

Our prayers for others

God of one and God of all, we pray for:

Those who don't know who they are, who can't understand themselves or their place in society;

Those who don't 'fit in', who are or seem to be different;

Those who don't know where they come from, their heritage or home, their family or bloodline.

God of all, we pray for them.

Those who feel lost and isolated, confused and afraid, rudderless or homeless, strangers in a strange land;

Those who wish they were someone else, or somewhere else, in some other time and place

God of all, we pray for them.

In your great mercy, Lord, hear our prayers and grant surer journeys for them all. **Amen.**

You may wish to dedicate your weekly offering now with words from StF 287:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Go in peace, to rejoice in God's love and reflect his glory. **Amen**



*Prepared by Diane Coleman, Local Preacher, Castle Eden Circuit
(grateful acknowledgement to the Roots website and Neil Richardson's "Paul for Today" for some of the 'reflection' insights, and to Roots for the prayers.)*

Worship for Sunday October 4th 2020

Our worship sheet this week is offered to the District by Castle Eden Circuit

"Worship is a continuing joy
and a source of nurture for Christian life." (Neil Richardson)

Let us worship God as we are able, mindful too of our wider Christian community.

StF 489 All I once held dear

Lord God, as we journey towards the goal you set before us, we see glimpses of who you are, too deep and unimaginable for us to grasp fully the depth of your being. What we see and feel spurs us on in our journey to discover more of you. **Amen.**

The Lord's prayer

StF 419 Almighty God, we come to make confession

Reading: [Philippians 3: 4b-14](#)

Reflection

It has been six months of doing it differently, staying safe, making space, covering our face; of being church outside the walls of a building, of using modern technology to find new ways of communicating. Between you and me, our Local Preachers' meetings are just as riotous as they ever were when we met in a room, but now it's on Zoom.

Worship for me during this time has been from Taizé. They reached out for those of us without the possibility of church worship by livestreaming their lockdown evening prayers, and we very quickly became the 'lovestream'. When the churches in France reopened

and the community's work of welcoming young people resumed to some extent, the daily prayers online became a weekly live transmission from the church.

The community thrives on change, they call it 'the dynamic of the provisional' and a whole new way of relating and continuing their ministry is being explored and developed. Here in this part of the Methodist Church we too have explored and developed materials for worshipping as a scattered community, and used them as an online resource. Not the building, nor the meetings, we the people are being church.

We have not chosen this change, most of us felt comfortable and happy in the familiar Sunday routine, but now we are on unfamiliar ground, doing things differently on a path we did not choose. To take the path you have been given, in the sense that Paul uses, is to be a wholehearted and authentic Christian. You take your situation, your path, and make it your own.

How desperately Paul wants to know Christ, while at the same time he confesses that he has not managed it yet – and maybe never will. He even implies that he still is not sure what it means to really know Christ. But, he says, that's okay. It is a lifelong ambition, something to work towards. Sometimes we get a little despondent that we don't know our God or Saviour as well as we feel we ought.

Paul is 'pressing on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus'. That is where he is headed, that is his destination. He is 'straining forward to what lies ahead'. He sounds like a man desperate to get to where he's going, putting every ounce of his strength into it – reminiscent, perhaps, of a dog straining against its leash as it tries to pull its owner faster towards the anticipated enjoyment..

Our goal

What is our goal in life?

How much effort are we putting into it?

Are we 'straining' towards it – or are we just ambling along?



We cannot reach the goal by our own efforts alone. Paul's endurance of suffering, giving up everything he had previously called precious and striving for the goal, all take place under God's grace. Paul's progress to become more Christlike is the result of Christ reaching out for Paul, and Paul reaching for Christ.

Faith means accepting God's 'yes' to us in Christ. God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live the Christian life. The internal reality of Christian living is God centred, Christ centred, Spirit centred.

Paul has already been found by God and what he has to do now is respond – which he is doing with his every breath.

I have heard it said that the church was like a car whose rear view mirror was enormous, larger than its wheels, and partly obscured the road ahead. We are changing. We need to forge ahead into new ground and keep our eyes on the prize.

With Christ alongside us and the Spirit to guide us, with God's help, we will.

[StF 519](#)

Father I place into your hands