

## “We have not stopped praying for you”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read Colossians ch 1 v 9-14

If you can, watch the YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/4yxu1pqmEf4>

The book of Colossians is a letter to an Early Church community in western Turkey that we believe had been founded by some of the leaders from the church at Ephesus. Paul, one of the key leaders in the Early Church, writes to them thanking God for all he has heard about them and assuring them of his constant prayers. As well as encouraging us to continually pray for one another, the content of Paul's prayer might help us consider our priorities and what defines us as a community of God's people. These offer themselves as resources from God, that equip us for these difficult times. Spend some time reflecting on the three key elements that Paul outlines:

**Pray for God's wisdom:** Pray that we will be a people who don't just rush to the most obvious conclusion or get carried along by popular opinion, but seek the wisdom of God; an understanding that is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Seek God's wisdom to know how to live in these difficult and unusual times in a way that, as Paul says, gives glory to God. This is described as a wisdom that will also help us to grow in our own knowledge of God. Even though our circumstances might be very different, and the familiar routines of our discipleship journey may have been taken from us, we can pray that we might nonetheless emerge from these challenging times as those who have grown in our knowledge of God.

**Pray for God's strength:** This might require of us to adjust the narratives of our prayers – we might be tempted to simply pray that all the things that require patience and endurance will be taken away. God does invite us to place our petitions and our concerns before him, but we are also invited to pray for strength – so that we might grow in our own spiritual stature as a follower of Jesus and be an encouragement to our fellow strugglers. Perhaps what our world needs at the moment is not so much a Church that somehow manages to avoid all of our present struggles, but one that can stand with people and help find a way through them; a Church that does this in God's strength, not our own.

**Give God thanks for the inheritance that is ours:** Someone who has been a real inspiration to us recently was Mabel, a member of our NWBA community and a staff nurse at Wythenshawe hospital. She is working in the midst of the current pandemic and all the strain that this places on those who work in our health service. When sharing her story in an online service she simply observed - “These times will pass.” For us, as a people of God, this is a message that resounds beyond this immediate crisis to every challenge and struggle that we face as a human race. We have an inheritance; an investment in a world that transcends our human circumstances. That does not make us indifferent to what people are facing in the here and now, but equips us to be a people of hope in its midst, because we are redeemed and a people of grace, because we are forgiven. Though we live out our faith in the real world, we do so as citizens of God's new kingdom.

### PRAYER

All sufficient God, amidst all the uncertainty and struggle that we face, help us to draw on the resources that you provide. Grant us the wisdom to not simply seek our own way or be carried along by popular opinion, but to understand more deeply your will and purpose. Help us, even through these unwelcome circumstances, to discover more of who you are. Give us the strength that we need to endure patiently and to be a source of hope and encouragement to others. And as we journey through all that life requires of us, help us to do so with our eyes fixed on the inheritance that is ours through Jesus. AMEN