

We pray for the wider issues in our world. We think of those whose lives are scarred by war and violence, and we ask that the leaders of nations may work to bring about a new world order of peace and harmony.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for your church. As we continue to face difficult times help us to be more aware of your presence, and trust you for guidance.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

And we pray for ourselves. Guide and direct us, lead us through our lives, and may we know the security which comes from faith and love.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer. Amen**

We sum up all our prayers in the words our Lord taught us.

Our Father.....

You may wish to set aside your offering for the work of God.

Hymn StF 728 **O God, you search me and you know me**

Blessing

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, keep your hearts and minds in his love, now and forever. Amen

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Darlington District Worship at Home Sunday 17th January 2021

Thank you to John Kidd, Castle Eden Circuit, for preparing our worship sheet.

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary,
Praise him in his mighty heavens,
Praise him for his acts of power,
Praise him for his surpassing greatness.
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Hymn StF 87 H&P 56 **Praise to the living God!**

Opening Prayer

Lord, we come to worship you. Your greatness, majesty and power are far beyond our understanding. We live our lives in awe of you, yet are drawn towards you because above all we know your love for us, a love best expressed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for him, for his life, death and resurrection, for the example he showed us of how to live We thank you that he gave us hope both for this life and the next. We praise and thank you that through your power and love we are able to experience you day by day.

We know that we don't always live up to what you expect from us and want from us, so we ask your forgiveness. Forgive us for our weaknesses: our greed and selfishness, our lack of understanding, our ignorance. Help us to feel that forgiveness, and help us to fill our lives with you and your will for us. In Jesus Christ's name. **Amen**

Reading

Psalm 139:1-6,13-18

Reflection

Of all the psalms, this is my favourite. When I first read it, more years ago than I care to remember, I felt the first verses very threatening. “You have searched me and you know me.” (v 1) How dreadful! God knows all about me – the very worst of me, the bits that no one else knows, as well as the bits that are exposed to the world. God knows **all** about me. And as I read on, things seemed to go from bad to worse. “You hem me in, behind and before.” (v 5) Surrounded by God, there is no escape. If God knows all about me and there is no escape, what hope is there? But as I read further, I discovered that what the psalmist was saying was that despite God knowing all about me, he still cares. Hemmed in, behind and before, God’s hand was laid on the psalmist, and that knowledge was too wonderful for him. Now that’s a pretty amazing thing. God, the creator of our universe, cared about the psalmist, and by implication God cares about me. Now I’m nobody important, but God cares about me.

And the psalmist goes on to explain why God cares so much about him. “You created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” (v 13) And that’s an amazing thought isn’t it. God knows all about us because he created us. Before we were born God made us part of him. He was there not only at the beginning of all things, he was there at our beginning. We rightly think of God as the creator of the universe, but we sometimes neglect to think of him as **our** creator. Yet that’s what the psalmist is claiming. Personally, I have no doubt that he was correct. God knows me, he knows what I am like, good and bad. And despite that, or perhaps because of that he still loves me. God’s love is unconditional. We call him “Father” and parents generally love their children unconditionally. And that’s what the psalmist realised. God’s thoughts about him were so great as to outnumber the grains

of sand because God’s love was central to his being. And it’s just the same for us.

Hymn StF 482 H&P 428 **There is no moment of my life**

Prayers of Intercession

Lord God, we bring to you our needy world. Guide and direct people into being and doing the best they can be.

We pray for those suffering from illness and disease. We pray especially for those with Covid-19.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those working to relieve suffering. We think especially of the NHS staff working so desperately to relieve suffering and distress.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our country. As we experience again the pressures of lockdown we pray that the government, scientists and local authorities may be able to work together for the good of all.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for those scientists who have been able to develop vaccines against Covid-19 and pray that their work may continue to be successful.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**