

Prayers of intercession

Take some time to reflect on what God is calling you to notice this Lent.

Born from the renewing and life-giving water, we pray to you, creator God, for your world, which human hands have seized and scarred. Give us your eyes to see its beauty, your love to care and your courage to take action against what we have done to your planet.

Born from the cleansing and life-giving water, we pray to you, saving God, for your church which seeks to do your will but is diverted by our thoughts and agendas, not following your spirit working amongst us. Give us eyes to see your visions and beauty, your love to care and your courage to act.

Born from the life-giving waters, we pray to you, redeemer God, for all people, that we may work together for the good of all regardless of colour, creed, or conviction. We give thanks to all who give of themselves to help us: our key workers, doctors, nurses and care staff, family and friends.

We remember all those in education and retail, the neighbours and the stranger who help support and care for others. Give us your eyes to see the beauty of your people, your love to care and your courage to act.

Born from the healing waters, we pray to you, comforting God, for those who are distressed or discouraged. We pray to you, resurrection God, for those who are ill (add names) or those who now rest in glory, Give us your eyes to remember their beauty, your love to care and your courage to act.

We set aside our offering in thankfulness to God for all the gifts we enjoy.

Hymn: StF 378 / H&P 300 **Father of everlasting grace**

As we come to the end of our time of worship and reflection today let us come as one, wherever we are, and say the grace together:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and ever more. Amen

This worship sheet is based on a service prepared by Stuart Lawson, Local Preacher.

Darlington District Worship at Home Sunday 14th February 2021

Call to worship: Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is a success

StF 66 **The Steadfast love of the Lord never ceases** or
H&P 66 **Great is thy Faithfulness.**

Prayers

Light of light, Lord of Lords, God of this world and the next,
We give you thanks for the promise of this day and the season of Lent
We give you thanks for the challenge of this day and the season of Lent
We give you thanks for the blessings of this day and the season of Lent
Thank you, Lord God, for the opportunity of worship, for the freedom to be amongst your family however far apart we may be, meeting in our homes, but still in the warmth of your embrace and the love of our church family.

Thank you that in worship we can put aside, the uncertainties of this world and rest upon the certainties of the Kingdom, for your promises are not changeable but immovable and eternal.

Thank you that we can bring to your feet all the hurts and fears that trouble us, and leave them there, your strength and assurance are all we require.

Thank you that as we draw near to you in worship, we are transported from a world of concerns and fears and find a place where we can be at peace in your presence, find healing, wholeness, and refreshment.

Most merciful God, we humbly admit that we need your help.

We confess that we have wandered from your way: we have done wrong, and we have failed to do what is right. You alone can save us. Have mercy on us: wipe out our sins and teach us to forgive others.

Let us bring our confessions to God.

We ask that you bring forth in us the fruit of the Spirit that we may live as disciples of Christ. This we ask in the name of Jesus our Saviour as we pray together as we say the Lords prayer. **Our Father...**

Bible reading: [Ecclesiastes 3: 1 - 8](#)

This has been a year most people would like to forget about. We faced lockdowns, separation from family and friends, the loss of our freedom to do what we want when we want, and maybe joined the hunt the toilet roll game.

However, amongst all these negatives there are positives as well. Neighbours coming together, support for key workers; community spirit thriving, time talking to each other and way too much time making cakes – or was that just me?

Very often though we just look at the negatives, we dwell on the dark side of life, we try and put a dampener on the good stuff and just think about what we have lost and not what we have gained.

Helen Keller said, “when one door to happiness closes, we fail to see another door that has been opened for us, instead we only focus on the door that is closed, not at the possibilities and opportunities the new doorway gives us”.¹

Everything is possible through God who gives us strength, yet do we really rely on that strength or try and do it alone? In our Ecclesiastes reading the negatives are outweighed by the positives. The turning of crying to laughter, the war to peace, the hate to love. The tasks of turning negatives into positives may be difficult, but let’s not lose sight of the dreams of what we could have: possibilities of the new opportunities that changing our mindset could bring about. Everything is possible as God gives us unfailing love and the support we need to do his work and he will light the path that we go down.

Perhaps we are facing a different route in worship and in our church life, not the way we planned but in the way that is in God’s plan for us.

It isn’t easy to change our way of thinking or to change our worship style, our music, our structure our location. All these are for many of us a comfort blanket and we could feel it is being taken away from us. We may put barriers up, become gatekeepers, try and stop the changes. Perhaps we have our own agenda, we want our own way so we look on all the negative implications without giving the new a chance. Perhaps we are too busy thinking about ourselves rather than looking at the bigger picture.

Let us see instead what could happen if we focus on the positives of change, focus on the possibilities, focus on the new ways we can come together, focus on the hope that we have in getting the ultimate support from God to

build his church. A church not for yesterday, that’s gone, but instead the church for today and tomorrow and the day after and the day after that.

Jesus came to bring in a new order. Perhaps this is our time to build the church for tomorrow. To encompass technology, to look at the new ways of being church be it in a coffee shop or in a pub. The possibilities are endless, only limited by our reticence. We have to work together to help turn the darkness of people’s lives into light and to turn their sadness into joy, the negatives into positives. It is within our gift to do that if we choose so to do.

In the situation we are in it is not about waiting for the storm to pass it is about learning to dance in the rain, again looking at the positives rather than the negatives.

Let’s start to build from the foundations we have been given for the future. It’s a fantastic opportunity let’s not waste it. We may be scared, worried about what the future holds, but God said that he will be with us every step of the way as we journey on. He is the rock on which we can build, he is the solid foundation, the anchor in our sea of troubles, and with Him and through him everything is possible.

There is a song that went through my head when my wife was ill. A song two days older than grass called “Yield not to temptation”. The chorus says “Ask the saviour to help you, comfort, strengthen and keep you. He is willing to help you, he will carry you through.” (HR Palmer 1868) God will lead us through the darkness. God has already opened the door to possibilities and opportunities that lie ahead, and God will carry us through those. He can turn the crying into laughter, the silence into song. He will give us strength in the days that lie ahead.

We all have a part to play in looking to the positives, building on the solid rock of Christ. As disciples of the risen Christ we are people of hope in our communities. We too can help turn tears to laughter, give voice to those who are silent and shine the light of Christ in the darkest moments.

As we begin Lent let us make it a time to open our eyes to what God is doing and our ears to what God is asking of us at this time. Let us open our minds to respond courageously and our hearts to respond in love to God who first loved us.

¹ Helen Keller in her books *We Bereaved* in 1929 and again in *The Open Door* in 1957