



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.

Colossians 1:3-8 'Thanksgiving for God's Church'

³ In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel ⁶ that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. ⁷ This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸ and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.



I'm told that the origin of the word 'church' is in a first century Greek word for power: *kyros*. In those early days a man who wielded power lived in a *kuriakon*, a house of power. That's the word Christians adopted and applied to the house of God, the source of all power. The Scots word 'kirk' comes from the same root. The church is a place where believers find power and may be filled with that power in worship and fellowship.

In this Bible reading, Paul is thankful for the church in Colossae. It wasn't a church he'd founded, in fact he'd never been to Colossae. In spite of that, they'd heard the message, found faith in Christ and were growing and maturing in their faith. They were living by Jesus' command to love one another and in a hostile and challenging world had found the power they needed to live out their faith, hope and love with fellow Christians.

At the beginning of World War II, the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was soon to be imprisoned for his faith, wrote a classic book on building a Christian community that is strong enough to withstand persecution, *Life Together*. In it he wrote of the value of belonging to a local church:

'It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and sacrament. Not all Christians receive this blessing. The imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely, the proclaimers of the Gospel in heathen lands stand alone. They know that visible fellowship is a blessing.... The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.'

*'It is by grace,
nothing but grace,
that we are permitted
to live in community
with other Christians.'*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

Prayer:

Father, we thank you for your Church. We are thinking a lot about past, present and future buildings, but today we want to praise you for past, present and future people of faith, love and hope. We thank you for those who have gone before us, who have helped to lay the foundations of our trust in you; we thank you for the saints who join with us today and for the way you blend the talents of individuals; and we thank you for those who will continue to witness to your love and care. Bind us together Lord, and may our love for one another be evidence of your great love for the world.