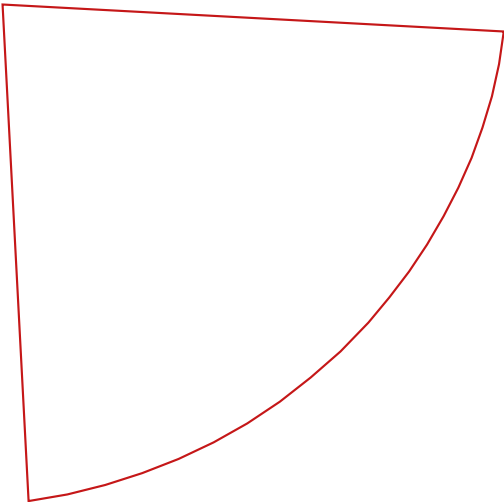
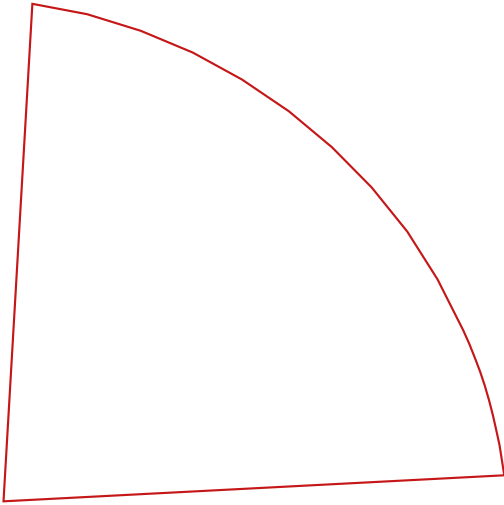


Praying with Hymns



A Guide



Acknowledgement:

Deacon Laura Evans, a Methodist minister serving the East Solent and Downs Circuit of the Methodist Church, created much of the original content here for use in local settings, such as leading worship at a church or event without music, leading prayers, or finding the right words in a pastoral situation.

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The hymns referenced in this booklet remain the property of their writers/copyright owners and are subject to copyright law. Numbers relate to where you can find them in your copy of *Singing the Faith*.

Introduction

This booklet is intended as a guide for those who want to use hymns as prayers. You might be preparing to lead worship at a church or event without music. Maybe you've been asked to lead prayers and are anxious about what to say. You might need help to find the right words in a pastoral situation. Or perhaps you're someone who loves the poetry of the hymn book and wants to explore it further.

For many of us, hymns are hugely significant, especially those sung at important milestones in our lives.

As Methodists we have always 'sung our faith'. Hence the title of our hymn book, which is authorised and can be trusted to reflect Methodist theology. The hymns of John and Charles Wesley came about at a time when most 'Methodists' were not welcome in the parish church where the liturgy was taking place. The hymns of Charles, in particular, enabled them to learn, sing and recite their theology with the aid of memorable tunes.

Reading hymns as poetry enables us to really focus on the words and what they mean for our relationship with God without worrying about whether we're singing in tune!

In this booklet you will find various categories containing lists of reference numbers for *Singing the Faith* hymns that are particularly appropriate for use as prayers. Of course, this is quite subjective and you may well want to add your own ideas, or use a hymn at another time than the one suggested. That's fine.

All you need is a copy of *Singing the Faith* and the relevant licences if you're projecting the words on a screen. If you're not sure what you need, all the information can be found on the Singing the Faith Plus website, www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus. However you use these hymns, don't forget to mention the name of the writer when you introduce them.

Praying with Hymns was first developed as a resource for use locally in the East Solent and Downs Circuit of the Methodist Church. It has been well received, and has opened the eyes of many to the versatility of hymns when adapted for spoken prayer. Now the wider Church will also be able to benefit from discovering the treasures of the original hymn book in this way, as well as new hymns available online.

Using hymns as prayers: some ideas

This is a resource designed to be picked up and used quickly. In all likelihood you will skim through a few possibilities before arriving at something that seems to fit your purpose. As you're turning the pages of *Singing the Faith*, if you spot a few other hymns to add to the list for next time, so much the better!

But as you make your choices, you may also think: "That's a lot of words!" or "How can I involve others in this?"

The following are just a few ideas:

- If one lone verse jumps out at you, just use that. Be sure to say who wrote it and where it comes from, though!
- If the hymn has a chorus, you could ask the congregation to pick up their hymn books and join in with that.
- If there is repetition in the hymn you could ask the congregation to join in. (For example, the Easter hymn "Christ the Lord is risen today" contains repeated Alleluias that sound even more dramatic, celebratory and meaningful if taken up responsively by the congregation. Another good example is the Singing the Faith Plus hymn "[God called you, Jesus, into Jordan's deep](#)", with its repeated line, "We'll walk with you".)
- You could split the congregation in half and ask one side to read the odd verses and the other the even verses. (You might even invite two sides of a congregation to turn towards each other, offering alternative verses of a hymn to each other as a gift or a blessing.)
- There are many ways of dividing up a hymn text between solo readers, groups and/or sections of the congregation, for example *Singing the Faith* (StF) 124:

Reader 1: For the fruits of all creation,

All: thanks be to God;

Reader 2: for the gifts to every nation,

All: thanks be to God;

Reader 3: for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping,

All: thanks be to God.

- If you're not used to leading worship, be aware that the 'Gathering in God's Presence' section of *Singing the Faith* is useful for choosing an opening hymn, and the 'Calling and Commissioning' section might help you choose the closing hymn.
- www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus is very useful for finding hymns that relate to themes, and there is a Bible reference index at the back of the music edition of the hymn book.

Reading hymns as prayers

Finally, it's worth spending some time, if you can, preparing how you will read your hymn-prayer.

Consider making an "I" hymn a "we" prayer, for example: "Show us how to stand for justice" (StF 713); "Breathe on us, Spirit of Jesus" (StF 371); "Forth in thy name, O Lord, we go" (StF 550).

One of the joys of reading a hymn without its tune is that it can refresh our experience of words that have become familiar to us. This is especially true if we read a phrase as whole, and don't simply pause at the end of each line of text. In many hymns, a single phrase or idea may flow through two or more lines. For example:

Hark! The herald-angels sing glory to the new-born King...

These two lines run as a single phrase, while the line break helps us find the right emphasis ("**Hark!** The herald-angels sing **glory** to the new-born King").

Or: *And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?*

Similarly (to take another Christmas carol):

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

By reading a hymn with care, and maybe adding more than voice, we can discover new meanings, and even find real drama in the unfolding words. For example, this particular carol ("O little town of Bethlehem") may become a whispered conversation between a group of wondering angels:

"How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!"

"So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven."

"No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him still the dear Christ enters in."

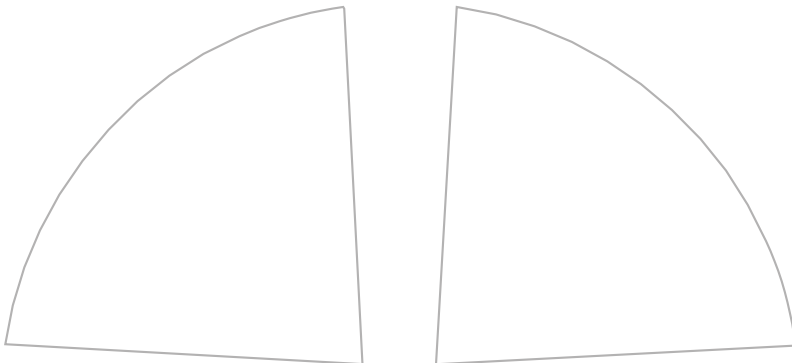
(You will notice that for the suggestions in this booklet, some hymns are listed with more than just their first line. This is because, as in the examples above, the first line only makes real sense when the rest of the phrase is included.)

More hymns on Singing the Faith Plus

Included in the suggestions here are texts published on Singing the Faith Plus. This website was created at the same time as the hymn book, and is designed to support and complement the printed book. Amongst other things, it publishes hymns written since the book's publication in 2011. Explore the New Hymns section – which is regularly updated – to discover other hymns as well as the ones suggested here. (www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/new-hymns)

You can also explore the Hymns as Prayer section, which looks in greater depth at some of the themes in this booklet, and how hymns can help us understand them better: www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/prayer-in-worship/hymns-as-prayer/.

We have denoted hymns from Singing the Faith Plus as **StF+**.

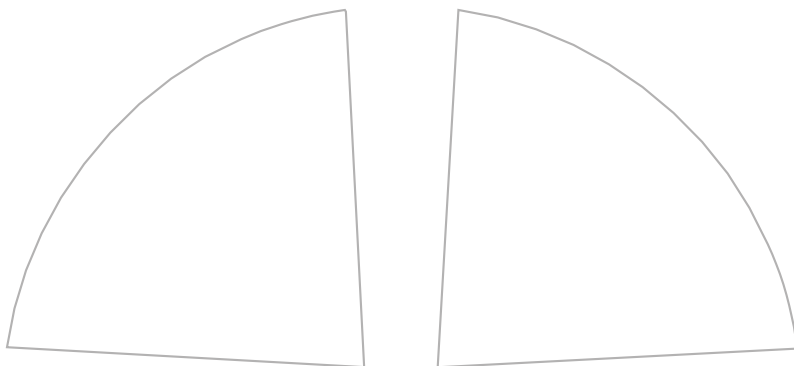


Vestry prayers

(For sharing with those who are to lead worship)

148	Come, let us with our Lord arise (verses 2 and 3)
374	Come, Holy Spirit (selected verses)
381	Holy Spirit, breath of heaven
407	Hear the call of the kingdom
408	How small a spark has lit a living fire!
418	We have a gospel to proclaim
667	O Watcher in the wilderness
749	Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open
830	I lift up my eyes to the hills (Psalm 121)

Also see: 'Gathering and focusing' (page 9)



Gathering and focusing

18	Be still and know that I am God (also see <i>StF</i> 19 and 20)
24	Come, now is the time to worship
25	God is here! As we his people meet to offer praise and prayer
28	Jesus calls us here to meet him
29	Jesus lead us to the Father
30	Jesus, stand among us at the meeting of our lives
36	There's a quiet understanding when we're gathered in the Spirit
37	You're calling us and so we're gathered here
76	Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising
380	Holy breath of God, find me in this place
385	Holy Spirit, we welcome you
389	Like the murmur of the dove's song
401	Come, sinners, to the gospel feast
676	Christ, from whom all blessings flow, perfecting the saints below
683	Great is our redeeming Lord (verse 1)
759	Come O Lord, give us your Spirit
StF+	Just as we are, your servants here
StF+	Light we now our candle's flame (<i>on lighting a candle</i>)
StF+	We cannot bear the full light of your glory
StF+	You call us out to praise you (verse 1)

(Morning)

444	Day by day, dear Lord, of thee three things I pray
659	As dawn awakes another day, the working sphere rolls into view

(Evening service)

144	Here are my thoughts, Lord, here is my mind
374	Come, Holy Spirit, descend on us
552	Here am I, Lord

Praising God

3	Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory
7	God, who made the stars of heaven
41	Blessèd be your name in the land that is plentiful
47	Faithful God, faithful God
51	Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father
52	He is exalted, the King is exalted on high
59	Lord, the light of your love is shining
60	My soul rejoices in God my Saviour
66	The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases
67	This, this is the God we adore
68	Worship God with the morning sunrise
82	O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works thy hand hath made
88	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation!
115	Praise ye the Lord! 'Tis good to raise our hearts and voices in his praise
181	Of the Father's love begotten
183	Praise to the God who clears the way
334	Praise to the Holiest in the height
345	And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?
346	Christ the world's light, Christ and none other
488	You showed us mercy when we were in darkness
608	All praise to our redeeming Lord
754	Glory, glory, glory in the highest
773	Praise the lover of Creation
778	Laudate Dominum (Praise the Lord, all you nations)

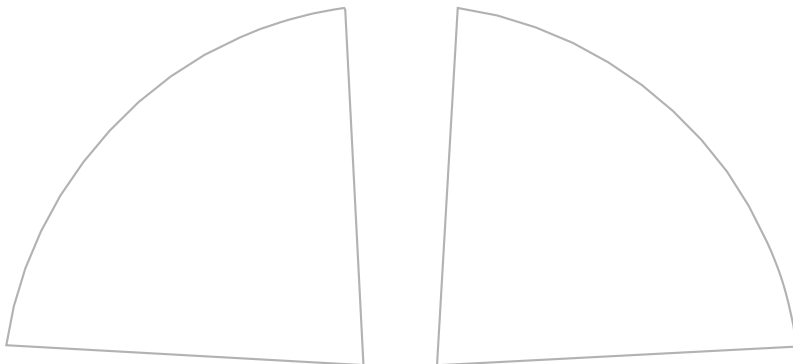
Also see: 'Advent and Christmas' (page 20); 'Lent and Easter' (page 21)

Giving thanks to God

78	Give thanks with a grateful heart
81	Now thank we all our God
114	Oh the life of the world is a joy and a treasure
355	Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly
468	I was on your mind long before you formed the earth
482	There is no moment of my life
515	Unless the Lord builds the house we labour in vain
524	Listening God, you hear us when we cannot speak
619	Thanks for friends who keep on loving
776	In the Lord I'll be ever thankful
StF+	Thank God for life – for all that is essential

(Particular celebrations)

119	God of Eve and God of Mary (<i>Mothering Sunday</i>)
124	For the fruits of all creation, thanks be to God (<i>Harvest</i>)
125	Praise and thanksgiving, Father, we offer (<i>Harvest</i>)



Prayers of confession

(Being honest with God)

233	When Jesus came to Jordan to be baptised by John
419	Almighty God, we come to make confession
421	Empty, broken, here I stand
422	Father, we have sinned in word, and deed, and thought
429	Lord, we turn to you for mercy
435	We come to you with no pretence
549	Come, let us use the grace divine
613	God, how can we forgive when bonds of love are torn?
727	God in his love for us lent us this planet (<i>Harvest</i>)
StF+	When our views are varied

(Praying for healing of mind and spirit)

498	God of all power, and truth, and grace
650	Heal us, Immanuel! Hear our prayer
651	Lord of life, we come to you
652	Lord, we come to ask your healing
655	We cannot measure how you heal
656	When the bonds of love are breaking
StF+	Jesus, you ask that we forgive
StF+	May this place be one of nurture

In difficult times

632 I've had questions without answers

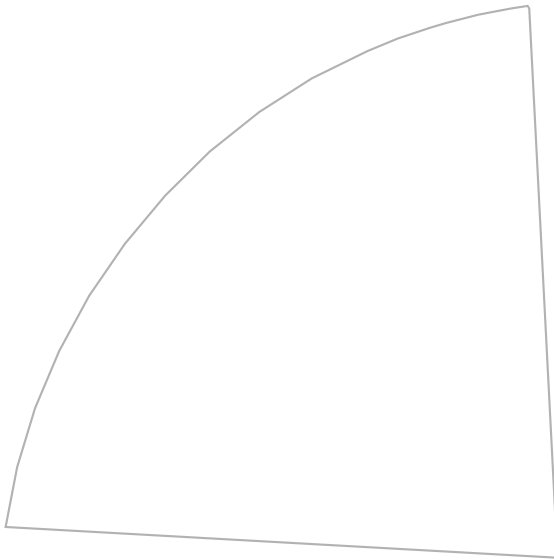
640 We turn to God when we are sorely pressed

641 When circumstances make my life too hard to understand

706 Longing for light, we wait in darkness

StF+ The world is fraught with danger

StF+ When our futures are uncertain



In times of grief and loss

(General)

StF+	God who knows our darkest moments
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(When a loved one doesn't remember)

621	When memory fades and recognition falters
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(When a person is dying)

622	When our caring love wears thin
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734	Going home, moving on
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(When a loved one has died)

616	Lord, in our lonely hours
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733	God, hold us, enfold us, through desolate loss
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737	Into the hands that blessed the children
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746	For all the saints who showed your love
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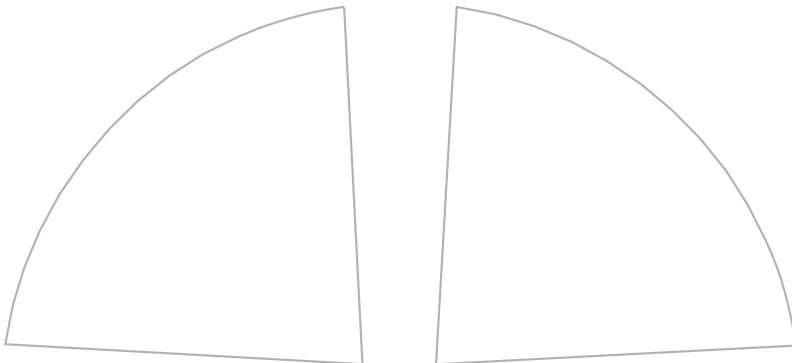
(When a baby has died, before or after their birth)

739	Through the rivers of our tears
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740	We cannot care for you the way we wanted
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Asking for God's help

4	Father in heaven
240	When we are tested and wrestle alone
325	Jesus Christ – Perfect Love
371	Breathe on me, Spirit of Jesus
380	Holy breath of God, find me in this place
383	Holy Spirit, gift bestower, breathe into our hearts today
395	Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me
410	Lord, your Church on earth is seeking your renewal from above (<i>for the Church</i>)
413	Send down the fire of your justice
466	Have faith in God, my heart
492	Christ be my leader by night as by day
511	Speak in the stillness, God we pray
513	Take this moment, sign, and space
518	Father, hear the prayer we offer
622	When our caring love wears thin (<i>caring for others</i>)
631	I lift my eyes up to the mountains
647	God grant us words to speak when words are all we bear
713	Show me how to stand for justice



Prayers for the world around us

109	In the darkness of the still night
183	Praise to the God who clears the way
245	Blest are they, the poor in spirit
399	When deep despair casts out all light
527	Pray for a world where every child finds welcome in a sheltered place
612	God give us life when all around spells death
618	Sacred the body God has created
687	One human family God has made
695	'Come, now, you blesséd, eat at my table'
698	God! As with silent hearts we bring to mind how hate and war diminish humankind
700	God weeps at love withheld
701	Heaven shall not wait for the poor to lose their patience
716	There are no strangers to God's love
718	We lay our broken world in sorrow at your feet
StF+	We pray for healing and for health
StF+	You call us out to praise you

(Particular occasions)

120	We gladly celebrate and praise [the gift of motherhood] (<i>Mothering Sunday</i>)
126	Praise God for the harvest of orchard and field (<i>Harvest</i>)
131	By a monument of marble (<i>Remembrance</i>)
721	What shall we pray for those who died (<i>Remembrance</i>)
727	God in his love for us lent us this planet (<i>Harvest</i>)
StF+	This fragile, passing beauty (<i>Remembrance</i>)

Walking with God

153	Break thou the bread of life, O Lord, to me (<i>before a Bible reading</i>)
163	When listening prophets dare to speak
239	Sent by the Lord am I; my hands are ready now
398	There's a spirit in the air
444	Day by day, dear Lord, of thee three things I pray
519	Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do
535	God, when I came into this life you called me by my name
566	Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee
611	Brother, sister, let me serve you
629	God of my faith, I offer you my doubt
643	When, O God, our faith is tested
665	Make us your prophets, Lord
667	O Watcher in the wilderness
670	We have nothing to give that didn't first come from your hand
672	Where can we find you, Lord Jesus our Master?
688	One is the body and one is the Head
702	I will speak out for those who have no voices
713	Show me how to stand for justice
722	When mountains that we thought secure lie crumbled where we stand
723	Who can sound the depths of sorrow in the Father heart of God
728	O God, you search me and you know me
764	We believe in God the Father
781	Take, oh take me as I am
StF+	Listen for God who speaks within our hearts (<i>before a Bible reading</i>)
StF+	"Lord, save us from the desert", is what we often pray
StF+	We'll walk with you (God called you, Jesus, into Jordan's deep)
StF+	You call us, as you called the Twelve
StF+	You call us to the wilderness

Closing prayers

7	God who made the stars of heaven
241	When we were in the darkest night, and wondered if our eyes would ever see the light (verse 2)
382	Holy Spirit, come, confirm us in the truth that Christ makes known
439	Abba, Father, let me be yours and yours alone
501	Help us, O Lord, to learn the truths your word imparts
547	Beyond these walls of worship
550	Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go
560	My eyes be open to your presence
649	God! When human bonds are broken
658	A charge to keep I have: a God to glorify
660	Called by Christ to be disciples every day in every place
662	Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?
685	In Christ there is no east or west
707	Make me a channel of your peace
717	We do not hope to ease our minds by simple answers
719	We pray for peace

(Evening services)

146	Now that evening falls
147	The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended

(Blessing / sending out)

610	Best of all is God is with us
681	Community of Christ, who make the Cross your own
769	All glory to the Father be
772	May the road rise up to meet you
774	The peace of the earth be with you
StF+	Be the light in my darkness (verse 3)

Prayers at Holy Communion

The Methodist Worship Book offers a range of liturgies for celebrating Holy Communion. Some may be used all year round; others are designed to be used during specific seasons of the year. All contain prayers, and places where prayers may be used – and the hymn book is a good place to find suitable words.

Singing the Faith contains a substantial ‘Holy Communion’ section (hymns 568 to 602). Here, and elsewhere in the hymn book, you can find hymns appropriate to the different stages of this special meal:

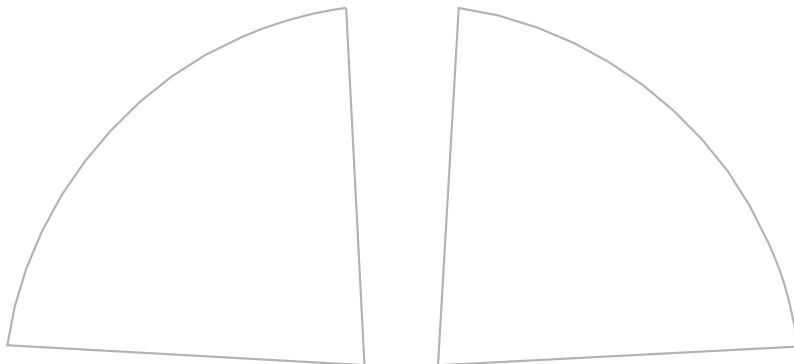
- Prayers of confession (eg “Before I take the body of my Lord”, *StF* 575)
- Before, during and after receiving the bread and wine (eg “Come, Lord, be our guest”, *StF* 580; “Now let us from this table rise”, *StF* 596)

Elsewhere, there are hymns appropriate to the Sharing of the Peace:

691	What shall our greeting be
712	Put peace into each other’s hands
774	The peace of the earth be with you

On the Singing the Faith Plus website, there are other communion hymns (eg “We gather round this table”), and a complete Prayer of Thanksgiving for the season of Pentecost, which draws upon a number of modern hymns:

www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/posts/a-pentecost-great-thanksgiving/



Advent and Christmas

(Praise and thanksgiving)

181	Of the Father's love begotten
183	Praise to the God who clears the way
201	Good news, good news to you we bring
202	Hark! The herald-angels sing
207	Jesus is the heart of Christmas

(For the world and God's help)

194	Child of joy and peace, born to every race
-----	--

("Light in darkness": candle lighting prayers)

174	Light a candle in a darkened place
176	Like a candle flame

(Prayerful meditations for Advent and Christmas)

169	Come, thou long-expected Jesus
188	There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring
189	Wild and lone the prophet's voice echoes through the desert still
190	Angels, from the realms of glory
205	It came upon the midnight clear
213	O little town of Bethlehem (<i>Christmas Eve</i>)
214	Once in royal David's city
215	See, amid the winter's snow
219	We see the eyes of Mary shine
222	Who would think that what was needed
225	Bethlehem, of noble cities
226	Birth brings a promise of new life awaking

Lent and Easter

(Praise and thanksgiving)

292	After darkness, light
298	Christ the Lord is risen today: Alleluia!
303	I know that my redeemer lives

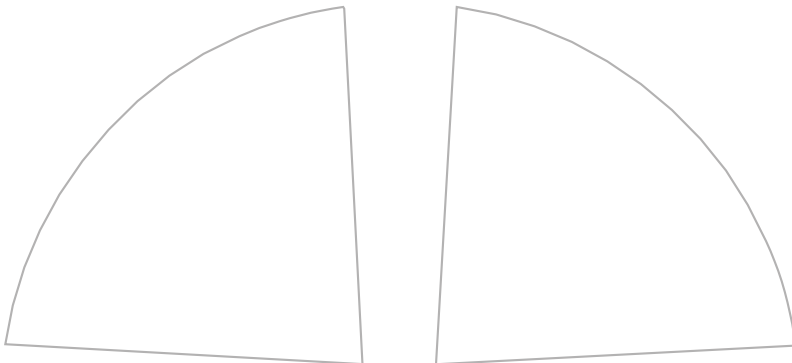
(Prayers of commitment)

272	From heaven you came, helpless babe
289	When my love for Christ grows weak

(Prayerful meditations for Lent and Easter)

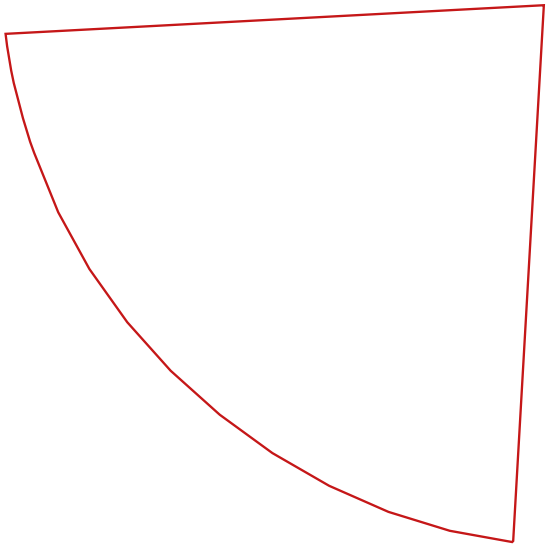
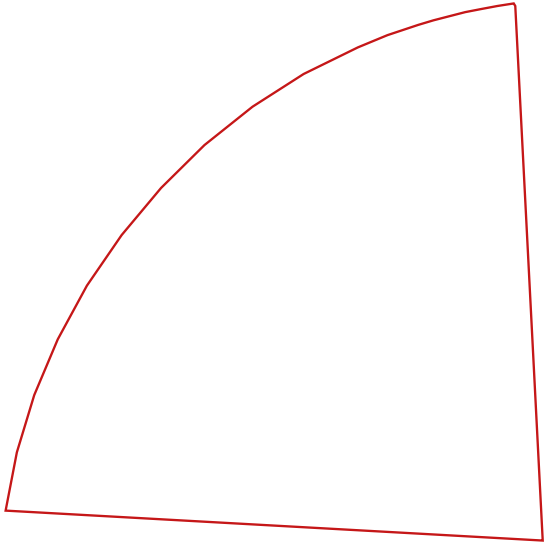
294	All you that seek the Lord who died
296	Christ has risen while earth slumbers
307	On the day of resurrection
308	On the journey to Emmaus with our hearts cold as stone
309	See, what a morning, gloriously light
312	The head that once was crowned with thorns

StF+ "Lord, save us from the desert", is what we often pray



Prayerful meditations

12	Morning glory, starlit sky
45	Earth's creator, everyday God (selected verses)
73	Fill thou my life, O Lord my God
101	Before the world began, one Word was there
108	In the beginning God played with the planets
110	In the wonder of creation
139	Today I awake and God is before me (<i>morning</i>)
158	Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders
162	The prophets' voice comes down the years
306	Now the green blade rises from the buried grain (<i>Easter</i>)
350	I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship, should set his love upon us
387	Into a world of dark, waste and disordered space
416	There's a wideness in God's mercy
436	What shall I do my God to love
437	When the music fades, all is stripped away
438	Your ceaseless, unexhausted love
510	Says Jesus, "Come and gather round"
644	When our confidence is shaken in beliefs we thought secure
675	Because the Saviour prayed that we be one
690	The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord





Singing the Faith can be ordered in a range of editions from www.methodistpublishing.org.uk

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