



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 4:4-9 'The Most Important Things'

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Over forty years ago, I shared in a Lent service which inspired me then, and continues to do so still, in a way few do. The preacher urged us to consider abstaining from not only chocolates, biscuits, coffee, or cigarettes etc., but rather to give up complaining, irritability, idle gossip, negative criticism, ill temper, self-absorbency. To be done with negativity, and concentrate on encouragement, finding the positives in life. Determined to be more charitable, patient, generous towards our fellow humans, however difficult we may find some of them!



The danger in denying ourselves luxuries is that we are liable to congratulate ourselves when we've got through another day without that Mars bar, or whatever may be our particular treat. Disciplining our appetites may indeed have a positive effect on character building – so too will regarding others in a more positive light, remembering always that we are all equally precious in God's sight. We may never understand why some folk behave as they do. Only God can fully know what influences us one way or another.

If we have found God's love and peace and joy in our lives, may we be generous in our treatment of all whom we encounter in daily living. For all of us matter equally to him. God does not love "en masse" but individually. He cares about each and every one of us, with all the griefs, joys, fears, hopes and dreams. All the concerns, trials and temptations we experience. Our Lord's command is that we love one another as he loves us.

Prayer:

Give us, Father,
a vision of your world as love would make it;
a world where the weak are protected and none go hungry;
a world whose benefits are shared,
so that everyone can enjoy them;
a world whose different people and cultures
live with tolerance and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice
and justice is fired with love;
and give us the courage to build it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

