

30th August 2026 – Morning Service

I am sending you to...

Rev Andrew Roberts

A gathering prayer

Lord God, thank you that you have called us here today: to hear and receive your word to us; to be inspired, challenged, motivated, and supported in the steps we take. Whatever the journey, long or short, easy or not, we follow you in faith. **Amen.**

StF 11 – Holy, Holy, Holy

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| 1) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty.
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity! | 3) Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness
hide thee,
though the sinful human eye
thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity. |
| 2) Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be. | 4) Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name
in earth and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity! |

Reginald Heber

Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

We give thanks to you the Great I AM. **Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we give you praise.**

Father, we thank you for your unfailing compassion. You call and use all manner of people to further your kingdom. Thank you that we can see and learn from others, those who have gone before us in the faith. Jesus, you came to show us the way, leaving footprints for us to follow. Thank you for never giving up on us when we stumble, for never failing to hear us when we call, for never being too busy to care. Holy Spirit, thank you for your presence, our source of strength and courage as we journey in faith. Though we cannot see the future or fully understand the present, we can trust in your leading to take us one step at a time.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we give you praise. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord, we can always come up with excuses for not doing what you ask of us. We are too tired, too busy, too shy. We are not good enough, wealthy enough. We are sorry for preferring our comfort zone to stepping out into the risky unknown. Forgive us for concentrating on ourselves and what we lack instead of giving you and those in need our attention. We are sorry for not looking to you first and foremost. Forgive us for our excuses, for hiding behind our inadequacies. Help us to look beyond ourselves and seek you, taking courage for one step at a time. **Amen.**

StF 50 – Great is the Lord

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| 1) Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise,
the city of our God, the holy place,
the joy of the whole earth.
Great is the Lord in whom we have the victory,
he aids us against the enemy,
we bow down on our knees. | <i>Ch) And Lord, we want to lift Your name on high,
and Lord, we want to thank you,
for the works you've done in our lives;
and Lord, we trust in your unfailing love,
for you alone are God eternal,
throughout earth and heaven above.</i> |
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Steve McEwan © 1985 Body Songs

StF 52 – He is exalted

He is exalted,
the King is exalted on high,
I will praise him.
He is exalted,
forever exalted
and I will praise his name!

He is the Lord,
forever his truth shall reign.
Heaven and earth
rejoice in his holy name.
He is exalted,
the King is exalted on high!

Twila Paris © 1985 Straightway Music

Reading: Exodus 3: 1-15 (NIV)

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.'

When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!'

And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The Lord said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'

And God said, 'I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.'

Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?'

God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you."'

God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you."

'This is my name for ever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.

Reading: 1 Peter 3: 13-15 (NIV)

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.' But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Address

For Moses it began with a burning bush.

It is not uncommon for a bush to catch fire in the Sinai desert, either due to lightning strikes or the refraction of the sun through water droplets. And sadly, of course, this summer, bushes catching fire have been far from unusual in this country and across Europe. And for some of us fire has come very close indeed.

But the day Moses had his famous encounter with a burning bush, things were a little bit different and were to have major consequences.

He was out pasturing his father-in-law's sheep but had strayed far beyond the usual grazing routes into unfamiliar territory. Here, he notices a strange bush, one which burns and burns yet never seems to run out of fuel. As Moses approached to investigate, an angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of the fire, and then the bush itself seemed to call him by name. Moses is known here, even though he has never been to this place before. He is commanded to take off his shoes because he is walking on holy ground.

I wonder if we ever have that sense of walking or standing on holy ground. And I wonder if maybe we treated the ground around us today as holy there might be less disaster and destruction.

Anyway, back to Moses. The voice that Moses hears identifies itself as the God of Moses' ancestors and says that the cry of the Israelites has come to God's attention. This indicates that the Israelites have not abandoned their faith despite their enslavement; they have been faithful to cry out to God, trusting that God will rescue them in good time. Now God is appointing Moses to execute that rescue plan, announcing in verse 10, **'I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt'**.

Naturally, Moses doubts that the people will believe that he has been truly sent by the God of their ancestors – and who can blame him. After all, imagine what your friends or neighbours would say if you went to them and said by the way I was out walking the dog today and God spoke to me through a burning bush and this is what He said...

To add to Moses' uncertainty remember he is only out in the desert because he is on the run – a consequence of his murderous outburst where he killed an Egyptian (see Exodus 2:11-15).

In the next chapter, God gives Moses the ability to perform some signs of his authority for this task (see 4:1-17). At this point in the narrative however, God simply promises to be with Moses each step of the way and says that one day Moses will return to this same spot to worship God for the fulfilment of the promise being made.

All the different people groups of the Ancient Near East had their different gods known by different names (some had whole pantheons of them!) but, so far, the descendants of Abraham had only known their God as 'God', or as 'the God of our ancestors'.

Moses decides to try and learn the name of God so that he can tell the Israelites the name of their rescuer – then he can prove that he has encountered this God. But God's enigmatic answer is a strange Hebrew construction, *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, which can be translated various ways into English: I am who I am; I will be who I will be; I am who I will be; I cause to be what I cause to be. Any or all of these translations are theologically dense – they seem to imply the self-existent and therefore self-defining nature of God. This in marked contrast to the gods of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples, especially the Egyptians, who set great store by the naming of deities, and created many images of them.

So, what might this ancient story have to say to us today?

Well in the light of recent events I do think the conversation about holy ground is important but today I would like to concentrate on the commission that God gives to Moses, **'I am sending you to Pharaoh'**, and to consider the question to whom is God sending us/you/me?

In 1 Peter the eponymous apostle urges us to 'always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that you have' (1 Peter 3:15). A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to do just that in a rather unusual setting.

Some of you know my guilty pleasure is motorsport and in particular racing on the sort oval tracks. My Dad first took me to Hednesford Hills Raceway in 1968, and I've been going ever since. Some of you might also remember that in 1997 I blessed the marriage of two friends of mine, Neil and Angie at a major meeting in Ipswich, an event that was covered by The Times newspaper no less. Angie sadly died of cancer a few years ago and just a month ago Neil died of his injuries in a freak accident when he tripped over his pet dog and banged his head.

Neil had been at the centre of the form of motorsport that I have particularly followed, National Hot Rod Racing. Every August the top drivers in the sport from across the UK and beyond gather at Hednesford for the National Championship. It seemed to be the ideal opportunity to offer a memorial service for Neil.

The first challenge to overcome was to get permission off the track owner to hold service. Now the owner of the track is an especially tough nut – maybe even slightly tougher than Pharoah. My journalist friend who was working on the service with me said 'you would be the best one to ask him for permission as he is less likely to tell a man of the cloth to go forth and multiply' – or words to that effect!

So, after some delicate and protracted negotiations – like Moses I had to ask several times – we were granted permission to hold a short service in the bar at the track on the Saturday morning. So not the usual setting for a service and definitely not your typical congregation!

But what an occasion. So many came that we had to relay the service outside and everyone was deeply respectful of both Neil and the occasion. It was very moving and driver after driver came up at the end to say 'thank you so much for doing this'. And in the bar at the racetrack the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit was named and honoured.

It felt like a 1 Peter moment and an Exodus 3:10 moment. A moment when God if you like was saying 'I'm sending you to Hednesford to share my blessing'.

Now I'm not expecting anyone reading or hearing this to head off to the next meeting at the Raceway to do something similar, but I wonder to whom and to what context is God sending you? Maybe your pleasure (guilty or otherwise!) is a choir, or a National Trust property, or a gym or a sports club? A context where you are known and respected and therefore, when the opportunity arises can 'give the reason for the hope that you have with gentleness and respect'.

Now that might scare us a bit. It certainly scared me – all sorts of things could have gone wrong. But they didn't because most importantly like Moses it was the knowledge that God was with me that mattered.

And God will be with you too wherever and to whomever you are sent. So let me encourage you as Peter encouraged his readers to 'always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that you have'. And when go says I am sending you, to go. Amen.

StF 20 – Be still for the presence of the Lord

1) Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found –
we stand on holy ground.
Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

2) Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour He is crowned:
how awesome is the sight –
our radiant King of light!
Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

3) Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him –
in faith receive from him.
Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

David J Evans © 1986 Thankyou Music

Prayers of Intercession – please use the silences to offer your own thoughts and prayers
Let's take a few moments to pray.

First let us be conscious that wherever we are, at home, at Church, we are on holy ground, for it is God's gifting of the space and God's presence that makes it holy.

Silence

Then let us invite God to speak with us and make us aware of who he is sending us to and when conscious of our calling let us ask God to give us the courage to go.

Silence

Returning to the image of the burning bush let us continue to pray for those whose lives have been devastated by fires, for those who serve in the fire service, for policymakers and for ourselves that we may all treat God's world with better care.

Silence

Let us pray for our churches and Circuit and especially for Revd Rachel as she begins her ministry amongst us that she would know God with her Moses knew God to be with him.

Silence

Let us pray for those on our minds and in our hearts who especially at this time that they would know God's blessing, healing, courage and peace.

Silence

And then let us bring our prayers together as we say the Lord's Prayer...

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 663 – I the Lord of sea and sky

1) I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Ch) Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

2) I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

3) I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Daniel L. Schutte © OCP Publications

A sending out prayer

Lord, continue to guide our footsteps, as we seek to respond to your call, knowing that you go with us, our ever-present guide and enabler. Wherever our footsteps take us, may your will be done. And may your blessing; the blessing of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with us and go with us. **Amen.**

Opening and closing prayers adapted from rootsontheweb.com