



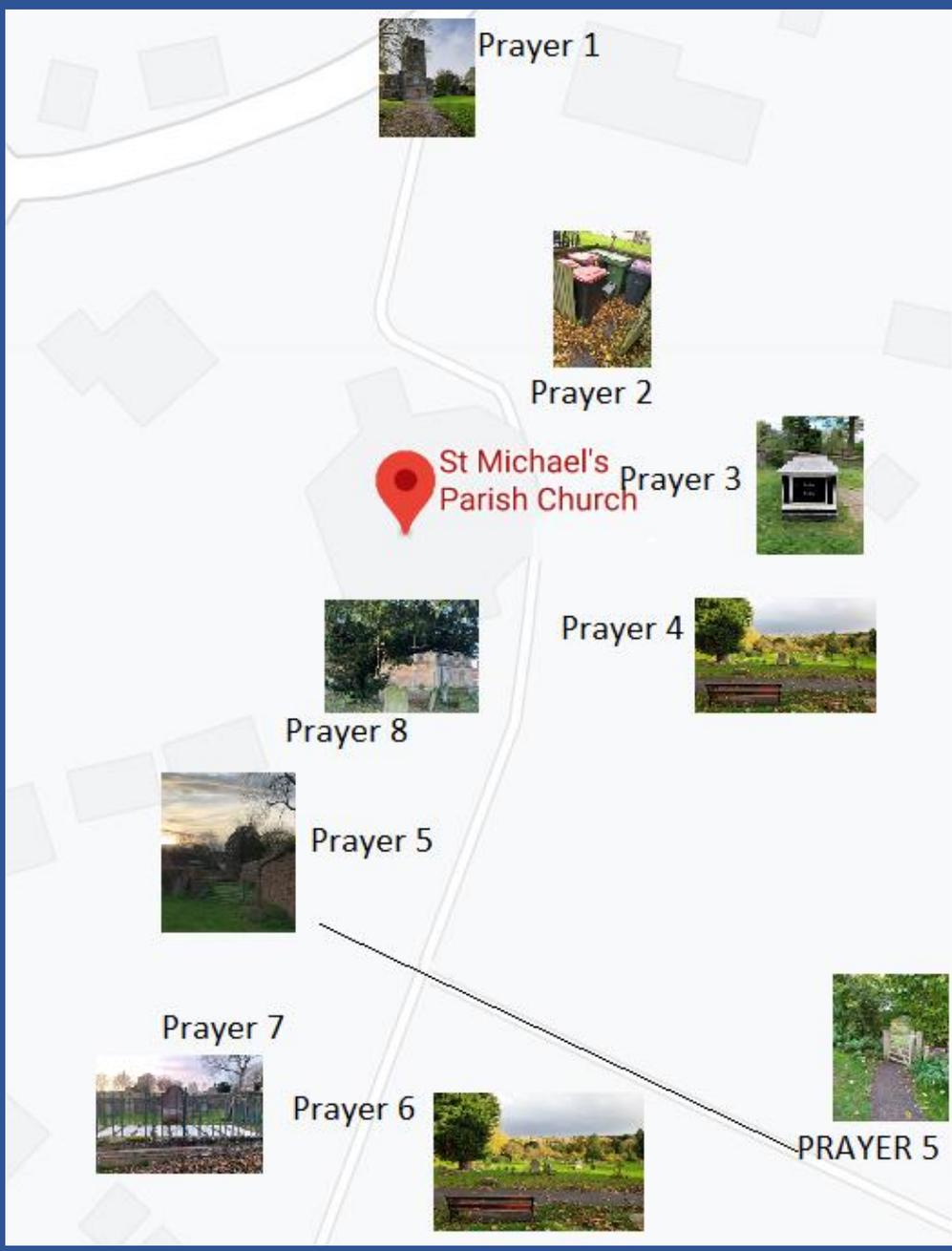
**st
Michael's
Madeley**

PRAYER WALK The Winter Season



Welcome to the St Michael's Churchyard. Whether you are walking the paths or watching virtually, we hope you will find the sights and sounds of this place, where Christians have worshiped together for over 1500 years, a blessing. An opportunity to give time to God, to meditate on his word and space to think of the past, present and future.

The prayer walk starts at the driveway to the church and finishes at the prayer tree. Below is an outline map, but please feel free to do the walk in any order, in one go or at times to suit you.



Prayer 1 – Enter Into His Gates

As you walk up the drive notice how you feel if the doors are closed. Through the doors and on the floor of our church tower there is a beautiful mosaic. Around the circle is verse 4 from Psalm 100: *'Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.'*



If you can go into the church then look at the floor, the altar, the stained-glass window.

But what happens when the doors are closed or for whatever reason we cannot freely enter our beautiful building? Do we stop being church, do we stop worshiping, do we stop praying? By no means. St Paul tells us in Ephesians:

'Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding on behalf of all the saints.'

Our church building is beautiful, but His gates are limited only by our imagination. As you stand outside of the church, marvel that worship in this place is older than any building that has ever stood here.

Prayer - As we come to you Lord Jesus help us to know your presence in all times and in all places. Help us to gather in Spirit to the praise of your name.

Prayer 2 – The World

Right from the beginning of time, God intended for people to care for the earth, Genesis 2:15 says: *'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.'*

We are to guard it and protect it; we are to be good stewards looking after it. Part of that means not misusing what we have been given, not leaving rubbish around for someone else to pick up. Each of us should take responsibility for the world that God has given us.

We have been given dominion over the earth but that doesn't mean that we should do to it anything we want or for any reason. Many areas of this beautiful world in which we live have been destroyed because of selfishness.

A psalm written by David, Psalm 24:1 says, *'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.'*

This is not our earth -it belongs to God and He will hold us responsible for how we care for it.

It seems appropriate that at the start of this prayer walk we consider how we care for this world both here and at our homes. Can we reuse items, recycle them or reduce what we do use? Prayerfully take time to consider your response.

Prayer 3 – Past, Present & Future

As you follow the path round the left of the church you see the tomb of John Fletcher, one of John Wesley's closest friends. Like Wesley he was devoted to spiritual renewal and revival that was the concern of the newly formed Methodist movement. John married Mary Bosanquet in 1781 and she was one of the first women in the Methodist movement to be authorised by Wesley to preach.

When her husband passed away in 1785, she remained and devoted her life to the people of the parish of Madeley. In one of her early letters to Wesley she says: *I want not only to walk in the way, but in the highway of holiness: so that every breath I draw, every word I speak, every drop of my blood, and every grain of my strength, may be holiness to the Lord. Yea, I*

want to be more abundantly nothing, and my Jesus to be all in all. I find many times nothing so helpful, as to cast my soul just as it is at the foot of the cross; forgetting all that is past both good and bad, and only pleading, 'Thou, Lord, must ordain my peace; for thou, Lord, hast wrought all my works in me.' I then love Jesus, and give up my will that moment, as if I had not one more to live.

And indeed she did, as on the tomb inscription it says of Mary: *she continued to tread the path in which he left her and ministered with ardent zeal.*

Why do we look to those who have gone before us? Why are we so interested in our past as we step into the future?

As we look around the world in which we live it is comforting to know that many have trod the path we tread. They had the same faith in our Lord Jesus as we do. That, we with them, recognise that our God is the same: past, present and future. We live and move in the same promises and, through the power of the Spirit, find our true home in Him who died for us. As you stand by the tomb let us remember and declare our faith in God:

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.
We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**



Prayer 4 – Change

As you spend time looking over the churchyard you will no doubt be aware of changes. Looking over towards the estate of Sutton Hill, perhaps you remember it being built and you will have witnessed the changes there. Pray for all who live in this area.

As you look around at the trees, many will have now shed their leaves as the autumn colours fade and winter comes. Look at the beauty of the branches and how they are silhouetted against the sky. Spend time praising God for the beauty of nature.

You will have seen changes in your own life to make you the person you are today. God isn't finished with you yet; spent time thanking God for changes in your life and for wisdom to know how to accept the inevitable changes that will come.

Prayer 5 – What Path to Choose

First go to the wide gate that leads to the triangle field.

How many of us look back on the choices we have made through life and wish that we had made different ones? Whatever choices we have made, these experiences have made us the people we are today. We cannot change what has gone before but we can choose how we look at that journey. If we choose to tackle the hard choices, we come to realise that Jesus will help us on the way.



In Matthew's gospel we hear Jesus giving his disciples a choice for the journey ahead.

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. *Matthew 7. 13-14*

Now walk downhill on the path towards the orchard gate.



Our life as a Christian is a choice, Jesus warns us that although the wide gate may be an easier path to take, it is the narrow gate that leads to life although challenging.

The picture you see shows a narrow gate leading into the community orchard where you can see the fruit trees. The trees have lost their leaves and appear dead unless you know, and have faith, that in the spring, new life will show in the green buds and, later in the year, fruit.

As we walk through winter, know that even in the dark, God gives gifts to his people. We have faith that even through the darkest times God is working in us and through us.

Prayer 6 – Rest Awhile

From the orchard come back up the hill and rest awhile on the white bench.

Sometimes we can feel as if the world is on our shoulders, that we don't know which way to turn. It can be like being in a fog where nothing is clear. At times like this we know we can turn to God, just as Moses did. The Lord promised Moses that He would go with him and give him rest. As you spend time with God now, listen to what he is saying, and what he is showing you.

As the mist clears, our prayer is that you will have found some rest and that the rainbow will be a sign of God's promise to you. As it says in Psalm 62 verse 1 'Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.'



Prayer 7 – Many Rooms

Further on up the path, move to the Nine Men of Madeley grave.

On the 7th September 1864, nine Madeley miners began their ascent to the surface of the pit at the end of their shift; they never made it to the top. There were 3 men responsible for the workings of the chain and these 3 men paid dearly for their mistake as they were on the chain when it became unhooked. The other 6 miners were all boys. They were each buried in the grave with a cast iron lid with their initials on it.

On the communal headstone of the grave are 2 bible verses:

⁶ I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

And

⁴² Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

When those people close to us die it can be unexpected. Even when someone has been ill for some time the end is still a shock.

As you look at the grave of the 9 men of Madeley, bring to mind those you have lost but do not do so with sadness. Give thanks to God for what they mean to you and remember the hope we all have in the eternal life that Jesus promises us:

¹ 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.' *John 14. 1-4*

Prayer 8 – In All Times & In All Places

As we come to the last prayer station our thoughts turn again to the mercy of God.

‘Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”’

Psalms 91

And with an assurance of that refuge we can turn outwards to the world and all of its challenges. As Christians we are called to prayer and in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us to:

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

Ephesians 6.18

As you look down the path to the yew tree, you can see bamboo circles hanging from the tree. If you go to the churchyard at any time, there will be additional circles for you to add to the ones there. The circles are the prayers of the saints for our world and everyone in it:

Jesus help us to be good stewards of your world

Jesus look with mercy on this world at this time of the pandemic and all who work to bring it under control

Jesus speak to this land and its people to turn to you and shelter under your wings

Jesus help us to speak out against injustice

Jesus helps us not to turn away from those in need and be active in helping

Jesus give comfort to those who need your healing touch in body, mind or spirit

Jesus bless us with your Holy Spirit

As you come to leave this place then pray unceasingly to our Father in heaven

Blessing

We hope that you have been able to meet with God on this prayer walk. As you continue your faith journey, we pray that you may know God’s blessing in your life, and the assurance that He loves you.

