



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.

'A Few Thoughts about Soul'

'My soul magnifies the Lord.' (Luke 1:46)

'For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?
Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?' (Matthew 16:26)

'Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.' (Matthew 10:25)

'Hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.'
(Hebrews 6:18-19)

The other day I was in a discussion about the meaning of the word 'soul' – as you do! This requires some 'soul searching'! 'Soul' is one of those words that almost defies clear definition.

A situation may be 'soul destroying'. A confused person may be described as a 'lost soul'. A verse above reminds us how possible it is to sell or forfeit our 'soul'. We speak of 'the soul of a nation' or a 'soulful' look. S.O.S. is an abbreviation for 'Save our Souls'. A lifeboat may rescue one or two 'souls'. 'Soul music' originated out of the life experience of African-American singers in the early 1950s and 1960s, as such it expresses deep felt feelings.

Our eyes are described as 'the windows of the soul'. To look into the eyes of a well-loved pet at some length can become a mutual discovery of 'soul'. If so with creatures, how much more so is this possible with 'soul-mate' human beings?

The old American spiritual song has these lines which suggest immortality:

'John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave but his soul goes marching on'.

Our hymns reflect different understandings of 'soul', often echoing biblical verses: 'Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord' (StF 186) reflects the opening words of Mary's song of praise The Magnificat in Luke 1:46. The highlighted verse from Hebrews above is referenced in the lines of the old hymn:

"We have an anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and strong while the billows role". (StF 645)

Yes, for Christians, Christ is indeed the anchor for our souls, through the many changes in our lives... but, I suggest, not only an anchor – a rudder, a sail and an engine as well!

I believe that for each of us the varied and unique experiences of our lives are 'soul-making'! May it be that each of us discover and rediscover how 'with heart and soul and mind' (Matt 22:37) we can both 'magnify the Lord' and at the same time express 'the essence of our being'... which, by the way, is my best effort at defining the word 'soul'!

Prayer: meditate on the following words by Isaac Watts from StF 287 When I Survey:

***Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all***

