corrie and her sister, Betsie, were sent to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp, yet managed to smuggle a Bible into that terrible place, so the sisters held secret acts of worship, comforting their fellow prisoners. They endured great hardship and saw appalling cruelty meted out to others. Shortly before the end of the war, Betsie fell ill and she was so starved and weak that she died. Two days later, Corrie was freed by mistake, but she was well away from Ravensbruck by the time the error was discovered. Later, Corrie discovered that all the women of the same age as she and her sister had been killed, so she saw God’s hand in her salvation. As a result, she travelled around Europe talking about her experiences in a concentration camp.

One evening, at the end of a talk, a man approached Corrie and asked her to forgive him. He explained that he had been one of her guards at Ravensbruck but had found it almost impossible to live with himself afterwards. Corrie’s first reaction was to push him away, to shout and scream at him. Instead, she prayed for strength to forgive from the One who had asked his Father to forgive his killers at Calvary! Slowly, she took the former guard by the hand and offered him unconditional forgiveness.

If Corrie Ten Boom could act in such a way, so can we. Let us not allow our anger to fester within our hearts, to poison our souls with its bitterness, to prevent us from moving on. Instead, may we seek the strength to rebuild broken relationships, to become a channel of God’s peace. If we find doing so very difficult, bring to mind that Jesus gave his life to offer all of us a fresh start, so anything we have to do – swallow our pride, or set aside the pain and loss we have experienced – pales into insignificance, when we consider the agony, humiliation and death borne by our Redeemer for miserable sinners like us, for he overcame the world’s hatred with redemptive grace, not recrimination. May Christ Jesus grant us the faith and trust to forgive, in other words to let go of our grievances and move on. Amen.

## StF 424 – God forgave my sin

We close our worship with a hymn written by Carol Owens in Los Angeles for a musical, ‘Come Together’ in 1972 and was made popular by Pat Boone.

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| 1) God forgave my sin in Jesus’ name;<br>I’ve been born again in Jesus’ name,<br>and in Jesus’ name I come to you<br>to share his love as he told me to. | 2) All power is given in Jesus’ name,<br>in earth and heaven in Jesus’ name;<br>and in Jesus’ name I come to you<br>to share his power as he told me to. |
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Ch) *He said:*

*‘Freely, freely, you have received,  
freely, freely, give;  
go in my name and because you believe,  
others will know that I live.’*

Carol Owens © 1972 Bud John Songs

## The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. **Amen.**