

Sunday 19th July 2020

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, though separate let us worship together in God.

In oneness with creation, and in oneness as the people of God we are called to share together our joys and our sorrows and in the strength of Christ to share his love with all people.

We are individuals, from different places and with different needs.

We are God's people, with different skills and different ideas.

We are together, not because we must be but because we want to be.

Though separate, together we offer this time, together we offer our praise, together we share in word and prayer, together in God.

Suggested Hymn Light of the world

Prayer

Creator God, in the bustle of the day and the stillness of the night, we praise you; offering our hearts and minds in the presence of your awesome power. Mountain top and valley, hope and despair, you are always with us lifting us, tending us, loving us. You are the eternal God, the Holy God and we praise you. By your grace we gather in the name of Jesus and offer the words he taught us-
The Lord's prayer

Readings Genesis 28: 10-19a (suggested version the Message)
 Psalm 139:1-12, 23, 24

Reflective thoughts

In our story from Genesis we see the first reminders that God is present in everything, that we can encounter God in the most ordinary places and for us they become an extraordinary place. We expect to find God in majestic cathedrals but find him also in the majesty of a mountain with its many faces carved by nature, carved by God. Standing before an ocean with the timeless pattern of waves, and birds circling overhead we hear creation sing, God sing. Flowers with their intricate pattern of stamens and stigmas, petals and sepals, and fragrance attract insects to perpetuate the circle of life and fill us with wonder, fill us with the presence of God. As Psalm 139 reminds us all is holy.

The miracle of life, the creation of a human being, small and fragile, full of wonder, is holy. Every life is holy, every life is a part of God. Yet as we grow, how often do we lose that sense of wonder, caught up in the practicalities and pressures of everyday life we fail to stop and see that all is holy. We treat the world as a commodity, something for our use, rather than something which we are a part of and on which we depend.

When we forget that all is holy, we see enemies and retreat into solitude pretending we are apart from the holiness of all, somehow separate from the essence of creation, separate from each other and separate from God. We allow unimaginable atrocities, instead of reaching out in love because all is holy.

All is holy is mind-blowing in its magnitude and simplicity. All is holy means there are no barriers, there are no walls to keep us apart. Every man and woman are holy, every child is holy and every space is holy and filled with the presence of God, singing, dancing or simply resting in beautiful silence. Every candle is a reminder of God's presence, its light penetrating the darkness that is fear,

offering hope even in our darkest places. When we remember that all is holy then we tread more carefully and love more fully, we share more generously, and we fulfil our holy call to be one.

All is holy and all is God, and all will be well.

Suggested Hymn

Be still for the presence of the Lord

An invitation to explore

Jacob discovered God in a very ordinary place and that place became special. Do you have an unexpected special place where you found God? Think about that place, what makes it special, what about it revealed God? Are there similar places you might find a special moment with God?

Jacob was changed by his experience. How did your experience change you, or your approach to life? Have you noticed a similar change in anyone you know, have you ever asked them why they changed? Sometimes people do not know how to see God, and a lifechanging experience can be put down to co-incidence, luck or just chance, by talking about our experience with others we are inviting them to see their experience differently.

Psalm 139 reflects that God is everywhere and knows everything about us. Take a moment to consider how do you feel about that?

For some people this can be an intimidating thought, sometimes there are things we are not proud of and wish we could keep hidden. The idea that all is known in God is both liberating and frightening. We need to remember that God has created us, in God is free will and the God who loves unconditionally does not hold ill-advised choices against us but invites us to learn from the experience so that we can be more loving in future. Consider something you have learnt because of a mistake.

Life is a journey of discovery, we are continually changing and growing into what God means us to be. How have you changed, what do you know now that you did not know ten years ago? Has what you believe changed, how and why?

In Romans 8:24 & 25 Paul says, 'Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience'.

Consider, does having hope mean being open to change? If we believe this how might it change the way we view things?

A thought:

In the final episode of the third series of Dr Who with David Tennant as the Doctor, Catherine Tate, playing the Doctor's assistant, becomes the most important person in the world, indeed the Universe. She has inadvertently connected herself to the Doctor and now shares his memory and abilities and with this power is able to defeat the Daleks when the Doctor is incapacitated. However, this is not a state she can stay in and remain healthy so her memories of the event must be erased, in fact all her memories involving the Doctor must be erased. The Doctor delivers her back to her family and when she wakes she has no knowledge of ever having met him. It is a sad end to wonderful partnership. Talking to Donna's mother, the Doctor tells her how important Donna has been; her mother replies that she still is, she is her daughter. The interesting thing is that in all the episodes the involving Donna and her mum you would never have guessed that is how she felt. I wonder what difference it would have made if Donna had known how her mum really felt?

Do we tell our children how important they are or do we spend our time telling them what they cannot do, that they are too much of this and not enough of that; that they should be seen and not heard; do we tell them off in moments of great exuberance; do we encourage them to set aside their wildest dreams? Where is hope in that?

Perhaps if the church had encouraged and listened to those wild exuberant dreams of children and young people we wouldn't find ourselves childless now!

Perhaps if we told young people how important they are they would understand the value of a life to be lived and we would have less knife crime.

We are all important and we all have a role to play in building the Kingdom. God loves us and yet sometimes we struggle to believe that is possible. Lord help our unbelief and open our eyes to your amazing possibilities.

Prayers of concern and commitment based on Psalm 139 – Psalms for a quantum world
Eternal God, as we share together in prayer help us to understand our place in creation, to understand that our thoughts, words and actions make a difference, and you know our hopes and dreams and share our fears. The knowledge that we are connected in oneness and all we are and all we think and do is part of the collective consciousness is overwhelming, beyond our imagination for now, and yet when we trust in you we are empowered by the Spirit to become more fully human, and share fully in that oneness.

Help us to accept that there is no hiding in the knowing, no escaping, even though we can pretend this connection does not exist, deny its existence, and try to live apart. In love you are always with us and allow us the freedom to pretend or deny whilst still holding us and loving us.

We can know that Creation has formed each one of us; the atoms that give us form are a part of all that is, all that has been and all that will be. We share them with everything and everyone within this world and beyond. Everything and everyone are wonderfully and fearfully made, for all are in you, always have been and always will be, and everyone is important in the life of creation.

When we forget this, we allow fear to enter creation, fear of the unknown, fear of others, fear of the future. This fear is the opposite of love and destroys relationships but cannot break them for in you all are connected.

- We are concerned that fear is ruling our world and that our leaders are encouraging barriers instead of bridges.
- We are concerned that injustice is breeding fear and encouraging war whilst justice builds peace.
- We are concerned that greed is creating need when your creation is generous in provision, and greed is encouraging selfishness where your love encourages selflessness.
- We are concerned that a lack of self worth and leads to a loss of understanding of the value of life and is increasing violence where your love seeks harmony and respect.

It does not have to be this way.

In our prayers we remember those for whom life is a challenge, those trapped in the loneliness of poverty, illness, grief, and desperation. Those who are denied the opportunities we take for granted. This is not your kingdom.

Loving God, as people on the way of Jesus, we are committed to sharing all that we have with others, committed to making a difference through our words and actions, help us remember that we are not alone, that in our oneness we can discover the power of the Spirit and live differently. The way of Jesus is the way of your love.

A different way of living, a different way of seeing, a different way of being.

May we know your love and allow it to overcome our fear, so that your kingdom comes closer through our words and actions, and we allow our thoughts to be your thoughts in the reality that is oneness. To be is to be one. In Jesus name we offer these prayers. Amen

Our offering to God.

As we continue to worship apart but together, let us pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church by continuing to send our offering and exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know God's blessing on all we do. Amen

Hymn

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust;
what with care and toil is builded,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power
hour by hour
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom, passing thought;
splendour, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds
rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand;
joy doth wait
on his command.

Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all;
ye who follow
shall not fall.

ROBERT BRIDGES (1844-1930) altd.*

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.