



Lenten Prayer Guide 2026



The picture on the front cover is of an altar set into the rock in the desert between Jerusalem and Jericho, with the Communion elements on top.

Photo taken by Revd. Jenny Dowding.

Welcome to this Lenten Prayer Guide for 2026

Throughout this guide you will find scripture, prayers, poems, pictures and short reflections. These are to give you time and space this Lent to stop and be in the moment with God.

Lent is a time of living more simply and taking stock
in amongst all the busyness of life.

We are blessed to have contributions from across the Connexion and from further afield to aid us in our reflections this year. We will be using the Lent theme from the Methodist Church of '**Let Go Of...**' Helping us to switch from a negative mind-set to a good news mind-set – because life is fuller when we start believing the good stuff!

May this Lent be a time for you to connect with God afresh and find something new in a season many of us know well.

God bless you on this Lenten journey,

BHB Circuit Prayer Resource Group.

February 22nd Lent 1

Let go of idols. make room for God.

Lent invites us into the holy work of letting go. Not because the things we cling to are always bad, but because they quietly claim more of us than they deserve. Our idols today rarely look like statues; they are glowing screens, packed diaries, the constant pull to achieve, consume, and compare. They promise security, worth, and belonging, yet so often leave us anxious and exhausted.

To let go of idols is not an act of punishment, but of freedom. When we loosen our grip on productivity as our value, on wealth as our safety, on approval as our identity, we make room for God's deeper presence. The God we meet in Lent does not compete for space, but waits patiently for openness.

Making room for God means creating space for compassion, justice, rest, and truth. As we release what crowds our hearts, we rediscover a God who is already near—calling us back to what truly gives life.

Life in abundance, not life in a schedule.

Revd. Andy Fitchet

Let go I say!

Let go of all that tries to control.
That focus on idols and things that detract
From the God in whose hand we are held.

Make way and move on,
For Immanuel is here,
And now we walk with Him,
Especially alongside Him,
In company, into the wilderness.

So, let go of those things that bind us.
Know too our challenges He shares.
His temptations were greatly enormous,
They could have been so very different,
But no, He knew! He knew what He was called to
And obediently carried them through.

40 days He survived in fasting and prayer,
And overcame 3 enormous challenges.

The devil laughed out,
But God's voice spoke out
To the Son, whose message He should carry.
Encouraged by now
We can walk the same road
As we take on again, 40 days to examine our lives.

This 20 thousand and 26,
Many years have passed on,
Well over 2000 they are.

It seems now that many no longer do follow
The One whose amazing conclusion
Gives hope to our human sin,
Those idols are shattered
And Him we see risen,
Reigning alongside the Almighty
At One with the Father,
In Spirit and Son.

Our Saviour, our Lord, is He,
Whom we experience in broken bread and wine
And a life to follow seen in Lent.

Christine Thomas

March 1st, Lent 2

Let go of the form, embrace the Spirit

It is my pleasure and privilege to bring you greetings on behalf of the Methodist Conference. It is encouraging that this booklet will be using the Lent resources produced by the Methodist Church.

So, in that Spirit I offer this short prayer.

God of living breath,
you meet us not only in what we inherit
but in what you are still composing.
Where we cling to familiar forms,
gently loosen our hands.
Where our stories have stalled,
tune them again with hope.
Teach us to trust your Spirit
more than our structures,
your song more than our certainty.
May our lives become instruments
through which your grace is heard anew
a people rooted in yesterday,
attentive today,
and courageous enough
to sing tomorrow,
weaving our small faithfulness
into your wider story,
until love itself carries the melody,
for your glory alone.

Amen.

Matthew Forsyth - Vice President Of Methodist Conference 2025-2026

**The painting for this reflection is gifted to us by *Revd. Rachel Bending*,
Chair of the Southampton District, and the Channel Islands District.**



March 8th, Lent 3

Let go of scarcity. embrace abundance

“Let go of scarcity; embrace abundance.”

The trouble is, Lord of life, that we get into a negative mindset so quickly, and then stay there. We are so convinced of all that we lack—from young people to sufficient funds—that what we don’t have dominates our thinking at Church Councils and in our conversations.

We are like your first disciples—“How can we possibly feed all these people?” Your reaction was to ask, “What do you have?” and in response to the reply, “only 5 loaves and 2 fish, but what are they among so many?”, you feed the entire crowd of 5,000+.

Your disciples, now as then, often only see the problems and not the solutions. We lack the imagination, the creativity, the faith that respond to challenges which appear to overwhelm us.

So, help us to see what we actually have, and not be obsessed with what we don’t have. Help us to see what we are doing which is working, and not be depressed by what isn’t.

Instead of burying our talent in the ground because of fear or false assumptions, help us to use what we have as productively as we can.

Save us, too, from thinking that any advance in our Church’s life depends entirely on us. Help us to let go of relying on our own strength all the time, and help us to begin learning how to rely on the inspiration, wisdom, vision and strength which are rooted in you.

Help us to recognise where you are already at work, and to align ourselves to your purposes and your energy.

Help us to realise the great potential and the considerable gifts of people around us.

So, may we let go of the negative mindset fixated on scarcity, and receive with open hands the abundant life you make possible, embracing and holding it fast.

Help us to live and think and act as people with high expectations of the activity of the Living God amongst us—as you did, and still do. Amen.

Revd. David Jenkins

God! Why do I worry so?
If I could just stop for a moment
I know could see everything your way:
A world full of simple acts of kindness
 changing lives and lifting hearts;
Families and churches full of love
 which make us better people;
A planet overflowing with beauty;
 And the fact all we need to live
 is provided by your grace.
There is even enough to thrive.

But....

I worry still.
The news screams and I worry
 about the state of things.
I look at others and I worry
 about being enough.
 I even catch myself
worrying about my worries.
It almost feels like there is,
 in fact, not enough:
Food to go around? Space to live?
 Goodness to make it better?

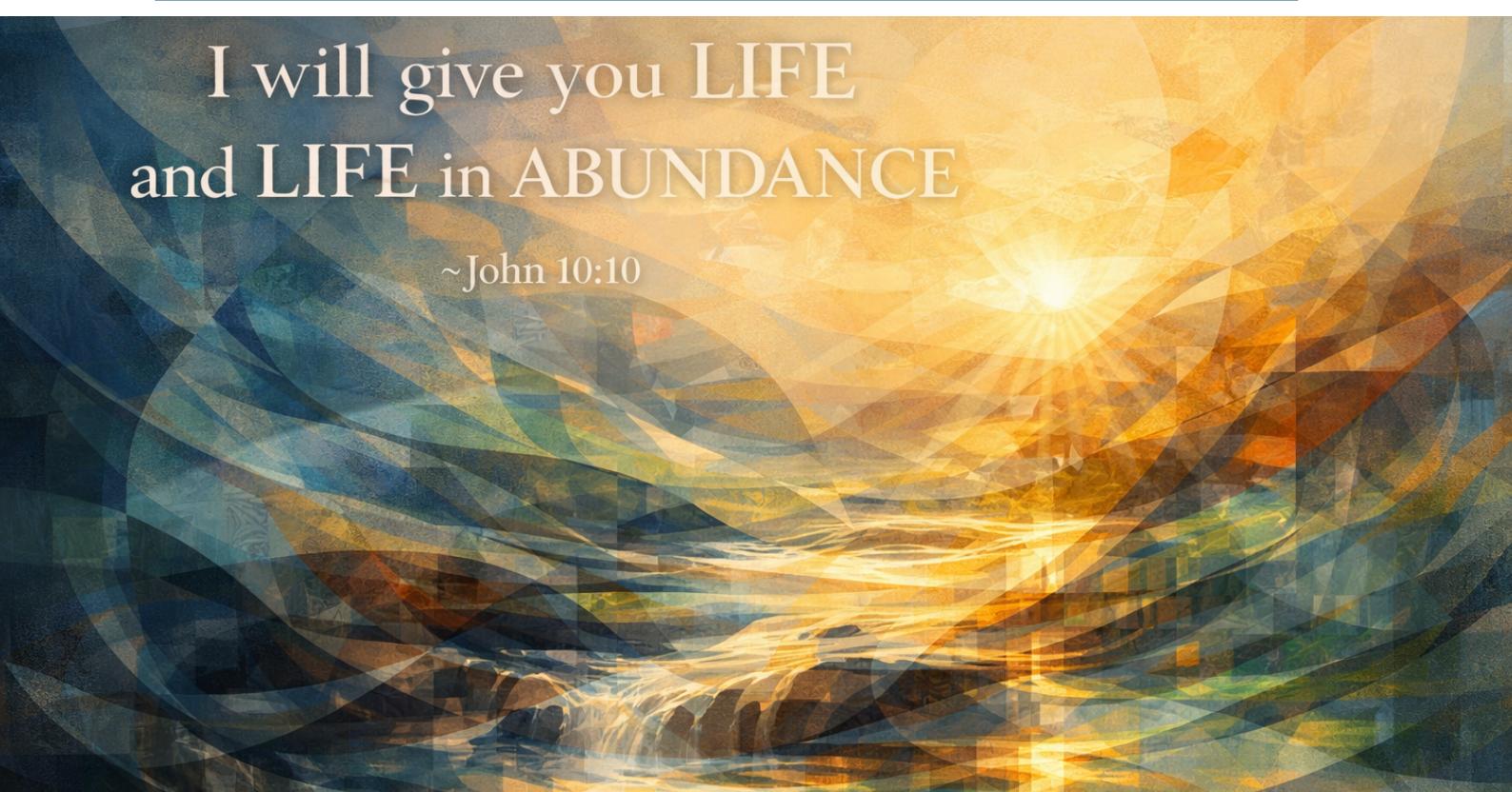
Still,
you have named this creation good!
Everything we have and are
is your precious gift.
Every person we encounter
is your own dear child.
You have created it all
and declared it good.
And you have not made it
and turned away,
you sustain it,
and us,
and still call it all good!

Send you Spirit to guide
me towards your peace:
On the bad days give me courage
to let go of my need for control;
On the good days
Open my eyes to see,
and my ears to hear,
and my mind to notice
the overwhelming goodness
and abundance of your
creation and love.

Revd. Martin Beukes

**I will give you LIFE
and LIFE in ABUNDANCE**

~John 10:10



March 15th, Lent 4

Let go of appearances, and embrace what's inside

The Lord said to Samuel - “People judge others by what they look like, but I judge people by what is in their hearts.” -1 Samuel: 16: 7 (CEV)

Gracious and compassionate God,
we rejoice that your saving love and mercy are extended to every human
being without distinction, and that every one of us is made in your image.
We give you thanks that you do not judge anyone by outward appearance, but
you see into each heart.

Forgive me when I assess others by what I see outwardly - status, behaviour,
or physical appearance.

Help me to notice the times when I fail to affirm the dignity of another.
Help me to see and understand what you see in each person I encounter, and
to recognise your image in them.

Forgive me for the sin of self-deprecation, when I fail to understand my own
worth and dignity before you.

Help me to know that I am deeply loved as I am, and worthy of respect.

Forgive me when I care about how I appear to others.
Help me to let go of the need to have others think well of me.

Help me to be as generous and gracious to others as you are to me.
May I see as you see, and love as you love, in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Revd. Jenny Dowding

PILATE'S STORY

Revd. Rachel Larkinson

He was a sad sight, the man they brought before me. His hands were tied with coarse rope, his clothes were ragged, his face strained with lack of sleep and bruised by the soldiers' blows.

I'm not happy with my position here as Roman Governor in this distant province. The people are restless and need firm control. But they are fiercely independent and I fear insurrection. And then I have to deal with cases like this. They told me it was someone with aspirations to be king. Someone who was a threat to our Roman rule. I expected someone proud and haughty, with fine clothes and many supporters. Instead I see a poor man, clothes in tatters, a man deserted and alone.

'Are you the king of the Jews?' I asked him in pity and amazement. What did he answer? It was hard to know, as the Chief Priests began their angry accusations. They spoke of blasphemy and disgrace to the nation. I could hear the bitterness and scorn in their voices. They hated this man. Yet in his eyes there was honesty, wisdom and wounded love.

'What is your answer?' I asked him. He said nothing. Nothing to the insults, nothing to the provocation, nothing to the pain of the blows.

I wanted to save this man. Here was something I had never known in my life. A calm endurance and an inner strength in the face of the worst the world can do. I felt this man had the key to true living. It was festival time. I would release him, according to a local custom.

And I would have released him, except for the crowd. The everyday people of this world. They all shouted the same thing; 'Crucify him!' They all listened to their High Priest and chanted 'Crucify him!' They just couldn't think for themselves. 'Release Barabbas!' they shouted. Now Barabbas, who had already led a riot, was the very last thing they needed in that mood. But they wouldn't listen to me. 'We want Barabbas!' they repeated again and again.

The situation was clearly getting out of hand. I had to act. But it wasn't my fault. I washed my hands of the whole affair. Yes, I handed Jesus over to be flogged and crucified, to dreadful suffering and death. But remember, when you read my name in history books. that it wasn't my fault.

We are all part of a world of power and corruption, where fear, treachery and violence drive people to turn on fellow human beings and destroy them. What we need is a way of life where love, truth and peace prevail. So, who knows, in this innocent prisoner they called Jesus, the one I sent to be crucified, may have been the hope for the future of us all.

March 22nd, Lent 5

Let go of despair, embrace 'respair'

I was stuck by how the wool had become entangled in the barbed wire. I hoped the sheep from whom the wool came, hadn't been too distressed as it encountered the barbed fence. I was intrigued that the wool held the water droplets within its strands.

The wool was no longer useful to keep the sheep warm but had potential to be useful in other ways. If it was carefully removed from the fence, it could be used a variety of wool products. Stuck on a fence didn't have to be the end of its story, instead, there are possibilities of a different future.

When I am struck, trapped and barbs of pain overwhelm me,
God where are you?

When I wait for release and the hurting to stop
God when are you coming?

When someone notices me and listens to me
God is it really you?

When someone tends my wounds and scars begin to heal
God help me to move with you.

When a new day dawns fresh with possibilities
God help me live lightly, find courage and hold onto hope. Amen

*I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Jeremiah 31:3*

But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Luke 10:33-34

Deacon Sarah Wickett



Spiritual practice - The 'respair shop'

from the Connexion Lent Prayer Guide

This week, embrace your inner Bagpuss! The classic children's TV programme of the 1970s was about a shop whose owner found lost and broken objects, mended them, and put them in the shop window for people to find them.

Choose one thing that's broken, messy, or neglected: a torn item of clothing, a cluttered drawer, a squeaky hinge, a forgotten corner of your home. Take time to fix it, clean it, or bring it back to life.

As you do, reflect on these questions: What in me might also need repair? What hope could be restored through this act? You don't need to do it perfectly. The point is care, attention and the belief that restoration is possible – even in small things.

March 29th, Palm Sunday

Let go of violence, embrace

gentleness

A Blessing for Lent (or a prayer for grace)

Take a breath. Pause. Be in touch with the place deep within where God's Spirit witnesses with your spirit that you are a child of God. Notice which part of this blessing attracts your attention and let your prayer flow from there.

May we turn from all that takes the place of Love,
May we be willing to let God meet us at our point of need.

May we forgive all who have let us down,
May we be willing to give and to receive.

May we reach out to those whom we have hurt,
May we be willing to offer friendship.

May we let go of rigid thinking,
May we be open to receive new insight from the Spirit.

May we lay aside negative thoughts,
May we learn to watch with great love.

May we put aside all apathy,
May we embrace loving action.

May we turn our eyes from ourselves,
May we gaze in delight on our loving Creator.

May the Joy of our Creator,
The love of our companion Christ,
And oneness with the Spirit
Increase in our lives day by day.

Amen

Matthew 21: 6-11 NRSVUE

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking,
“Who is this?”

The crowds were saying,
“This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”



April 3rd, Good Friday
Let go of certainty. embrace mystery

Good Friday: What happens now?

The distant sound of raging war
Fear in the faces of the poor

The clanging cymbal, noisy gong
Drowning out the angel song

Words of apathy, hate and scorn
Love withheld and smiles withdrawn

And emptiness and good undone
Conspire to kill God's precious Son

A hammer, wood and filthy nails
Some sour wine as breathing fails

Jesus takes his parting breath
God's spirit is wrapped up in death

The story ends as it began
No mercy for the Son of Man

Revd. Helen Watson



Jesus said:

‘It is finished.’

Then he bowed his head and gave up his Spirit.

John 19:30 NRSV

April 5th, Easter Sunday

Let go of fear. embrace joy

28 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. **2** And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. **3** His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. **4** For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. **5** But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. **6** He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he^[a] lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead,^[b] and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." **8** So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. Matthew 28: 1-8 (NRSVUE)

The fear of unknown or inexplicable events like we read here often produce thoughts of flight or result

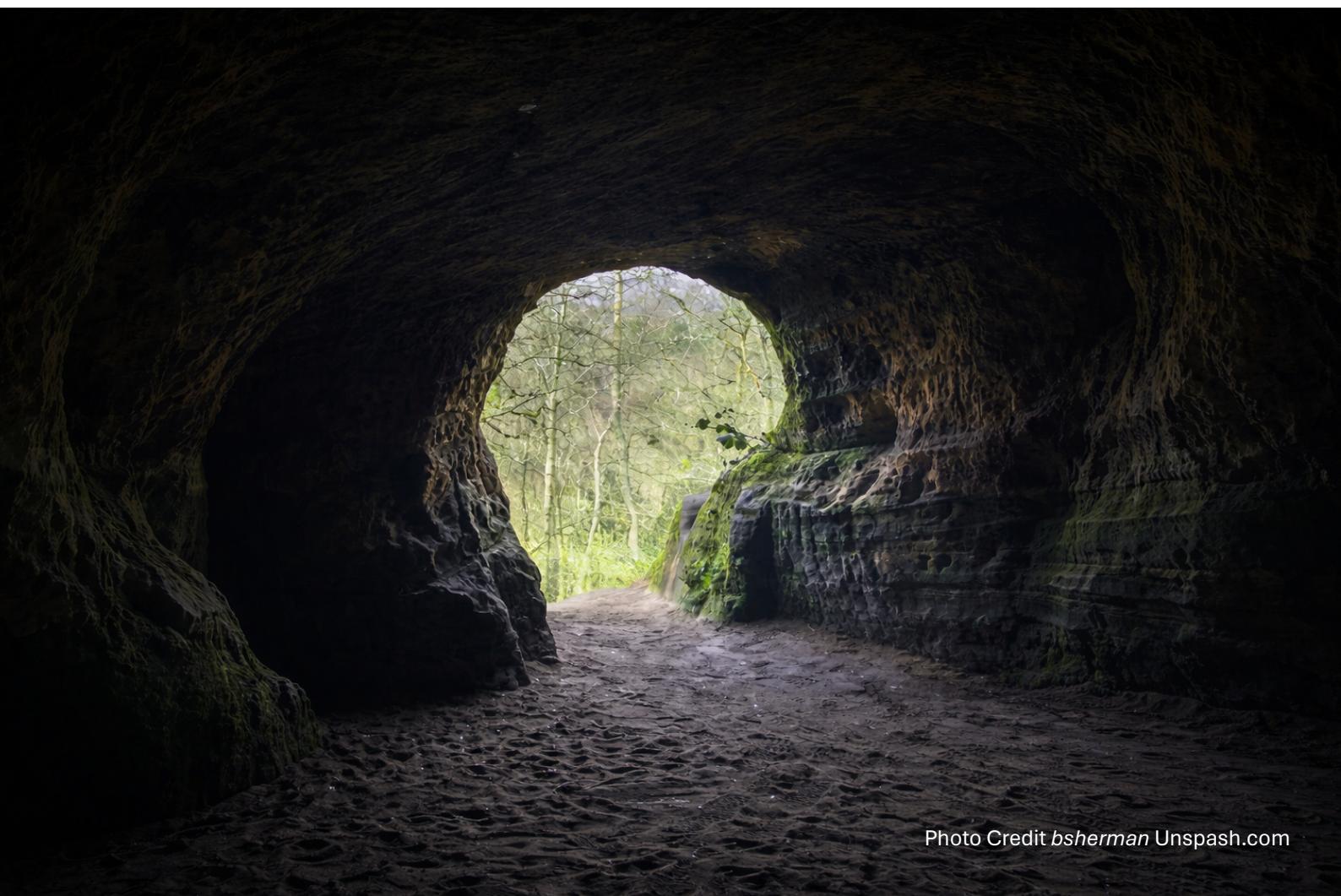
in freezing indecision, but drop the initial reaction

↓F **E A R**

*And use your **E A R** to receive Jesus' message which brings us*

J O Y

Gill Lawson



Luke tells us that the women rested before going to the Tomb. And in doing so, they gave themselves over to a rhythm older and deeper than the empire. They made space for God to do what only God could do.

On the third day, they would go to the tomb. And there, they would discover that the stone had been rolled away—not because they had done everything right, not because they understood it all, in another gospel story it has them asking each other who will roll the stone away when they were on the way to the tomb! They went without a plan but they went because they knew they should. They went because **grace had gone ahead of them.**

This is the great promise of Easter: that even when we cannot see it, grace is already moving into the places we fear most.

Resurrection doesn't depend on our strength or our understanding.
It arrives as a gift. It interrupts despair. It rolls stones away.

And so, in those long waiting seasons, when the world feels heavy and God feels distant, this story becomes a companion. It tells us: "*You are not forgotten. The story is not over. Keep resting. Keep waiting. Keep trusting. Grace is already on the move.*"

It calls us to create spaces where people can rest without guilt.
To honour pain without needing to resolve it too quickly.
To walk beside people in uncertainty without rushing them to clarity.
To tell the truth that **God is with us**, even here, even now.

We are called to be Sabbath people in a restless world.
We are called to be resurrection people on the Holy Saturday's of life.
Where people can bring their spices and their silence.
Where they can prepare, and wait, and wonder—without shame.

Let's be the kind of church that trusts God enough to rest,
and is brave enough to keep hoping.

God's grace does not wait until Sunday to arrive.
It is already blooming in the cracks of Saturday.
It is already working in the silence.
It is already holding our story together.

And when the dawn comes—and it has—
it won't be because we forced it.
It will be because grace has done what grace always does:
it has made a way where there was no way.

So that we can say,

Christ is risen, **he is risen indeed, hallelujah. Amen.**

Revd. Andy Fitchet



Berkshire & Hampshire Borders Methodist Circuit

This Prayer Guide was produced by the Circuit Prayer Resource Group. Thank you to all those who contributed.