



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 4:6-7

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.

In recent times when we've been faced with empty shelves and long queues at supermarkets, even the most patient of us is inclined to feel a bit put out. I cherish the description of the Israelites wandering in the desert and grumbling about how much better things were in Egypt. They might well have been thanking God for saving them from starvation, but no, what did they do? They complained:

⁵ We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.' (Numbers 11:5-6)

Human nature doesn't change! Paul, writing to the Philippians, tells them not to worry about anything, but by praying and pleading humbly to let God know their requests, crucially adding that this should be done with *thanksgiving*. We have so much to thank God for and at times when we feel hard done by, we need to spend some quiet moments counting the ways in which God has blessed us during our lives. J. Oatman Jr. wrote:

*Count your blessings, name them one by one
and it will surprise you
what the Lord has done.*

Whenever we pray, it's good to start with thanksgiving and at this Easter season, we give especial thanks for the gift of God's own Son, who died on the cross so that we might all have eternal life.



At the moment there are so many people to pray for in our world, all in need of God's healing, of his reassurance, of his mercy and of his peace. It's right too that we pray for ourselves, for wisdom, courage and strength as we follow Jesus and do our best to live as he lived – for others. Before we start our prayer requests, though, it's so important to give thanks to God for everything.

Prayer

Loving Father God,
we thank you for so many things:
for the joys of the world around us,
for the beauty of Spring, for the mysteries
of the universe, for the pleasures of family
and the faithfulness of friends.

In this time of crisis
we pray for all who are suffering from the
coronavirus, whether ill, or in solitary
isolation, or because they have lost their
jobs, are under intolerable pressure,
or are stranded far from home.

We pray that we may be given the wisdom
to recognise need when we see it, that we
may be inspired to find ways of helping in
the face of so many restrictions, that we
may always be conscious of you alongside
us every moment of our lives.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen