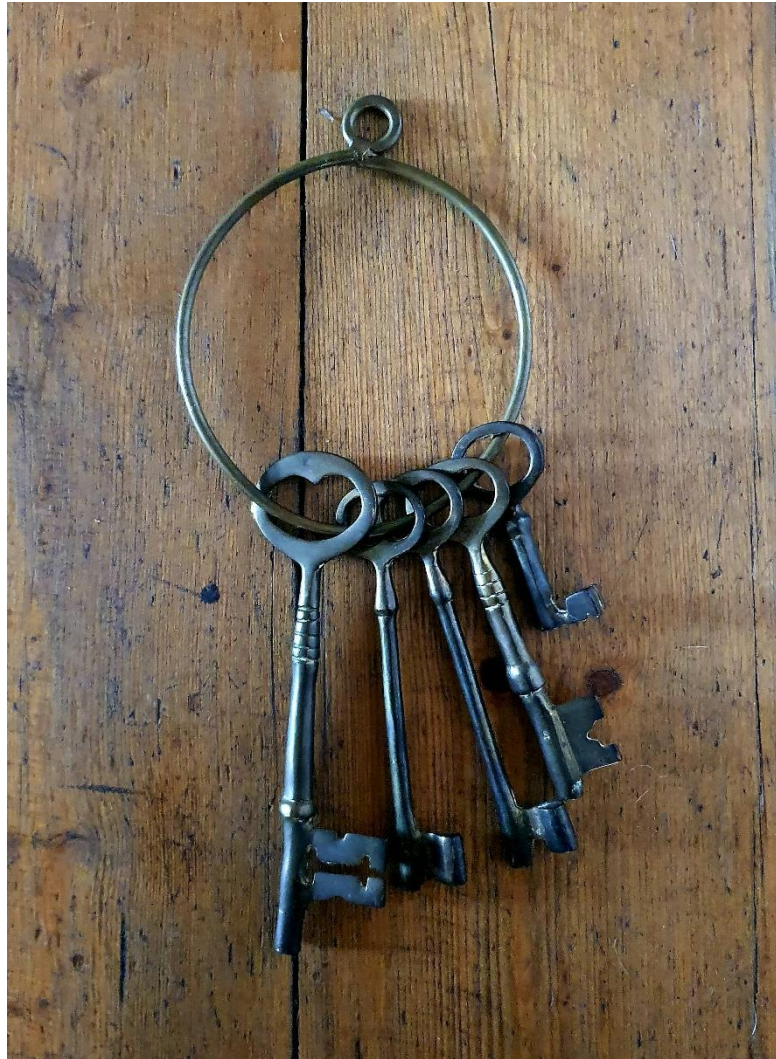


Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 28 June 2026

St. Peter & St. Paul

Welcome to this week's prayers and reflections. Today, we are celebrating the life and ministry of Sywell's two saints: Peter and Paul. Our theme is 'Keys' as we think about how Jesus unlocked their hearts and their lives, setting them free to be builders of his kingdom on earth. May our Lord unlock our hearts.

Every blessing,

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As you prepare to explore this image of keys who unlock hearts and souls, offer your praise to the one who calls us by name.



Thou art the Christ, O Lord,
the Son of God most high:
for ever be adored
that name in earth and sky,
in which, though mortal strength
may fail,
the saints of God at last prevail.

William Walsham How (1823-1897)

Prayers and Reflections
for use at home for St. Peter and St. Paul
Keys

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here, in your room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Enfold me with your love,
make my heart beat in time with yours;
in Jesus' name,
I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on this next verse from our hymn.

O surely he was blest
with blessedness unpriced,
who, taught of God, confessed
the Godhead in the Christ;
for of thy church, Lord, thou didst own
thy saint a true foundation-stone.

William Walsham How (1823-1897)



If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.

Feel our Lord's forgiveness.

Our verse invites us to look at how that very special moment in time – Simon Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God – changed the course of his life. Simon Peter is the only one of the Twelve who was able to give voice to this divine revelation. Was he the only one who recognised who Jesus is? Or was he the only one who had the courage to speak up?

God's people had been waiting for the Messiah for over five centuries. Can this carpenter's son from Galilee really be the one? In the Scriptures, God is one so how can he have a Son? Both parts of Peter's declaration were earthshattering. Enter into the moment immediately after Simon Peter speaks. Feel the deep yet fleeting silence as Peter's words linger in this thin space where heaven touches earth. Feel his words entering into the eleven's hearts and souls.

Simon Peter, the Galilean fisherman, was truly blessed by God's unlocking of these words within him. It is his moment of calling as Christ's to be leader of his Church. Yet, his blessing goes far beyond this, for his greatest blessing is knowing that his friend Jesus is God's Son.

Take a moment to ponder Peter's blessing.

*When you are ready, respond with this final verse from **As the deer pants**.*



*You're my Friend and you're my Brother,
even though you are a king,
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything.*

*Martin J. Nystrom (b. 1956)
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CCLI reported*

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to the God who calls us.

Almighty God,
whose blessed apostles Peter and Paul
glorified you in their death as in their life:
grant that your Church,
inspired by their teaching and example,
and made one by your Spirit,
may ever stand firm upon the one foundation,
Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

Amen.

Our Collect is for both of Sywell's patron saints – Peter and Paul, apostles called by Jesus to be leaders and builders of his early Church. Peter takes up his role in the days after our Lord's Ascension. What a transformation from the broken Simon of the three denials, who struggled to say sorry to the risen Jesus on the beach. It was our Lord's three-part forgiveness and re-calling that gave Peter the courage to shepherd our Lord's team.

Paul – as we know – first appears as a passionate enemy of our Lord's followers. When he met the ascended Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul was on the way to track down and capture members of the Church. When Paul's eyes were opened to who Jesus truly is – the Messiah, God's own Son – he became a passionate witness to his good news message.

Two leaders – two builders – two life-changing calls to come and serve, come and build Christ's Church. Two people of faith who were very aware of their own flaws and past failures, and of their need of our Lord's grace. Two inspiring role models.

How do their stories inspire you to live by our Lord's call on your life?



Thrice fallen, thrice restored,
the bitter lesson learnt,
that heart for thee, O Lord,
with triple ardour burnt.
The cross he took he laid not down
until he grasped the martyr's crown.

William Walsham How (1823-1897)

So much of what we have been taught about who Jesus is and how this should shape the way that we live comes from Paul's letters to the churches he planted across the Mediterranean. Without his deep desire to equip and encourage, cajole and challenge those churches, our faith, our bibles, would be missing these valuable God-unlocked insights.

Here is an extract from Paul's equivalent of Peter's 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' It inspired the hymn 'At the name of Jesus'.

In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
who, being in the very nature of God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

Philippians 2:5-7

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'

They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'

'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'

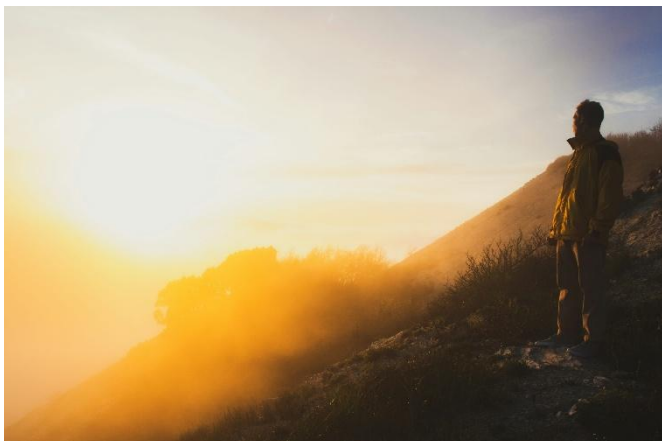
Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Matthew 16:13-19

The key who unlocks...

The word which stood out for me in this very familiar passage is keys. Keys unlock doors. Keys can let us in or set us free. In this passage, there is a 'visible' set of keys and an invisible one. Simon Peter is given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Not the keys to the pearly gates! He is going to be the Rock – the gatekeeper – who the others will look to in those early fragile days of the Church. He is the one who help them to shape the Church's rules, based on our Lord's teaching and the Spirit's guiding. It is a huge, huge responsibility and a difficult and dangerous one too.

Behind these visible keys – keys to open up the church so that it becomes a worldwide fellowship – is a vital invisible one: God's Spirit. It is God's Spirit who unlocks Simon's heart and soul and frees his voice to declare, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' God's bestowal of his very own key on Simon is why he is chosen by Jesus to be Peter, the Rock. The Holy Spirit is our key too. He opens our hearts to God's wondrous presence and possibilities, and his life-changing, life-enhancing calls on our own lives. Pause to accept again his keys. Keys to let in. Keys to free.



O bright triumphant faith,
O courage void of fears,
O love most strong in death,
O penitential tears!
By these, Lord, keep us lest we fall,
and make us go where thou shalt call.

William Walsham How (1823-1897)

OUR PRAYERS

Feel free to use one or more of these prayers and to add your own.

Lord Jesus, you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

You are my King. It is so amazing that you are my Friend and I am yours.

Accept, Lord, my love and my heartfelt praise. Lord, help me to...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, when you gave Simon a new name, Peter the Rock, you handed him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Your Church was born to live by your standards not the world's. Lord, help her to...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Lord Jesus, your churches are visible for all to see – as buildings, as church families who love and serve their communities, who unlock the hearts of those who are struggling. Lord, help us to...

Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

O God, you search me and you know me,

all my thoughts and feelings are open to your gaze,

you see the paths I will take before I take them. Guide my daily living.

Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**