



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Philippians 4:5b-7 'Paul's Final Words of Advice to the Church at Philippi'

The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

For many of us, the present times are worrying; we're faced with many unknowns, and massive changes to our daily lives. Paul writes about how difficult anxiety can be, and can even be a stumbling block between us and God, and can affect our faith (*Romans 14:23*).

Yet Paul also says 'the Lord is near': God is always with us, so presses us not to worry, not be anxious about anything. God is our loving and all-powerful heavenly Father who is always there for us, and who will take care of His children (*1 Peter 5:7*). So we are not to worry (*Matthew 6:25-34*).

For some of us as parents, or trusted friends, we've often known what someone wants to ask before they ask it; but we know it's important for them to give voice to what they want. God knows our need, but want to hear our requests. But we must ask Him in faith (*James 1:6-8*). We mustn't ask him just in faith though, we must ask with thanksgiving (*Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 1:3*). God hears our requests, and He always gives us an answer. Knowing this, even as we pray to God, we can thank Him for answering (*1 John 5: 14-15*).



The peace of God is one of the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*). When God's peace comes into our minds, anxiety goes out. Peace and anxiety are opposites. God's peace is greater than our understanding. It goes beyond all understanding. With our understanding of the world and our knowledge, we see things that make us anxious; but when God's peace comes, our anxiety is put aside, it's overcome and banished. God's peace will guard our hearts and minds from every anxiety – and for us we know that this peace is promised in Christ Jesus.

As we move through this troubling time, as society slows down, as people close their doors, as the trained and knowledgeable in our human family seek to help the world, we must remember that God does not rest. He does not stop hearing our prayers; answering our prayers; caring for us; being with us; and looking after us.

Prayer:

Holy God, thank you for being with us. Thank you for holding our hands and listening to our worries. We remember in our prayers all those suffering in our country and around the world, as this virus spreads through communities and families. We pray for their healing and that you be with them in their times of need. We pray for ourselves, for our wellbeing and our continued strength of will. We pray that we may all continue to face adversity with grace, and offer help where it is needed. Thank you for hearing us Father, thank you for your help; your support; your love, in this time of trial. Amen