**Written service at home 18th October 2026.**

Coming to a time of worship take a moment to breathe and settle in preparation to meet God.

Read or sing Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty (H&P 7 STF 11).

Prayers.

Creator God, we praise you because you are always there for us.
Always calling us to share your peace and joy.
You are always meeting us and holding us,
you challenge us and share our lives.
You are there when we need you
and still there when we turn our backs on you.
Even when we least expect it, Lord, you are always there.
We praise you for the wonderful surprises,
and for the times of excitement and celebration.
And we give thanks that you are there in our difficult times.

We are sorry when we forget your greatness and allow our faith to be a small part of our lives, letting other things carry more importance.
We are sorry that we do not share our faith each day.
Forgive us Lord, and make us new so we can bring your Kingdom glory.
**Amen.**

Say the Lord's Prayer in whatever version or language is familiar to you.

Readings for this week. Exodus 33: 12-23. Psalm 99.
1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10 and Matthew 22: 15-22.

**Reflection on the readings**.

Enquiring of the Lord is something everyone can do as His people. The Israelites had their tents we have our churches for worshipping the Lord. But we can pray and speak to God whenever and wherever our need or want. God is always open to communication from us. Moses uniqueness was that he was able to stand face to face (in the presence of, yet never seeing him fully) with the Lord and speak to him as one speaks to a friend. The Lord gave positive proof that He honoured Moses, desired to be with him for God met him in person. This enabled Moses to serve the Lord and His people. God communicated to this people through Moses. He promised to be with his people and proclaim his name in their presence.

The words of Psalm 99 encouraged the people who hear it to praise their Lord's great and awesome name as the Holy one. It tells of the great prophets whom God communicated through to speak to his people and that he answered to their call as a forgiving God. The voice from the cloud had already called to them – for God always takes the initiative, and grace always precedes faith. As they sought him in prayer, his voice in reply gave them the statue and decrees by which they and their nation were to live. In other words, the Holy God requires holiness in his people.

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, after greeting them he told them that "we always give thanks to God for all of you." Paul's relationship with the church in Thessalonia is a relationship enriched and emboldened by thankfulness for his fellow believers who have kept on ministering in spite of persecution. Paul enjoys and perhaps needs, the friendship of this community of fellow ministers. The letter depicts Paul as a pastoral leader intent on mentoring a community of believers portrayed through his ongoing communication despite his imprisonment. Paul and his companions had congregations across a wide area and Paul wrote letters to them, distinct forms of communication intended to encourage, teach and sometimes reprimand particular congregations where he was deemed the pastoral leader. Paul had a personal bond with those first congregations and his letters reveal the concern with which he communicated to each of his churches. He encouraged with gratitude the work that they did together to carry gospel wisdom across the regions. Congregations are to be bonded to one another in Christ by a spirit of thanksgiving for one another.

What are the gifts of such spirit? A spirit of thanksgiving can motivate us as believers who can be more intentional and thoughtful in all the ways we communicate with each other. A spirit of thanksgiving can motivate us to forgive and seek forgiveness, especially as each of us works to be understood and to understand. It should also motivate us towards working more collaboratively. Our churches today, may not be as widespread as the regions that Paul and his fellow ministerial team worked with those early Christian communities. But the communication we share today should still offer the intention for wisdom that encourages, teaches, and sometimes reprimands but most of all, that "always give thanks to God for all of you."

In our Matthew reading for this week, in trying to trap Jesus, the Pharisees and Herodians set a problem for Jesus by asking him a very cunning question about paying tax. If Jesus said ‘refuse the tax’ he would immediately be liable to arrest, which is what they wanted. But the answer ‘pay it’ would immediately lose him popular support.

Jesus’ response was to ask for a coin, he was testing the authority, they brought him a denarius, the least value of the monies with Caesars image on it. Give back to Caesar what is Caesars he told them because it bears Caesars image. This implies that the people had a responsibility to pay their dues as members of the society in which they lived. But he also said, “and to God what is God’s.” meaning that the people shouldn’t worship Caesar as their loyalty was to God. We bear God’s image so give yourself back to God.

When we do give ourselves without reserve to God who gave us everything and formed us in his own image, and when we set out to give to Caesar what is Caesars, but only if it does not conflict with what is due to God. When we give to God what is God’s, then we have within ourselves a spring of action which is always seeking integrity in a world of compromise.

It can be easy in the daily pressures of our society to wrestle with the conflicts that arise between the teaching of our faith and the actions of the powers of our world. We should always look to Jesus’ teaching on the greatest of the commandments, which grounds his debates with the religious leaders. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

The fulfilment of the law, including the question on whether or not to pay taxes, is that which grows out of complete devotion to God, expressed in the love of our neighbour, in whom we see the image of God always. **Amen.**

**Let us pray for our world and its people.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for those who are called to serve in the world, for all leaders of nations, politicians, those who have influence because of their positions in companies or services. For missionaries and Christians who travel anywhere in the world, that they may be ambassadors for Christ. This is our prayer we ask it in Jesus’ name.

Heavenly Father, we pray for all who are called to serve in the local community. For all who work in our health and care services, social workers, teachers, emergency service workers, shop assistants, and those who provide our essential service like power, water and transport. May they know that in serving others they are serving you.
This is our prayer we ask it in Jesus' name.

Heavenly Father, we pray for those who are called to serve you in and through your church. We pray for our ministerial staff, for our circuit stewards, church stewards and those who serve by listening to those who need to be heard, by holding the hands of those who need comfort and those who offer a warm welcome to those who feel they are left out in the cold. This is our prayer we ask it in Jesus' name.

Heavenly Father, we pray for our families, friends and ourselves. We remember that you called us to serve you here and everywhere. You call us to serve where we are today and where you will lead us in the future. You call us to serve you with our gifts and skills. We thank you that we know we are called by name to share in the task of bringing glory praise and honour to your name. This is our prayer we ask it in Jesus' name.

Hymn All my hope on God is founded. (H&P 704 StF 563)

Blessing.

**As our journey into this week begins,**
**the Lord blesses us on our way and travels with us.**
**As each path unfolds, God's presence comes with us.**
**As each question comes,**
**signposts along the way echo with God's word.**

**This is the reliable promise, God was, God is, God will be.**
**Within. Around. Beyond.**
**Always.**