

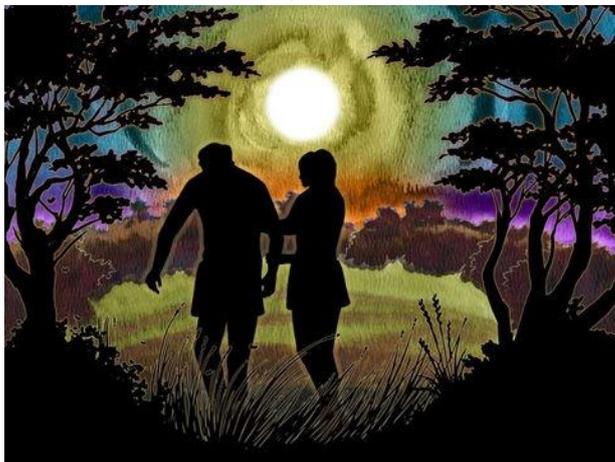


Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

### **Genesis 2:15-17 'Forbidden Fruit'**

<sup>15</sup>The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

The opening book of our bible, Genesis, seeks to give an understanding of life. We read of humans inhabiting a paradise which was lost through their disobedience to the Lord God's command not to eat fruit from the tree of life. Fruit was plentiful on other trees, of which they could take their pick. But forbidden fruit, it's said, is the sweetest. Tempted, they fell, and for this they were expelled from Eden. Those early writers seek to explain the origins of good and



evil, right and wrong. Throughout the Bible we read how God's people's understanding grew and developed, learning more of His purpose for the world. Prophets came rebuking, inspiring, encouraging, and teaching of God's love and concern in all their affairs. Mostly the people chose to go their own way; it was a long, slow journey. Then came Jesus, showing by word and action how to live as God intends. Still most continued to go their own selfish way. Little seems to change – the world today is still full of chaos and confusion, still far from reclaiming that lost paradise.

We may find God's ultimate purpose for His creation in the closing chapters of the Bible which speak of God's invitation to paradise for all who would accept the promise of new life offered through Christ's death on Calvary's tree. Forgiveness for all the wrongs and sins we commit. The book of Revelation tells of another beautiful place with a river on whose banks grows the tree of life, its fruit freely available, enough to satisfy the needs of all. And its leaves are for the healing of the nations. If the nations at the time that book was written needed healing, how much more so today.

A class of students was asked by their RE teacher what would they wish if they could have just one granted. Some said they would wish for an end to world poverty; others for no more war, injustice, violence or homelessness. Then one said he would wish for everyone to obey Jesus command that his followers love one another as he loved all and sundry. Wise youngster! If we always considered the needs of others before our own, God's paradise would surely come on earth. Amen.

### **Prayer:**

God of love, we confess that too often we turn  
from Your demand that we love and care as much for our neighbours as for ourselves.  
Forgive our self absorption,  
and help us behave ever more like Jesus our Lord and Saviour,  
who fully loves, and fully forgives us. In his name we pray. Amen.