



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.

Ephesians 4:29, 31-32 'Words of Love and Forgiveness'

²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

How good are you at forgiving? Do you forgive and forget, or hold on to grievances? I remember a member in one of my churches revealing resentment toward another member that he had held on to for over 30 years. It was clear that it still troubled him. The other person had probably forgotten and moved on, leaving him to suffer. By holding on to grievances we can store up more trouble for ourselves – anger, resentment, alienation, ill-health.

Whilst a simple apology and a handshake might be sufficient in most cases, these days we are often encouraged not to be satisfied but to demand compensation. We want the satisfaction of making people pay for the way they treated us. There are, of course, times when we may forgive someone who has committed a crime against us, but the law demands a punishment and justice must be served. However, the Lord's Prayer reminds us that forgiveness of others is also a requirement if we expect God to forgive us. Jesus tells Peter and the disciples that they should forgive not just 7 times, but 70 times 7. In other words without limit, forgiveness is to be the norm.

He puts it powerfully in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, where the Son having exploited his Father's generosity to live a wild and reckless life, returns home with no expectation of a welcome but is received with open arms, feasting and laughter, a reminder of a God who longs for us to be part of his family and is willing to forgive regardless of whether we deserve it or not. So hold on to St. Paul's words to the Ephesians by being kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.



'You Know that I Love you'
by Ally Barrett
(2017/18 acrylic on wooden board)

Prayer:

Father, forgive us when we are tempted to doubt you,
or express our anger with you.

Forgive us when we fail to live up to your call to love you
and our neighbour.

Forgive us when we take you and people around us for granted.

Give us strength to see the good in others
and to love others as you have loved us. **AMEN.**