

## Reflective prayers

God of sanctuary, safety, liberty,  
welcome us into your peaceful presence.  
Bless us with your sheltering calm,  
not to smother or silence us,  
but to give us space to be ourselves, just as we are,  
with our turbulent feelings,  
to help us to pause, breathe deeply, see clearly,  
to grow a sense of possibility  
that we can reach for with hope;  
to let memories rest, not try to be rid of them  
but to acknowledge they are part of who we are,  
to give moments of peace  
in which to make new memories, too.  
Such undisturbed moments of release,  
may be just that – moments.  
But they are as much a part of reality  
as everything else.

God of life and light,  
darkness and light are both alike to you,  
for you bring your own light into dark places.  
Free us, we pray, from all terror,  
for you are with us in a love that holds no menace,  
but wants to see us full of hope and laughter and joy,  
being all that we can be.

God, you who are the bright and morning star,  
stay with us through the dark hours,  
and bring us with a sense of wonder and stillness  
into the possibilities of each new day,  
Help us to live to the full  
each moment of trust and tranquillity.

## Hymn StF 519 **Father, I place into your hands**

We bless one another in the words of **The Grace...**

## Darlington District Worship at Home Passion Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021 – Fifth Sunday in Lent **HOPE FOR HARD TIMES**

### Opening responses

Leader: In winter and springtime  
in despair and hope

**All: God speaks to us**

Leader: In struggle and fulfilment  
in death and resurrection

**All: God speaks to us**

Leader: In worry and relief  
in waiting and consolation

**All: God speaks to us**

We are gathered and scattered today to acknowledge and lament that more than 125,000\* people have died in the UK as a result of covid19 in the last 13 months. Across the world, deaths have passed 2,642,000. Each person has been loved and has left grief behind, children's grief as well as adult grief. It has, indeed, been a year like no other. And there are other voices lamenting other circumstances. We are going to hear some of the many voices raised in lament...

*\*In excess of 143,000 have died where Covid-19 recorded on the death certificate.*

## **VOICES ARE HEARD ACROSS OUR REGION....**

### **In sorrow...**

for loved ones who have died during the pandemic, directly or indirectly due to covid-19, and could not be given a fitting way for saying Goodbye or for saying Thank you for their lives.

### **In sorrow...**

for loss of tangible contact with family, friends and neighbours, leaving many feeling isolated and vulnerable, including farmers and rural workers

**In sorrow...**

for loss of confidence and hope and onset of depression and despair

**In sorrow...**

for loss of livelihood, income, independence, self-esteem among people of all ages

**In sorrow...**

for loneliness in caring for partner, parent, child with severe and special needs with little support available

**In sorrow...**

for loss of essential treatment for other pressing conditions

Voices are heard across our region, full of sorrow, anger and anxiety. Voices are raised across our region lamenting unequal provision of services, assistance, security, understanding, respect. Young people's voices lamenting interrupted learning and missing friends. Too many live in the shadow of exhaustion and abuse, feeling trapped and forgotten, strangers in their own homes, their own land. Voices are raised across our region in sorrow, regret, anger. Some of the most poignant words were *'I have never felt so insignificant'*.

Silence

Candle

We each light a candle to acknowledge the darkness in which many have lived during these last months, and continue to do so.

**In the deepest darkness, a candle flame is a powerful light.**

Readings: [Psalm 88: 1-9](#)

[Matthew 11: 28-30](#)

*This worship was composed by Revd Jean Hudson, Durham & Deerness Valley.*

Prayer

Broken hearts, broken bodies, broken dreams, broken lives, God we bring them to you. For some of us, you seem far away, irrelevant; for some of us, it seems you are as helpless as we are; some of us want you to be there, source of comfort and hope, but we don't know how to reach you. Please, God, make yourself known to all who cry out from the depths as hope, as light, as mercy, as sanctuary. May all hear Jesus' invitation 'Come to me..'

Where is hope to be found?

**In being alive...** in this moment, wherever you are

**In the development of vaccines for all...**

**In kindness...** of family, of friends, of strangers

**In keeping moving and in awareness of life...** walks, exercise, watching children, birds, flowers, trees as spring arrives; caring for pets, tending a garden

**In memories...** somewhere to light a candle, keep a memory box, to be thankful

**In keeping a space...** maybe a tiny space in our lives amongst sorrow, anger, anxiety for something new and different to happen

**In saying thank you...** for all who have taken risks to keep us safe, to bring healing, offer comfort; for all who have prepared, provided and delivered food; for teachers; for public transport and taxi drivers, for Royal Mail; for all who have kept vital services connected to keep us comfortable and secure; for all who have, in different ways, kept us in touch with the outside world; for clergy, chaplains, funeral directors; for all who have been kind.

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