

Call to Worship

We turn to you, O Lord, for your love is kind.
In your great compassion, turn to us

Be swift and answer us, for we are in distress.
Draw near to us and redeem us.

(based on Psalm 69 v 18-20)

Prayers of Approach & Confession

With the psalmist, let us pray
**'Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind;
in your great compassion, turn to me'**

We come to you, God of every generation –
of our fathers and our fathers' fathers.
We worship you for your kindness, your compassion and your love.
We find you waiting here for us,
Ready to listen to our prayers, to heal our wounds, to come near to our hearts.
**'Hide not your face from your servant;
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.'**

We come to hear your word for us,
and seek a better knowledge of you, our God,
the one Jesus calls "our heavenly father".
As we worship, help us to follow Jesus
Receive our prayers and set our feet on right paths.
Hear us, in our need and distress.
**'Draw near to me and redeem me,
because of my enemies deliver me'.**

We confess to you, loving God,
that we need your health and redemption
We wander far from you, and fall and fail.
Forgive us, we pray, and by your Spirit make us new.

(using phrases from Psalm 69)

Declaration of Forgiveness

God is faithful and just, ever-loving and ever-gracious;
to each of God's children this promise is made:
Your sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As forgiven children of God we pray together the Lord's Prayer, Our Father...

Prayer of Illumination

God who comes to us in the Word made flesh,
as we open Scripture open our ears to hear,
and our hearts to understand,
that we may open our lives to you, Amen

Readings

Jeremiah 20:7-13 | St Matthew 10:24-39 | Romans 6: 1b – 11

All-Age Activity

You could pick up on the 'even the hairs on your head are numbered' by asking:
Who here has least hair on their head? Who has the most?
(obviously you will want to be sensitive if there are people in the congregation who wear a wig, or have been facing hair loss (or excess hair growth) – in this case you might prime 2 'volunteers' – Jack here has very little hair...Jill has a lot...)

Then ask . Do either of you know how many hairs you have? The one with little may know – especially if it's zero! The one with lots will probably have no idea.
(The average is 80,000 – 150,000 on a full head of hair – it would take more than 24 hours to count them all – and it would be really tricky, too).

However many, or however few, Jesus says that God, our heavenly father, knows exactly how many there are. That's amazing! What does that mean about how God cares for us?

Answers could include – he cares a lot, he even cares about little things, he knows us really well, even better than we know ourselves...

When Jesus says that God loves us like a heavenly father he means he loves and cares for us this amazing amount. We are very loved.

Sermon Notes

Jeremiah 20: 7-13

This is one of Jeremiah's laments – he is open and honest with God about how hard he is finding life as God's prophet. These are not nice, polite words from Jeremiah. When he says God has 'enticed' him, he could mean something as strong as 'conned' or even 'wrestled with and overwhelmed'. His is not an easy call to speak out for God, and he is treated badly by everyone around him. Jeremiah laments all this – he tells God how bad it feels. But this is not a sign of Jeremiah's lack of faith, but his total trust in God. Like a loving father God can be relied upon to listen, to care and ultimately to rescue. So Jeremiah ends on a note of praise – he is not just 'venting' into silence, but confiding in God, whose name is to be praised, and who will "rescue the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers". In preaching on this, it will help if you have a sense of what the congregation might be ready to lament about – the state of their health, the state of the church roof, the latest atrocity on the world stage, etc. Jeremiah speaks about his lived experience, and trusts God to help him with that – God offers the same to us. A lament begins with us opening up about our pain to God, and ends with our hearts being open to God's grace. You could leave people lots of reflection time to offer their own sadness and sense of being overwhelmed to God, but then give time to hear the gospel, the good news of the God who is there to rescue them.

St Matthew 10: 24–39

This is a complex reading and you might decide simply to pick out the 'encouraging' parts about hairs on your head being numbered, and God loving you more than many sparrows. If this is the good news your congregation needs, don't be afraid to preach it. But Matthew tells us that Jesus sets those words amongst challenging concepts of suffering, decision (maybe the 'sword' Jesus comes to bring is one of being on a knife-edge of facing hard decisions?), and picking up our own cross. If you are wanting to grapple with this part of the gospel, there is deep integrity in setting the challenge and the comfort alongside each other. Jesus is not offering 'pie in the sky when I die' but real grace when life is a gritty mess. In horror films, the real fear is generated by the things which can't be seen clearly, only glimpsed out of the corner of the eye, lurking in the shadows, half-imagined. Perhaps Jesus tells it to his disciples straight so that they don't succumb to deep fear. Then Jesus offers them, and us, the comfort of knowing the care of our heavenly father, which can give us courage to face the reality of life's difficulties. If you are having time to reflect, you might like to use the hymn "his eye is on the sparrow" by Civilla Durfee Martin - a hymn of confident faith written by someone whose health was very frail.

Romans 6: 1b – 11

For those wanting to tackle the letter to the Romans, there is real hope in the association between the suffering and death of Jesus and our sufferings. Some might want to talk

about substitutionary atonement (the idea that Jesus was our substitute when he was crucified for our sins). Others might prefer to major on the idea that because Jesus has been through the pains of life, suffering and death, he understands what we suffer, and that the same God and heavenly father who brought Jesus through death to eternal life will do the same for us. In preaching, you might want to find examples of people who have known the life of Christ in the midst of their sufferings. One example is Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was captured on video praying at a funeral in the last days of apartheid. Dressed in his bishop's purple he knelt on the dry African soil and clasped his hands together as he prayed, 'God, we know that you are with us and that you will bring victory, but why does it have to take so long?' . Yet God was with the people of South Africa and with Tutu through all the trials they faced.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore, God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

cf Philippians 2.6-11

Offertory

In gratitude to God for all God's gifts of grace,
we offer our gifts of money as a token of all our thanks and praise.

Eternal God,
receive our gifts,
enrich our lives,
and building your kingdom, we pray.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

God of all mercy, our loving heavenly Father,
we bring our prayers to you.

Father, hear us: **You alone can help and save us.**

We pray for those who feels their life is lost in deep water and great darkness.

For victims of natural disaster.

For those trapped in debt or addiction.

We pray for all who love and serve those who feel lost.

Father, hear us: **You alone can help and save us.**

We pray for those who fear the deep will swallow them up.

For those facing bullying or oppression

For those undergoing medical tests or treatment.

We pray for those who speak out for justice and kindness.

Father, hear us: **You alone can help and save us.**

We pray for those whose distress leads them to feel
that your face is turned against them.

For those struggling with lack of self-worth.

For those with poor mental health.

We pray for all who support and encourage vulnerable people.

Father, hear us: **You alone can help and save us.**

We pray for those who need to know that you,
Loving God, draw near to them.

For those whose lives have just begun,

or whose lives have changed dramatically.

For those nearing death

We pray for all those who accompany others and bring hope.

Father, hear us: **You alone can help and save us.**

Loving God, save us, lift us up, hear us, draw near to us.

That our prayers may be heard and answered,

and we and all your children know your love more deeply.

Father, hear us: **You alone can help and save us.**

We pray in Jesus name and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessing

May the love of the God whom Jesus called Father
care for you in each challenge and carry you through each pain
and may the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord
and the strength of the Holy Spirit
be with you today and always Amen

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
Dear Lord & Father of mankind	492	485	495	111
Alleluia, Alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord	234		295	30
We turn to you O God of every nation	654		720	
I know that my Redeemer lives (use Duke Street if the wonderful tune is not known)	278	423	303	278
Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory	33		3	822
We know that Christ is raised and dies no more	426	635		
Father of mercy, God of consolation	645			
Baptized in water (use Bunessan)		636		
Father we praise you, now the night is over	26	209		
Holy Spirit				1183
Stay with us, God as longed-for peace eludes us	338			
Do not be afraid	591	191		115
When we are living we are in the Lord		726	485	
Lord for the years	603	159	470	428
From the falter of breath		730		
O Happy Day	359			499
Give thanks for life		736		
Take up your cross, the Saviour said		402		935
Soon and very soon		749		605

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*

Ruth also suggests

'His eye is on the sparrow' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7Pk5YMkEcg>