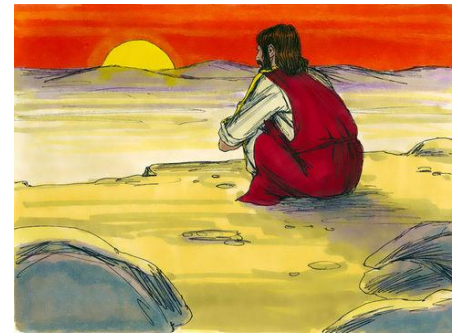




Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

### **Philippians 2:5-8 'Christ's Humility'** translated by William Barclay

Try always to have the same attitude to life as Jesus had. He shared the very being of God, but did not regard his equality to God as a thing to be clutched to himself. So far from that, he emptied himself and...became a servant, and was made for a time exactly like men. In a human form that all could see, he accepted such a depth of humiliation that he was prepared to die, and to die on a cross.



When Robert and I listen to radio services, we tend to 'sing along' with the hymns we know, as many of you do too, I expect. Recently, one of the hymns was *Lead us Heavenly Father*. The second verse starts:

*Saviour breathe forgiveness o'er us  
all our weakness thou dost know.  
Thou didst tread this earth before us,  
thou didst feel its keenest woe.*

However as we sang the next lines, '*Lone and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert Thou didst go*' we realized that the congregation was singing something totally different – we didn't catch what, but it set me thinking.

When I was young, I disliked the phrase '*lone and dreary*' as a description of Jesus, while '*faint and weary*' had little resonance with my own experience. Now, at a more mature age, it seems to me that James Edmeston, who wrote the hymn in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, got it absolutely right. Because Jesus experienced life as we do, as a human being, because he felt '*its keenest woe*', we can know that God understands exactly how we feel when it's difficult and things are hard. '*Lone and dreary*' are what many people have been feeling recently during the pandemic restrictions – '*dreary*' used to mean '*sad*' and we've felt that too. To know that our Lord has been there before us can be a tremendous help to us. Jesus' response to adversity was always to turn to prayer and it can be ours, too.

I think that '*faint and weary*' is often something that we feel more as we get older. Jesus died young, but there in the desert for forty days and nights, without proper food and no shelter from the weather, we can be sure that he experienced the faintness and weariness that overcome us from time to time.

### **Prayer:**

Loving Lord, we thank you for coming to earth as one of us. It is restorative and refreshing to know that you have lived life as we do, that you have been tempted as we are, that you have experienced the heights of joy and the depths of sorrow that are part of being human. You know about the irritations of daily life, about the highs and lows of friendship and betrayal.

We pray that you will give us courage and wisdom as we face the hard realities which confront us in life around the world today. May those with gifts for human health discover ways which help us to end the destructive infections of coronavirus and restore our lives to a new normality.

Give us, we pray, a profound sense of your presence as we care for each other, especially those who are most vulnerable. Hold us in your loving arms as we journey into the future. Call us towards deeper faith O Christ, believing that you are with us. And lift our hearts as we face each moment with you alongside us. Amen.