

Coffee Shop Sunday

"Meeting God in an Ordinary Place"



Coffee Break

10 Prayers and *11* Reflections

...Summer 2020, during COVID-19

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. Romans 12:4-6

In June, the **Coffee Shop Sunday** Facebook Group produced a booklet *19 Prayers in Lockdown*, each with a one-word theme. As we write, 1071 copies of that booklet have been dispatched far and wide including four continents.

This second **Coffee Shop Sunday** publication includes 10 prayers with new one-word themes, each with a reflection and in addition an overall reflection on all the themes.

The writers live in many parts of the UK, and one lives in the United States. They bring to every one of these prayers and reflections, a wide and deep knowledge of the love of God.

The two booklets *10 Prayers and 11 Reflections* and *19 Prayers in Lockdown* are both available to anyone who may find them useful @ £2 per copy for up to 10 copies, £1.50 per copy if ordering more than 10. This includes postage and packaging. We ask that if you use the booklet, you credit **Coffee Shop Sunday** as the church that devised the project and drove the production of these booklets.

May God continue to bless your individual ministries and thank you for all you do in God's name.

Contact details for **Coffee Shop Sunday** are on the next page and we would love to receive your feedback.

The Editing Team

**Sue Fry, Trevor Gay, Alison Lawn,
Janine Patterson, Ruth Rowan**



August 2020

WHAT IS COFFEE SHOP SUNDAY?

- An expression of 'church' that is based in Costa Coffee, Gallagher Retail Park, Stoney Stanton Road, Coventry, CV6 5QL
- **Coffee Shop Sunday** is part of the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit
- We meet on alternate Sundays at 4.30pm until 5.45pm to enjoy contemporary worship that includes music, songs, talks, interviews, poetry, drama, interactive activities and prayer
- We have an active social media presence through our Facebook Group, Twitter Account, Instagram Account and Blog – see links below
- If you have any questions or comments, or would like to know more about **Coffee Shop Sunday** please contact us in whatever way you prefer

Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/2589604707787300

Twitter: www.twitter.com/coffeesunday1

Instagram: www.instagram.com/coffeeshopsunday1

Blog: www.coffeeshopsunday.blogspot.com

Coventry & Nuneaton Methodist Circuit: <https://www.covnunmethodist.org.uk/>

PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS

- | | | | |
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| 6 | Renewal | | |
| 7 | Boldness | | |

Prayer 1

LOVE

*Written by Janine Patterson, Ruth Rowan, Michelle Tanley,
Shirina Ibrahim, Sue Fry, Marilyn Slowe*

We are loved by you God and embrace your created identity today, by God's grace. We love everyone, family, friends and neighbours as a child of God.

Amazing, steadfast God, your love for us is beyond compare. We thank you, for always loving us in times of joy and times of sadness even when we have trouble seeing your love for our own sadness but your love for us never waivers, beautiful saviour.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." **John 3:16.** Loving Father, we cannot thank you enough for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, whose example we must all try to follow in loving one another.

The Lord loves us no matter who we are, what we are, where we are, what we do. We are not alone and our Lord will see us through this traumatic time as we show love to one another, the Lord is with us.

He loves me because He loves me; we thank you Lord God that we do not need to do anything to get you to love us. You love us because you are love; help us to receive that love.

Loving God, you love all that you have created and love them to eternity. May we all know, experience, share and be generous with this love that you so freely give us; help us to be bearers and love givers for your name sake.

Amen



Reflection 1

Love

written by Sue Fry

He Loves Me Because He Loves Me

God's love is amazing. There is no rhyme or reason as to why He loves us, but He does, He even died for us, and there is nothing we can do to make Him love us any more than He already does.

Years ago, in my first diaconal appointment, I went through a very difficult time and lost my confidence completely. I felt unlovable and found it hard to believe that even God could love me. One wise friend told me to keep reminding myself that He loves me because He loves me. My situation did not change for a long time but, gradually, that often-repeated truth sank into my mind and I knew for certain that I am loved by God, and eventually by others, too.

During lockdown, many people have struggled with their mental health and some people I have spoken to have been unsure that they are lovable. The Gospel message of God's unconditional love is needed by everyone and we have the responsibility to share it.

In **1 John 4** we read, "This is the kind of love we are talking about - not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.... My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other."

He loves me because He loves me, and others need to know it too through our love.



Prayer 2

KINSHIP

*Written by Eileen Clarkson, Joy Welford, Marilyn Slowe,
Judith Mudzamiri, Jonathan Coles, Trevor Gay*

Dear Lord, we have come to meet you as a family drawn together in prayer. We ask that you bless our continuing relationships in **Coffee Shop Sunday**.

Almighty God thank you for being our Loving Father and for accepting us as your children. Jesus our Saviour, Lord and Brother we praise your name.

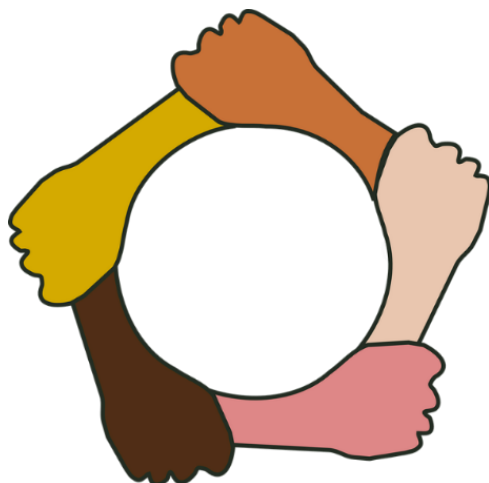
We are all your creation; we see your love within all humankind recognising you best in Jesus our friend and guide. We are joined in a loving embrace which encircles us, underpins us and upholds us.

Loving God we are thankful that you can call us your children and we can call you Father. Unite and enfold us in your kind care and keeping till our work is done and the shadows fall.

Mwari mupi veupenyu, imi mufudzi vakanaka. Tinotenda nerudo rwenyu rwekutipa mwanakomana venyu Jesu Kristu, uyo akava diramhamba rwezvitadzo zvedu kuti ukama hwedu nemi husimbaradzwe.*

As we reflect on the journey we have travelled thus far, we praise you Father for bringing us together. We thank you for the kinship that has developed amongst us and pray that our pioneering ministry will continue to grow.

Amen



** Shona translation
towards back of
booklet*

Reflection 2

Kinship

written by Jonathan Coles

Galatians 6:10

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

When I thought about themes for prayers, I wanted to think about something challenging but I also thought about what sums up **Coffee Shop Sunday**.

I then realised that we had become a family in prayer, and we have that kinship as a group of Christians brought together through new technologies. A group born in Coventry that spread throughout the UK and now worldwide.

Through the boldness and vision of one person, a search for an office became the pioneering ministry in Costa Coffee. Then when the country went into crisis and lockdown, the spirit moved and ministry went online. Just as the spirit moved Trevor and Annie, the spirit moved others. God showed his humour as he sent people to Coventry. Not literally, but in mission. A mission to keep our Christian communities together in fellowship, worship and most importantly though prayer.

As families we can tear each other apart or let challenging times become one of negativity. But when families come together, they can overcome difficult times.

After World War Two, a kindred spirit helped rebuild Coventry, physically and mentally. From dust there was breathed new life. **Coffee Shop Sunday**'s family has grown and spread its wings. Just as our father reaches out with his hands to comfort us.

As a family built on the solid foundations of our faith and through prayer, we remember that we are all God's family. We have seen plenty of disagreements on Social Media, but the **Coffee Shop Sunday** family has shown that apart we are still be joined together.

By praying ceaselessly, we can bring comfort to others. As I write this, we are facing difficult decisions in the communities we worship. We don't know when or if we will be able to have the old normal or will it be new normal. Let us prayerfully consider the needs of others and there is so much need. If we follow the lead of **Coffee Shop Sunday** and really become a church of mission, with real kinship, then we will see a real growth in the numbers entering the kingdom.

I end with these wise words from Paul's to the Church at Colossae:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. **Colossians 3:12-17***

Amen

Prayer 3

TOGETHERNESS

Written by Jackie Moreton, Ruth Thomason, Gina Bright-Garbari, Katrina Clifford, Maria Morris, Janine Patterson

Lord, often at this time we've had to be physically alone. Help us to feel your presence, to know you are with us, we are always together so never lonely.

Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe in his loving care. For this Lord we thank you and may our togetherness shine through our lives, bringing others to you.

Lord we stand on your words in **Matthew 18:20** and ask that you will always be in our midst wherever we are gathered either on Zoom, Facebook or **Coffee Shop Sunday**, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Lord, you can be everywhere that we can't. May the sense of togetherness in you sustain people who feel alone.

Together as a child of God as one family through Facebook in **Coffee Shop Sunday** online. We are together as a community praying and worshipping online.

We thank you Lord that you reach out to each one of us with your love whoever we may be and whatever we have done. We are in togetherness with you so let us reach out to others with your never-ending love and we pray they will come to know you.

Amen



Reflection 3

Togetherness

written by Joy Welford

Togetherness is a gift, a symbol in our lives of the relationship God wants to have with us.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought home what it's like to be separated; to lose the ability to touch those we love. We are aware of the damage caused when we separate ourselves from the love and support of others. Life feels wrong: something seems broken, abnormal, distressing.

But God is ever present within each of us and it may be helpful to think of this in a very direct way each time we breathe. It is God who gives us the first breath and it is to him our last breath ascends. This gift of life runs through us and joins us with our creator in a loving and unbreakable bond from birth to death.

Individual and independent though we may be, we need to feel the life of Christ present within us and joining us together. We become whole, complete, healed. Christ is our unity, our togetherness. Christ is ever present and visible in the faces of everyone we meet. We must not forget too each time we look in the mirror to look for Christ in ourselves, for we too reflect his love and are bound to all humanity by it.

We forget this at our peril and Mother Teresa puts it well...

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."



Prayer 4

JOY

Written by Kathleen Knowles, Christine Cumber, Alison Lawn, Amanda Milner, Eileen Clarkson, Valerie Gadsby

Jesus

Others

You

We know you as our friend and SAVIOUR and the joy that brings us. We pray that through this present crisis we will still endeavour to bring others to know you as THEIR friend and SAVIOUR too.

Give us joy in our hearts Lord and keep us praising you, in spite of the difficult times in which we are living. Help us to share our joy with all that we meet in your precious name.

Lord, your life-giving joy reaches out through your Holy Spirit, bringing contentment in our hearts. Let us radiate that joyousness even in testing times.

Lord let us truly worship you with joyful hearts and keep us praising 'til break of day. Equip us Lord with joy that radiates from us to everyone we come into contact with.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Help us to always praise you Lord, and to remember even at difficult times we can praise you in a minor key.



Whether it's the joy of a new baby, a comfy bed, a beautiful flower or a good meal, the joy is much greater with God by your side. Praise him with alleluias.

Amen

Reflection 4

Joy

written by Eileen Clarkson

Joy is the smile of the heart.

Whenever I think of Joy, I am reminded of Nehemiah when he wrote *“The Joy of the Lord is your Strength”* **Nehemiah 8:10**. When I have felt a bit low, depressed, anxious, or worried, wondering how I will cope, I have remembered these words.

Whatever situation we find ourselves in, the Lord will give us His strength and He will be our joy. We might not be shouting from the mountain tops, but we can still be praising God in a minor key.

There is a difference between Happiness and Joy. Happiness depends on the circumstances or the happenings around us. It can change from one moment to another. Whereas Joy is a much stronger emotion and when we know the Joy of the Lord, it is an inner joy that we can have, even amidst the worst of times.



Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, says St Paul, and therefore has to grow within us.

Paul did not have an easy life once he had become a Christian, yet he was still able to praise God at all times. When he and Silas were in prison, what did they do? They decided to sing, praising God. The two of them focused on what they believed and not on what they could see.

As we rejoice in all circumstances, praising God for who He is and for what He has done for us, we grow closer to Him, and His Joy will then flow from us to those around.

Have you heard the saying, “Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass, it’s about learning to dance and splash in the rain”? We can choose to rejoice, and when we know God as Father and Jesus as Friend, we can have the Joy of the Holy Spirit as our strength.



Splashing in the rain

*Photo by Rachel Lacy
with permission*

Prayer 5

SILENCE

Written by Janine Patterson, Sue Fry, Eileen Clarkson, Ruth Thomason, Christine Cumber, Jonathan Coles, Heather Bowery, Bruce Collyer

Agus mé I mo thost go hiomlán ag éisteacht lena bhfuil ráite ag Dia ag freagairt mo chuid paidreacha, cuireann sé I gcuimhne dom gur Leanbh Dé mé. Is breá liom fiú agus mé faoi ghlas nuair nach bhfuil anaithnid ag tarlú ar domhan faigh am ciúin chun guí machnamh a dhéanamh.*

Loving God, silence is, for some, a gift to be treasured as a place to meet with you in a special way while for others it is threatening, scary and to be avoided. Grant them your peace and all people a deeper sense of your loving, sustaining presence.

Loving God in the silence all around, the grandfather clock continues its gentle rhythmic 'tick-tock', time does not stand still. In a world of silence your heart continues to beat, a heart of love and compassion, you are never silent.

Breathe on me breath of God and in the silence may your voice be heard. Help us to discern what you are saying.

Lord in our busy world help us to be still and know that you are God. Teach us to listen in silence to your voice and learn to do your will.

Silence 'speaks' volumes as in silence we can be closer to you. Hear our prayer and help us to come closer to your presence by removing all distractions from our ears and eyes.

Lord, so many thoughts crowd out the quietness I would spend with you. Embrace them all, gathering each one together into your silence.

In your silent prayers, remember all those that have passed away through COVID-19, pray especially for the families of those suffering in silence. Please reach out with your loving hand and heart and let the word of God guide them all.

Amen

** Irish translation
towards back of
booklet*

Reflection 5

Silence

written by Heather Bowery

Imagine a symphony orchestra. The music reverberates through your body as the sound gets even louder. A long, deep drum roll... and then silence. The audience hardly dares to breathe. As the silence becomes so loud it is almost unbearable... a single flute plays a simple liquid tune... We are entranced.

Silence matters to musicians. And we need it too.

Our smoke alarm is faulty. Maybe it needs a new battery but it's high up and needs a good head for heights to reach it. Every minute or so it emits a single loud beep. In truth, we have got used to it. During the day we don't consciously hear it.

Sometimes I have trouble sleeping. Once I wake in the wee hours, I can struggle to get back to sleep. Outside a cat jumps onto the fence and it creaks. Claws rattle on the wood. The owls call to each other in the darkness. Further away a fox barks. And the smoke alarm beeps... every 49 seconds or so... relentlessly... The thing that I just don't notice in the day becomes so loud at night that it keeps me awake.

The boy Samuel was kept busy during the day. He worked in the temple, at the beck and call of Eli. *"In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions ... Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord ..."* **1 Samuel 3:1, 7**

It was not in daytime business but in the dark silence of night that Samuel first heard God speak to him. He didn't even understand that it was God at first.

We too easily become busy with everything we have to do that we fail to hear God speaking. Silence matters. *"Be still, and know..."*

Psalms 46:10

Prayer 6 RENEWAL

*Written by Katrina Clifford, Bruce Collyer, Christine Cumber,
Jonathan Coles, Sue Fry, Judith Mudzamiri*



Lord, you make all things new. Help to be patient when we can't see change and trust that you may have only just planted a seed.

Lord in your precious name remembering the parable of the mustard seed, renew and fill our hearts with joy and love at this difficult time for many of us, in your precious name we pray always to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

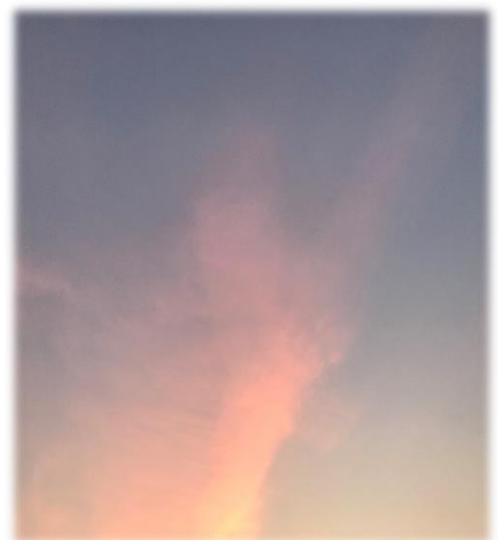
Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us!
Break us, melt us, mould us, fill us.

Let us use this opportunity of lockdown to rebuild our faith and our church. Let us remember our covenant with you and our commitment to spreading your word by reaching out.

Pour out your Spirit on this nation and your whole world that we might have a renewed longing for you and for your ways. Transform and renew us Lord so that we can be channels for your Spirit wherever we go.

Lord Almighty God, Alpha and Omega, renew us, to be the people you want us to be. Through you Lord, all things are possible.

Amen



Reflection 6

Renewal

written by Alison Lawn

It's sunny, but there is a refreshing breeze in the park today at 6.00pm on 20th July. Pausing on a memoriam bench, overlooking the wide green, I notice the branches of a sapling form the shape of a cross.

I have walked this route frequently during COVID-19, on stormy days in a raincoat, and when the sun has been so warm, I have sought shelter under a huge old oak.

I have ambled these paths at 7.00am and at all times of the day until the light fades. I have watched the green shoots of spring emerge from lockdown, bluebells leading into this community space, blossom fallen like pale pink crumpled confetti onto the footpath.

Today, the ruby, coral and fragrant lemon roses bloom in the rose garden and a wooden bench has been newly painted as a rainbow, slats of colour making the arc.

Many people of differing ages tentatively escaping lockdown. There is a distant hum of traffic and runners divert to the new trail that has emerged as people move onto grass beside the path in order to social distance. Everyone is exercising or resting, enjoying the warmth of this season.



I am reminded that the storms of the pandemic will pass and there will be sunny days ahead.

As I linger in this beautiful place, I realise the renewal of the seasons, the cycle of life, and that God has been renewing my relationship with Him.

I have stepped out, my soul has been renewed in God's strength.

I must continue on my journey and appreciate God's renewing spirit.

Amen

Postscript to Renewal reflection ...

I picked up my pen as thoughts on renewal came to my mind. A lady stopped with her dog and asked what I was writing. I said "a reflection for a coffee shop church". After listening, the nurse told how folk had become friendlier during COVID-19 and how she too had often walked here in-between shifts at the hospital. She shared her eye-opening experience of life and renewal during the pandemic.



Rainbow sunrise

Prayer 7

BOLDNESS

Written by Joy Welford, Christine Cumber, Janine Patterson, Eileen Clarkson, Marilyn Slowe, Doreen Koffee-Williams

In my desire to serve I would be bold, be prepared to use your name and do your will. May I do so gently, lovingly, inclusively, ready to uplift and not to condemn.



Lord we come boldly to your throne of grace. Give us the courage to speak the truth and to share your gospel wherever we go.

Agus Dia á ligean isteach I mo shaol go dána trí urnaí, adhradh agus comhaltacht nuair a dhún mé na hEaglaisí go léir ní raibh an saol mar a bhí gnáth. Bíodh misneach agat do ghnáthchineál nua trí amanna crua COVID-19 agus cailteanas.*

Be bold be strong for the Lord your God is with you. Loving God we can do nothing without you, and yet with you ALL things are possible.

Faithful God, we approach your throne of grace and mercy with boldness of the Holy Spirit so empower us at such a time as this to use the same boldness in the face of injustice, adversity and sickness; to seek change, transformation, healing and restoration. We are thankful that you come to us, listening to us, renewing and enabling us to be resurrection people of boldness, grace and forgiveness.

Almighty God lead your children and the Church to boldly dance to the flute of Jesus' tune in service and worship so that others may see Jesus Christ through us. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen



** Irish translation
towards back of
booklet*

Reflection 7

Boldness

written by Trevor Gay

Acts 4:31

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.



In my management career I was always taught that we need a strategy. A plan is essential. I have discovered that Jesus does not work that way in my life. I visited Gallagher Retail Park, Coventry in late Summer 2019 with the Methodist Superintendent. We were looking at retail units as an option for a Circuit office and worship space. The vacant units were too expensive to consider. I noticed a Costa Coffee Shop, so we walked over for a coffee and chat about options. As we sat in Costa drinking coffee, I suggested it would be amazing to have worship in this space. I spoke to the Manager of Costa who loved the idea and within three months **Coffee Shop Sunday** was born with our first gathering on 1st December 2019. We had 22 people in attendance which was great. By the time Lockdown arrived in March 2020 we had 57 people attending. During lockdown **Coffee Shop Sunday** has grown stronger with 269 members in our Facebook Group – an increase of 197 members in five months.

Jesus was with me in Costa, gently nudging and encouraging me to be bold. In my life, doors that appear closed are sometimes not; the door is often ajar. We need to be bold and just try pushing at the door.

We just need to “*speak the word of God with boldness*” and we will be amazed what Jesus delivers. What do we have to lose? Do not plan in so much detail that you miss opportunities – God’s timing is perfect.



BE BOLD for Jesus.

Prayer 8

INCLUSIVENESS

*Written by Jean Newland, Caroline White, Pamela Coles,
Christine Cumber, Esther Green, Jonathan Coles*

We are all different but the same. God made us black, white, yellow and blue. We are all God's children and should include everyone in our prayers for an inclusive society.

Father God you made us all so wonderfully and perfectly unique. I am proud to be a part of you and part of the beautiful picture you have created. Just like a jigsaw each piece is individual and uniquely formed. Some struggle to connect, some look as though they should not fit anywhere but they all complete the wonderful image that you God have on that box lid.

We are created in your image, which means that each of us is just like you, whatever colour, gender, ability or disability. And in that knowledge, we know that you understand and feel any suffering we may encounter. We pray that our fellow humans will embrace the same understanding and treat us as they would like to be treated.

Lord help us to treat all our fellow humans with the same respect regardless of their race, culture, religion, or abilities. We are all your children and made in your image.

We pray that our hearts will deepen with understanding of what it truly means being inclusive, no matter what gender, orientation, disability, race, colour, or beliefs. Thank you for your amazing mercy, faithfulness, grace and love, that we can live as one as you are one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Lord you made us in your own image, all unique and all loved by you. Your disciples made it clear all are welcome, help us to make sure that inclusiveness continues today and forever in your kingdom.

Amen

Reflection 8

Inclusiveness

written by Marilyn Slowe

When Jesus prayed for his disciples in **John 17**, He prayed that all will be One as He and the Father are one. I want to suggest that Jesus knew we can destroy and or frustrate each other's being by not being inclusive. To be inclusive is a mandate from Christ as to how we can be good disciples. Seeing Christ in 'The Other' who might not look, speak, dress, think or even understand you; yet you stop and seize the moment to be alongside. Like in the parable of the Good Samaritan **Luke 10:25-37**.

Believers should challenge racism, stereotype, subversive prejudices and all other ISMS there are because God weeps when we withhold love. We should all develop critical and reasoned assessment of ourselves and an awareness that everyone brings something to the table if only we are outward looking. Central to our faith is the affirmation of the dignity of life in which we all participate. Hence no one should be 'written-off' instead all should be included.

By being inclusive the strong can support the weak and we can hold each other so we all can climb whatever mountain that stands before us. This is what Africans call UBUNTU, it means 'I am because we are'. We are all made in the diverse image of God. Our God is a God of inclusion and love us all the same.



Prayer 9

CHANGE

*Written by Eileen Clarkson, Janine Patterson, Trevor Gay,
Amanda Milner, Valerie Gadsby, Jean Newland*

Loving God, change can be difficult and challenging at times. Help us to trust you when we face changes and look beyond the caterpillar and see the beautiful butterfly.

Loving Father, over lockdown there has been a lot of changes in our life some good and others not so good. We all know God is there through them all to help support us as a child of his.

Though we may struggle to accept change, we know that Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever. When we welcome Jesus into our life, we become a new creation, the old has passed away and the new has come.

Lord, change is never welcomed but we ask that you help us to embrace the change that faces us as we try to move forward after COVID-19. Lord we ask that you walk with us through every changing scene to make this World a better place and us a God centred Nation.

Change affects people in different ways, what is good for one may not be the same for all. Let us embrace change with patience viewing it as part of God's glorious plan.

Lord change us into the people you would like us to be. Because we would like to grow more like you day by day.

Amen



Reflection 9

Change

written by Ruth Thomason

One of the most difficult things for human beings to do is to *change*. The arrival of COVID-19 has challenged us to make a fresh start, change how we care for the world and for each other but how can we do this?

In his Christmas day broadcast in 1939 (World War II had started on 1st September) King George VI, pondering on what may lie ahead, made the following speech:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God that shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way!"

We too ponder what changes may come but where better to look for guidance than in God's word

Jeremiah 29:11-12 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."*

The result of real change is found described in Galatians: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law"* **Galatians 5:22-23**. The blame game has no part in these Godly fruits.

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

In the words of the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr,

*"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and **wisdom to know the difference.**"*



Prayer 10

KINDNESS

*Written by Sue Fry, Jonathan Coles, Christine Cumber,
Ruth Rowan, Marilyn Slowe, Sharon Longman*

Loving God, kindness is needed so much in our world. Help us to respond to all people with the kindness you show us and to be kind to ourselves.

Lord help us to capture the kindness that has been shown by others in this period. Give us the power to make that Christian kindness become the new normal in our society.

Lord help us to be kind even to those people who are unkind to us. Help us to show a Christian example to others especially our young people, in Jesus name.

Lord your kindness is beyond our understanding, you give without receiving and you teach us to follow in your footsteps. Give us your guidance to spread kindness everywhere we go in your name.



Generous God bless us with kindness so that we can share this fruit of the spirit generously with others as you bless us to be a blessing. Make us reservoirs of kindness that are replenished as they give so that your name be praised with thanksgiving.

Kindness is choosing love over hate, light over darkness, compassion over judgement. Help us Lord to show your love in dark places and to accept our neighbours for who they are.

Amen

Reflection 10

Kindness

written by Janine Patterson

K - Kindness of strangers.

I - Isolation of being alone in lockdown but we have enjoyed fellowship. Someone always available on the phone, by text and online when needing someone to talk to.

N - New normal as Church doors may be closed for a while but now changed to Online, Emails, Zoom and Facebook.

D - Different times away from family, friends, church and loved ones through these tough, unknown times.

N - Neighbourhoods helping each other and those shielding so they can receive items needed - kindness when not knowing the person.

E - Everyone's lives have changed because we are all in lockdown together, apart from the key workers or those who cannot work from home.

S - Stopping for strangers who need help out of kindness, local food hubs providing and delivering food to those who need it.

S - Sympathy for all who have lost loved ones during lockdown and cannot be together.

Galatians 5:13

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Luke 6:31

And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

1 Samuel 20:14

But show me unfailing kindness like the Lord's kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed.

All themes

written by Jonathan Coles

As COVID-19 was still with us we learnt new oxymorons and metaphors. Social Distancing became a new oxymoron, or was it? Because some people find being physically close difficult. But that doesn't stop the feeling of **togetherness**, as we found in Coffee Shop' Sunday. We became a family bound together in prayer. We formed a **kinship** that any close family should feel together, bound together in God's **love**.

In hardship we can still share together in the **joy** of fellowship. As Christians though, we always leave time to reflect in **silence**. In silence we wrote two extra lines, metaphorically we said more in a shorter space of time than any other prayer theme. Silence does speak volumes. Silent prayer and reflection are important to us in our faith. COVID-19 and lockdown has given us a chance to pray, reflect and importantly it has been a start of a renewal of our faith. As a group though, we recognized that in these difficult times to continue that **renewal**, we must witness to our faith with **boldness**. As that hymn says *Be bold, be strong, For the Lord your God is with us*. And we continued to find ways not just to reach out and grow our group but also to find ways that we can go out and be so bold.

During the lockdown period we have seen some many acts of **kindness** and Christian spirit. But this has been clouded by terrible images of abuse of some people in our communities worldwide, based on their colour, sexuality or disability. We are reminded of the **inclusiveness** of our faith. It is important the making sure that we show this in our actions and in the way we worship.

Not only do we need to reflect in a prayerful way, but we need to see that our reflection is a reflection of our God. When we look at others, do we see our image, that of our God, reflected back to us? For God made us in his own image and that means that we are all part of one family.

One family whose non-physical image should reflect what our father expects, which means we should be accepting of all those into the kingdom. By our own actions we can **change** the actions and attitudes of others.

As it says in **1 Peter 2:17**

Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king.

We continue to pray and reflect and grow in that Kinship spirit and through the fellowship of each other, powered by the Holy Spirit.

Amen



Translations

Shona

Prayer 2 **Kinship**

Mwari mupi veupenyu, imi mufudzi vakanaka. Tinotenda nerudo rwenyu rwekutipa mwanakomana venyu Jesu Kristu, uyo akava diramhamba rwezvitadzo zvedu kuti ukama hwedu nemi husimbaradzwe.

God, giver of life and the good Shepherd. We thank you for your love, that you gave your only Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins, so that our relationship with you is restored.

Irish

Prayer 4 **Silence**

Agus mé I mo thost go hiomlán ag éisteacht lena bhfuil ráite ag Dia ag freagairt mo chuid paidreacha, cuireann sé I gcuimhne dom gur Leanbh Dé mé. Is breá liom fiú agus mé faoi ghlas nuair nach bhfuil anaithnid ag tarlú ar domhan faigh am ciúin chun guí machnamh a dhéanamh.

While in total silence listening to what God has say answering my prayers, reminds me I'm a Child of God. I'm beloved even in lockdown when unknown happening in world find silent time to pray reflect.

Irish

Prayer 7 **Boldness**

Agus Dia á ligean isteach I mo shaol go dána trí urnaí, adhradh agus comhaltacht nuair a dhún mé na hEaglaisí go léir ní raibh an saol mar a bhí gnáth. Bíodh misneach agat do ghnáthchineál nua trí amanna crua COVID-19 agus cailteanas.

While allowing God into my life with boldness through prayer, worship and fellowship when in lockdown all Churches closed life not like normal. Have boldness for a new normal through hard times of COVID-19 and loss.

Bible verses

Love

We love because he first loved us. **1 John 4:19**

Kinship

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. **Philippians 2:5**

Togetherness

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Joy

Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. **Isaiah 49:13**

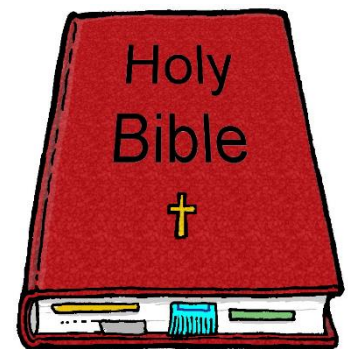
Silence

There is a time for everything..., a time to tear and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:7-8

Renewal

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. **Romans 12:2**



Boldness

So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there [in Iconium], speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. **Acts 14:3**

Inclusiveness

In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. **Romans 12:5**

Change

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. **Hebrews 13:8**

Kindness

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. **Ephesians 4:32**

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When I pray you answer me; you encourage me
by giving me the strength I need. **Psalm 138:3**

God for his constant inspiration, encouragement and love.

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“Meeting God in an Ordinary Place”