



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.

Romans 8:26 'Praying Always'

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

Colossians 1:9a Since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you.

One of my late husband's partners was a cousin of Archbishop Michael Ramsey, to whom he was quite close. It amused Ian when he had to sign letters to Lambeth Palace on his partner's behalf, which happened not infrequently, as the cousins kept up a lively correspondence. Since he had to read the letters and check for mistakes before signing, it meant he gained some revealing insights about the two men's mutual interests, which were wide-ranging and varied.

Over the years, as I have promised to pray for others and have mused about what that means, by chance it has been a phrase of Michael Ramsey's that I have found most helpful, "to be with God, with the people on your heart". I think that is one of the most beautiful images of what intercessory prayer is all about. It is a deep act of love, intentionally placing ourselves in the presence of God and in that moment sharing in the love and concern that he has for his people. It isn't an action of the mind so much as an action of the heart: holding people in your heart, and then holding your heart up to God.

Part of that is very easy – we all have people on our heart. When we love someone it comes naturally to want what's best for them, to worry about them. If you love someone they are on your heart.

What does take intention and effort though, is taking the time to be in the presence of God with the people and situations that are on our hearts, taking our worries and our love and holding them up to God. In that act of sharing



our hearts with God, we know that our love and our worries are on his heart too. That is powerful prayer. We aren't informing God of things he doesn't know – of course he knows! Nor are we asking for specific outcomes, God already knows what we want to happen, we don't have to tell him. What we are doing is sharing in the love that he has for his people and sharing our burdens with the one who truly has the strength to bear them.

Prayer:

Loving heavenly Father,

We don't know all of the challenges our friends have,
but you know everything.

We hear their silence,
you hear their prayers.

We see their laughter,
you see their tears.

We see when they give,
you see what's been taken from them.

We see their outward appearance,
you see the scars on their souls.

We experience their faith,
you know their doubts.

We thank you, Lord,
that you hear every single prayer
and meet all your children in their need.

Help us to spend time with you
with other people on our hearts.

In Jesus' name. Amen.