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Diocesan Day of Prayer

In a time of challenge and transition

30 June 2022



‘In him, every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes’

*1 Corinthians 1,10*

Session 1: God our Creator – ‘Bless the Lord my soul!’

Introducing the day – Bishop Ruth

Let us call to mind who we are, and remember God’s constant presence with us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

We are the beloved children of God

who created our beautiful world in love,

who gave us life, who blesses us abundantly,

and who daily sustains and re-creates us and all creation.

We light a green candle for our Creator God,

and for the precious gift of life for us and our world.

Song:

‘In the darkness of the still night  
In the dawning of the daylight  
In the mystery of creation  
Creator God, you are there  
In the breath of every being  
In the birthing and the growing  
In the earth and all its fullness  
Creator God, you are there

In your love that is eternal,

Creator God, you are there’

Reading: verses from Psalm 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits— who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

Let’s call to mind the good things we want to celebrate,

and for which we are thankful:

A time for quiet reflection on – or naming aloud –

the blessings we have received and if you are with others, sharing them.

We pray:

Faithful and generous God,

our help in ages past, and our hope for years to come,

we rejoice that you bless us with so much that is good;

for the natural world in which we delight,

for this beautiful county in which we live,

for the gift of one another, old and young,

for the communities of which we are a part,

and the much-loved places where we meet to worship.

We thank you for all that we see you doing among us,

glimpses of your presence and your power.

Especially at this time we give thanks for Bishop Michael,

whom you have chosen to lead us;

we look forward to all that he will bring to us,

and all that you will do for our Diocese through him;

we ask you to bless him and as he prepares to come to us,

and to open our hearts to welcome him,

that together we may work with fresh vision

and renewed energy for your kingdom here.

We acknowledge that these are challenging and uncertain times:

our resources are depleted, many are finding life a struggle,

there seem to be so few of us to do your work,

our fragile earth is struggling for survival

and we wonder what the future will bring;

Remind us, we pray, that you are a God who always meets our needs:

you do not faint or grow weary,

you give power to the faint and strengthen the powerless;

those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like eagles,

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not be faint.

So this day Lord, we wait on you,

and seek your direction.

Meet us, we pray, challenge us, inspire us, lead us forward.

Renew our vision, rekindle our zeal, and deepen our commitment.

Session 2: Jesus our Redeemer – who walks alongside us

We are people who weep

for the suffering of our world;

we walk with Christ towards all who grieve,

who struggle, who are oppressed.

We light the purple candle for Jesus our Redeemer

who entered the pain of our world

and who suffers still with those who suffer:

Song:

‘In the homeless and the hungry  
In the broken and the lonely  
In the grieving of Your people  
Saviour Jesus, you are there  
In the tears and in the heartache  
In the love through which we serve You  
In the anguish of the dying

Saviour Jesus, you are there

In your love that is eternal,

Saviour Jesus, you are there’

Reading: Verses from 11 Corinthians ch. 4

We do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’s sake. For it is the God who said, “Light will shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not

destroyed, always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.

For we who are living are always being handed over to death for Jesus’s sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal flesh.  We know that the one who raised Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and will present us with you in his presence. Indeed, everything is for your sake, so that grace, when it has extended to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

Let’s call to mind our concerns for the pain and heartache of our local situations and our world:

A time for reflecting on, and perhaps sharing together, the struggles and suffering we see around us at this time – those coping with money worries, fearful about the future; those suffering from the after-effects of Covid; all who are anxious and depressed; the people in our churches who feel despondent; the depleted finances of our diocese, those suffering because of the war in Ukraine and its global implications; refugees around the world.

Let’s seek to enter into these situations in our minds, and ask God to be present in places of pain, despair and suffering – as he chose to be in Jesus…

We pray:

Lord, as we reflect on the pain and heartache of our world,

and remember all that Jesus went through for our sakes. We

are reminded that love is costly; and that to serve you faithfully, to live and tell the story of Jesus, will demand all that we can offer.

Give us strength and courage to make that commitment to serve you wholeheartedly.

Let us make the words of this hymn our own:

Open are the gifts of God,

gifts of love to mind and sense;

hidden is love’s agony,

love’s endeavour, love’s expense.

Love that gives, gives ever more,

gives with zeal, with eager hands,

spares not, keeps not, all outpours,

ventures all its all expends.

Drained is love in making full,

bound in setting others free,

poor in making many rich,

weak in giving power to be.

Therefore he who shows us God

helpless hangs upon the tree;

and the nails and crown of thorns

tell of what God’s love must be.

Here is God: no monarch he,

throned in easy state to reign;

here is God, whose arms of love

aching, spent, the world sustain.

Teach us, good Lord,  
to serve you as you deserve;  
to give and not to count the cost;  
to fight and not to heed the wounds;  
to toil and not to seek for rest;  
to labour and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do your will.

*Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola*

Session 3: In the power of the Spirit

We are people of hope and faith.

In the Spirit we celebrate our energy and strength,

and our calling to work with God in the recreating of the world.

We light a red candle

for our hope in the Spirit;

we are not alone.

Song:

‘In our hearts and in our thinking  
In the longing and the dreaming  
In the yearning of our heartbeat  
Holy Spirit, you are there  
In the love for one another  
In the sharing of our being  
In receiving and forgiving  
Holy Spirit, you are there

In your love that is eternal,

Holy Spirit, you are there’

Reading: Verses from Romans ch. 8

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God,for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hopethat the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 

We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labour, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercede with groans too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.We know that all things work togetherfor good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

A time for reflecting on what the Holy Spirit might do in our lives and in our world, if we allow the transforming power God offers to get to work! What gifts and skills have we been given that we might use? How can we re-imagine our local situations and our world in the light of the Spirit’s possibilities? How might we need to change aur vision, our lives?

*We pray:*

Lord, pour on us we pray the gifts of your Spirit:

give us trust and hope,

give us faithfulness in prayer,

give us generous hearts,

give us resilience and courage,

give us discernment in recognizing priorities,

give us creativity in using our resources well,

give us imagination to see new possibilities.

give us fresh vision for all that is to come,

and joy in serving you and one another.

We ask this in the confidence that,

as you have called us to this task,

you will equip us for it.

Session 4:

Now we light all three of our candles,

green for the Creator, purple for the Son,

red for the Spirit.

We are not alone as we face an uncertain future:

the strength of the Father, the love of the Son,

and the energy of the Spirit, are ours, and will sustain us.

Song:

‘In our joys, our hopes, our healing  
In awakening to revealing  
In Your call and our responding  
God, three-in-one, you are there  
In our prayer and in our service  
In our praise and in our worship  
In Your love that is eternal  
God, three-in-one, you are there

In your love that is eternal,

God, three-in-one, you are there’

Reading: Verses from Philippians ch.4

'Rejoice in the Lord always;

the Lord is near;

do not worry about anything

but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

let your requests be made known to God;

and the peace of God which passes all understanding

will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

We are not heroic, Lord;

We are your ordinary people,

Yet you have called us.

**Lord, have mercy;**

We are living in challenging times;

We know that we must accept change;

We realise that the cost will be great.

**Christ, have mercy**

Give us generous hearts,

And courage to give what it takes

To follow you in the way of sacrifice.

**Lord, have mercy;**

Time for reflecting on where our thinking and praying today have led us - In new directions? Accepting the reality of our current situation? Glimpsing new possibilities? Remembering our calling:

* To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
* To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
* To respond to human need by loving service
* To transform unjust structures of society
* To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation

So let us affirm our faith in God:

We believe in God

who created and is recreating the earth,

who so loved the world that he sent his Son

to share our human life,

and the Spirit to be our strength.

God has chosen and called us

to be people of hope in a bleak world,

to share the good things we have received,

to use creatively the gifts and skills we have been given,

to work for justice and freedom from oppression,

and to be a blessing to others.

In partnership with the people of God around the world,

and together in this Diocese of Bath and Wells,

we name ourselves as those who, in Jesus Christ,

and in the power of the Spirit,

will respond to the challenges that face us

work for God’s kingdom in this time and this place.

We pray:

In God, our limitations are not the final word;

our moments of crisis

are opportunities of eternal possibility,

and our weakness is taken up into the courage of God.

In Christ,

Our humanness is touched with divine life,

our tears are mingled with the longing love of Jesus,

and when we are alongside those who suffer

God himself is present.

In the Spirit,

there are no limits on our dreams,

no endings to hope, and a world beyond our seeing.

We can never live beyond the cherishing of God.

Final Prayer of Dedication

Lord, we are uncertain of the future

**But we know that you will go with us.**

We do not know how our needs will be met

**But we know that you have never failed us.**

We feel that our strength is depleted

**But we know that your grace is made perfect in weakness.**

We feel that we have nothing left to give

**But we know that you will re-fill us with gifts beyond our imagining.**

As we put the past behind us, with thanks for all you have done

**We ask that you will take us and use us in new ways.**

Pour upon us the gifts of your Spirit

**and lead us forward in hope and joy.**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**The love of God,**

**And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,**

**Be with us now**

**And remain with us always.**

**Amen**

A landscape with a body of water in the distance

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**‘Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -**

**Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,**

**Past put behind us, for the future take us:**

**Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone’.**