



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.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2021: Colossians 1: 15-17

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.

From time immemorial, humans have pondered the big questions. What is life all about? What is my place in this vast universe? Is there a god? If so, how can we relate to a deity? What is God like? Down the ages, we have tried to answer and explain. All cultures have put forward ideas, created gods in their own image, built altars to unknown gods. God dimly perceived as they reached out seeking that 'Other'.

For the Jewish people, there was a supreme concept of one true deity: immortal, invisible God. omnipotent, omniscient, the creator of all things known and unknown. God was remote but all powerful, set apart, too holy to be approached by mere mortals. The Hebrew Bible is the story of the Jews' journey of discovery into the nature of God. Prophets spoke of a God of justice and mercy, and they glimpsed God who also cared about individuals, who was concerned for the welfare of all of humanity in its great need.

In that magnificent passage from the letter to the church in Colossae we have a Christian response to the question 'What is God like?'. Paul claims: "*Jesus is the image of the invisible God*". Because Jesus experienced life as a human being, we know that he understands us, our strengths and our weaknesses. He is alive, available now to guide and support us as we too make our way in a world that often perplexes us. Challenged by problems of poverty, pandemic, terrorism and the threat of extinction because of our lack of care for God's world, many are hopeless and despairing. For those who deny the very existence of God, those who deride him or find faith irrelevant, the outlook is indeed grim. But God has not deserted us. With him we have hope for the future. By our prayers and our sharing of the knowledge of his love, shown in our words and actions, we are following in footsteps of one who has promised that God's will can never be defeated. In good times and difficult times, may we trust both present and future to the one who is the same yesterday, today and forever. And show, whenever we can, our faith in the God who came to share our humanity. The one who has promised be with us and who will never leave us or forsake us.

Prayer:

Eternal God, may we find reassurance in knowing
that you are changeless,

that your nature is, always has been, and always will be, love:
love that will draw all people to yourself.

May we never forget that you are always working

to bring about your kingdom, through hearts and minds the world over.

When we are tempted to despair as we see a world struggling with so many problems,
when you seem remote from daily life, renew in us faith and trust in you.

Thank you for your unfailing care and concern for all, whatever and wherever their need.
We pray in the name of Jesus who came to bring your love here. Amen.

