

# Parish of Central Exeter

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion  
15th Sunday after Trinity 20 September 2020

## The Mind of the Messiah

Welcome everyone.

*We continue with readings from Philippians, with reflections and intercessions by Richard. For Night Prayer we stay in Matthew's Gospel.*

We begin our service this morning with 'At the name of Jesus'. This hymn picks up the phrase from the reading. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI2rKRCWmOU>

### Call to worship

We are called to be people of faith in the midst of the world,  
and so we mix our worship and our work,  
our faith and our life.

We gather in our homes as people who live in the world and yet,  
we gather as people who have been called to see the world  
from a different viewpoint.

God has called us together,  
God has called us to be part of a community.  
God challenges us to consider questions of priority  
as we engage with the world.

In this time together, although physically apart,  
may God open our hearts, minds and eyes,  
allowing us to see deeper,  
helping us to live in the world  
while still offering a challenge to the ways of the world.  
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

*(Developed from a post by Rev Gord: <http://worshipofferings.blogspot.ca/>)*



### **Opening Prayer**

Through our worship of you this morning,  
may we find our hearts and minds  
at one with your mind.

Help us to be worthy  
of the gifts you share with us.  
Inspire us in this time together  
so that we may care more deeply for your good earth  
and all of creation. Amen.

### **Penitence**

It seems we cannot decide, Lord  
We say we will live to serve others,  
but end up meeting only our needs.

We claim to live in a way that honours Christ,  
but we do not take him to work, school, home.

We believe that the gospel can transform lives,  
(at least, for those who need it - not us).

Forgive us, gracious Lord.  
may we be ambassadors of grace.  
may we carry compassion to the hurting.  
may we be workers with you, our Lord and Saviour,  
to reach out and bring the kingdom of God  
to everyone we meet.

*Silence is kept*

### **Assurance of Pardon**

This is the good news:  
there is no ranking in God's kingdom.  
God graces everyone with the same gifts:  
mercy, restoration, new life.  
God has kept the covenant.  
We have been forgiven,  
we have been made new people.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.



*(Confession and assurance adapted from Thom Shuman in Lectionary Liturgies.)*

## Psalm 105 v 1-6

*(This is part of the Psalm appointed for this Sunday. There are echoes here of Paul's message in Philippians to be of the same mind as Christ.)*

O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name,  
make known his deeds among the peoples.  
<sup>2</sup> Sing to him, sing praises to him;  
tell of all his wonderful works.  
<sup>3</sup> Glory in his holy name;  
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.  
<sup>4</sup> Seek the Lord and his strength;  
seek his presence continually.  
<sup>5</sup> Remember the wonderful works he has done,  
his miracles, and the judgments he has uttered,  
<sup>6</sup> O offspring of his servant Abraham,  
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.



## Worship Song

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. Click on bottom left pink symbol in picture to start. The words appear on the screen.*

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p071nqf3>

## Prayer of illumination

Spirit of God,  
who danced at Creation's birth,  
dance with us now  
as we read your Word,  
that we may be changed,  
renewed  
and empowered for mission, Amen

## Reading

### Philippians 2:1-13 (NRSV, with vv 1-11 translated by Tom Wright)

<sup>1</sup> If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> Who, though in God's form, did not regard his equality with God as something he ought to exploit.

Instead, he emptied himself,  
And received the form of a slave,  
Being born in the likeness of humans.

And then, having human appearance,  
He humbled himself, and became  
Obedient even to death,

Yes, even the death of the cross.

And so God has greatly exalted him,  
And to him in his favour has given  
The name which is over all names:

That now at the name of Jesus  
Every knee within heaven shall bow —  
On earth, too, and under the earth;

And every tongue shall confess  
That Jesus, Messiah, is Lord,  
To the glory of God, the father.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

### Comments

The central theme of this passage is ‘the mind of the Messiah’ which Paul urges the Philippians to adopt, in the course of which he includes the poem which contains the inspiration for the hymn “At the name of Jesus.”

For the following comment, I’m heavily relying on the words of others. First, Earl Palmer in “The Lectionary Commentary” tells us that ‘the word translated “mind” means *perspective, frame of mind, outlook.*’ It’s important, he is saying, to be aware that “mind” does not refer simply to the activity we know as ‘thinking’. It does not simply denote a series of propositions that we accept as being true, or ponder over as to whether they are true; it is more about the orientation of our lives which is manifested in our outward behaviour.

With that in mind (as it were), we turn to what Tom Wright in his biography of Paul has to say about this passage:

‘Paul urges the Philippians to let their public behaviour match up to the gospel, which will mean sharing the Messiah’s suffering — as Paul himself has done and is doing [Paul is probably writing from prison in Ephesus]. In particular, he urges them to cherish and guard the unity and their holiness....

But how? The central appeal of the first half of the letter explains. Unity and holiness will come, and will only come, as the mind of the community and of the individuals within it are transformed to reflect the mind of the Messiah himself.

The “mind of the Messiah” is then the subject of one of the greatest Jesus-focused poems of all time. Echoing Genesis, the Psalms, and Isaiah in particular, it tells the story of Jesus going down to the lowest depths and then being exalted as Lord of the whole world. The poem works at several levels. It expresses many things Paul believed about Jesus himself — the truly human one, the ultimate Israelite, the Servant of the Lord, the embodiment of Israel's God in person ...

[Tom Wright now quotes the poem: verses 6-11]

[Tom Wright continues:] ‘This is the story of Adam (everyone), of Israel, of the One God — all in the form of a perfectly balanced poem about Jesus. The poem is cast in the idiom of a Hellenistic paeon of praise for a great man, but the content is of course deeply Jewish and scriptural. It is, in fact, a poem that sums up a great deal of what Paul believed: that Jesus is the messianic fulfilment of Israel’s story, the embodiment of Israel's One God, and hence the appointed Lord of the whole world. Its careful structure, giving full weight to the cross in the very centre, encapsulates exactly what Paul most deeply believed about the gospel. It is *because* of the cross — the defeat of the powers — that Jesus has been exalted as Lord and that every knee shall bend at his name.

This poem, I suggest, grows directly out of Paul’s much earlier belief ... about who Jesus was. But, shaped by his own sustained scriptural reflection and teaching, it now draws many different elements of that biblical material into a tight structure. By celebrating the ultimate victory and power of Jesus over all other powers in the universe, Paul has meditated deeply on the fact that even at his own lowest moment “the God who raises the dead” had come down to that same point. The poem may thus have functioned as one of the ladders out of Paul’s own pit of despair long before it then functioned as the model to teach the Philippians, and the church ever since, how to think.

The poem suggests, above all, a radical redefinition of *power*. This was the very theme that had concerned Paul so much in Ephesus and in his first letter to Corinth. It was the subject he found himself rethinking from the ground up as he discovered that the power of the gospel belonged utterly to God and not at all to himself. Learning how to think [but see Earl Palmer’s comment, above] as the Messiah had thought, Paul insisted, was the only way to radical unity in the church...

Paul, I suggest, came to this extraordinary expression of the Messiah’s mind not least through the combination of his Jesus-focused scriptural meditation, on the one hand, and his own involuntary imitation of the Jesus pattern, on the other. He too had been humbled under the weight of suffering. He had pondered the fact that this was the means by which Jesus had attained his exultation as Lord.’

My (Richard's) additional comment is this: knowing one's own mind can sometimes be hard enough (which is a major reason for my being a writer — the novelist Flaubert nailed it for me when he said, 'The art of writing is the art of discovering what you believe'). I suspect that, even more so, knowing 'the mind of the Messiah' sometimes (often? always?) counts as mission impossible in specific situations. So perhaps we can at least, on our good days, *aspire* to the 'mind of the Messiah,' even if we often miss by a mile.

### **Song**

*We now have the song: 'Thy Great Name'. It's a different approach from a traditional hymn, and perhaps slightly long. See what you think. Sung by Natalie Grant, with words on the screen.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXH0MjGe10s>

### **Affirmation of faith**

We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.  
We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Intercessions**

Eternal and most loving God,  
by whose creative power we are sustained,  
we call to mind and heart your world and your people,  
that through our prayers you would bless them.

Strengthen the worldwide communion of churches  
that we may serve you more faithfully.  
May we who confess your name  
be united in your truth,  
live together in your love,  
seek to emulate the mind of the Messiah,  
and reveal your glory to the world.

***Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.***

Bless and guide the powers that be,  
give wisdom to all in authority,  
that they too might seek to emulate the mind of the Messiah.  
We bring to you the pain of our world,  
especially... *[please focus on one or two current hotspots or issues]*.  
Guide this and every land in the ways of justice and peace,  
that we may honour one another and to seek the common good.  
***Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.***

Comfort and heal all who suffer  
the hurts of others' words and deeds,  
and the pains of flesh and feeling.  
We bring to you those we know  
who seek comfort and healing,  
especially... *[please focus on one or two individuals or families]*;  
give them courage and hope, enabling them  
to emulate the mind of the Messiah in their troubles;  
and give to those who care for them  
grace and skill to do your healing work.  
***Lord help us, Lord graciously hear us.***

Touch the lives of the poor, the dispossessed, the rough sleepers:  
the spiritual descendants of those whom Jesus sought out and befriended.  
We bring to you those who live in this our city,  
especially... *[please focus on one or two individuals or initiatives]*;  
and move our hearts to emulate the mind of the Messiah  
in our response to these our brothers and sisters.  
***Lord hear us, Lord graciously hear us.***

And we pray for ourselves,  
as individuals and as a community,  
and for the work we seek to do.  
Open us in all things to the mind of the Messiah  
and the promptings of your spirit,  
guiding us in our hope and vision for the future.  
***Merciful father, accept these prayers  
for the sake of your son our saviour Jesus the Messiah.***



## **The Peace**

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

## **A short Spiritual Communion**

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

O God,  
help me to trust you,  
help me to know that you are with me,  
help me to believe that nothing  
can separate me from your love  
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **An offertory prayer**

*We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.*

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,  
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.  
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,  
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,  
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

*As we prepare for communion you might like to access 'Pie Jesu' sung here by Voces8. Music by Gabriel Fauré. Prepare to skip ad at the right time! Worth it though!*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9al6HNOqSo>

*Pie Jesu Domine,  
Dona eis requiem (sempiternam).*

*Merciful Jesus  
Grant them rest (everlasting)*

*The words were written at least seven hundred years ago, as part of the poem Dies Irae (The Day of Wrath or Final Judgement) and are used in the Requiem Mass.*





*Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.*

*Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say*

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits you have given me,  
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

#### **Post Communion Collect**

God of the different way:  
You are not bound to human hierarchies and understandings.  
Help us to grow out of our restricted habits  
of thought and action  
and into the extraordinary and expansive patterns  
of Your Kingdom  
that we may become agents of change  
and healing in the world. Amen

#### **Commission & Benediction**

Go out in the strength of God's gracious gifts.  
Live lives worthy of the gospel of Christ.  
Stand firm in one spirit.  
Strive with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

And may the power and the presence of God go with you.  
May the Call of Christ lead you into fruitful labour.  
And may the Holy Spirit fill you with the joy of grace.  
In the name of Christ. Amen.  
*(Nathan Nettleton [www.laughingbird.net](http://www.laughingbird.net))*

**Our final hymn:** 'Love Divine, all loves excelling', sung at St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire. Words are on the screen. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07rt2jj>

**Scroll down for Coffee Break**

## Coffee Break

September 23 is the Autumn Equinox, with the day and night the same length.

In 2017 BBC Radio 4 used the equinox for a series of poetry readings throughout the day, appropriate for the time of year. One of these was 'Postscript' by Seamus Heaney.

And some time make the time to drive out west  
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,  
In September or October, when the wind  
And the light are working off each other  
So that the ocean on one side is wild  
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones  
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit  
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,  
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,  
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads  
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.  
Useless to think you'll park and capture it  
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,  
A hurry through which known and strange things pass  
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways  
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

"Postscript" by Seamus Heaney, from *The Spirit Level*. © Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996.

*This is about a transient experience that cannot be recaptured, and yet has a profound affect on the person involved. These are experiences that we all can have, but they are more likely to occur unexpectedly, than through searching.*

**Scroll down for  
Night Prayer**



## Night Prayer

If you are able to do so, you might wish to light a candle near a window.

*Our liturgy follows the theme of equinox: light and darkness*



## Balance

### Preparation

May the Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.

Our help is in the name of the Lord  
who made heaven and earth.

We thank you for the balance  
of light and dark  
at this time.

The balance leads  
to the glory of autumn.

The days grow ever shorter.  
The dark grows ever deeper.  
The cold comes ever sharper.

But the Light of the world  
shines brighter.

In his love we are warmed.  
In his light we may see

### We listen to a song

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qZ4u\\_2ZAlc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qZ4u_2ZAlc) remember to stop the ads.

*Words are below*

## Earth Song By Voces8

Sing, Be, Live, See.  
This dark stormy hour,  
The wind, it stirs.  
The scorched earth cries out in vain:  
O war and power,  
You blind and blur,  
The torn heart cries out in pain.

But music and singing  
Have been my refuge,  
And music and singing  
Shall be my light.  
A light of song,  
Shining Strong:  
Alleluia!  
Through darkness, pain, and strife,  
I'll Sing, Be, Live, See...  
Peace.

*(Words by Frank Ticheli)*

### **We seek forgiveness**

We have forgotten who we are.  
We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding of the cosmos.  
We have become estranged from the movements of the earth.  
We have turned our backs on the cycles of life.

We have forgotten who we are.  
We have sought only our own security.  
We have exploited simply for our own ends.  
We have distorted our knowledge.  
We have abused our power.

We have forgotten who we are.  
Now the land is barren.  
And the waters are poisoned.  
And the air is polluted.

We have forgotten who we are.  
Now the forests are dying,  
And the creatures are disappearing,  
And the humans are despairing.

We have forgotten who we are.

We ask for forgiveness.  
We ask for the gift of remembering,  
We ask for the strength to change.  
We have forgotten who we are.

*United Nations Environmental Sabbath program*

*Short silence*

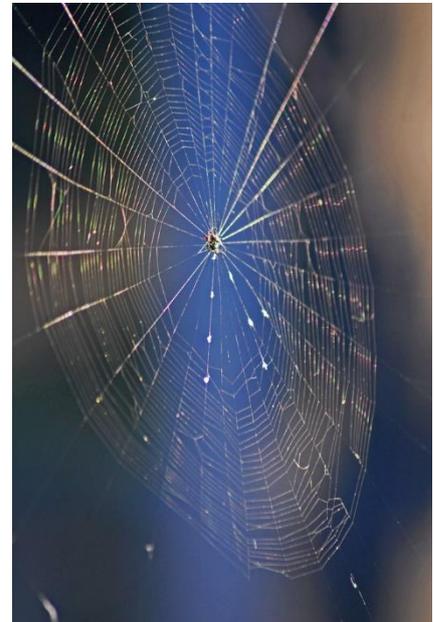
This we know.  
The earth does not belong to us;  
we belong to the earth.

This we know.  
All things are connected  
like the blood which unites one family.

All things are connected.  
Whatever befalls the earth  
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.

We did not weave the web of life;  
we are merely a strand in it.  
Whatever we do to the web,  
we do to ourselves.

*Chief Seattle*



### **Song**

*We now have the song: 'Think of a world without any flowers.' Sung for us by the virtual Junior Choir of Holy Trinity Church, Dubai. Words are below.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc9SEezP3AA>

1 Think of a world without any flowers,  
think of a world without any trees,  
think of a sky without any sunshine,  
think of the air without any breeze.  
We thank you, Lord, for flowers and trees and sunshine,  
we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name.

2 Think of the world without any animals,  
think of a field without any herd,  
think of a stream without any fishes,  
think of a dawn without any bird.  
We thank you, Lord, for all your living creatures,  
we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name.

3 Think of a world without any people,  
think of a street with no-one living there,  
think of a town without any houses,  
no-one to love and nobody to care.  
We thank you, Lord, for families and friendships,  
we thank you, Lord, and praise your holy name.

### Reading Matthew 20 1-16

#### The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

<sup>3</sup> “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ <sup>5</sup> So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. <sup>6</sup> About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

<sup>7</sup> “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

<sup>8</sup> “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

<sup>9</sup> “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. <sup>12</sup> ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

<sup>13</sup> “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. <sup>15</sup> Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

<sup>16</sup> “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”



Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard [Codex aureus Epternacensis]

## **Reflection**

**To: HR dept**

**Subject: Grievance over pay and treatment.**

I am using the formal grievance procedure to bring to your attention my unfair treatment when being employed by you last week.

I was hired first thing in the morning at the agreed rate and worked as directed the full session. When being paid I was horrified to find that other workers hired at later times the same day had received the same payment as me, despite having worked for far less time.

This is hardly an example of equal pay for equal work. When I expressed my displeasure at the time, I was informed that this was a perfectly normal working practice. If it is, I find it deplorable.

A Labourer.

**From: HR**

**Subject: Your grievance.**

Dear Friend

I am sorry you found it necessary to invoke our grievance procedure. It seems from your comments that you may belong to a different culture from the prevailing one in this kingdom. I am therefore taking this opportunity to explain our policy and practice.

Our overall policy is determined by our founder. We offer the opportunity to work for us to all people irrespective of nationality, ethnicity, culture, age, disability, gender identification, sexual orientation, or religious practice. We do not operate systems of keeping track of time worked or the nature of work undertaken, so this document you sent me which you call a time sheet is quite alien to our thinking. We prefer to see those who work for us as part of our family, which means they receive generous benefits over and above those that they might otherwise expect, although it is entirely up to the founder to decide what they are.

One of the benefits is the living wage, and if those workers hired later in the day had been paid pro rata, this would not have been a living wage for them, and it is their families that would have suffered. So the decision was not an arbitrary whim, but the application of a clear and positive social policy. We hope you will understand this.

You are choosing to regard our founder purely as an employer, and your relationship bound by a series of laws, contracts and market forces. In which case as you have admitted you have received the agreed wage which is also fully in accordance with established pay norms. However I could point out that the tasks you were assigned were actually less onerous than some that others in your cohort had to undertake, so if I use your argument, you were paid in fact more generously than some of your colleagues.

I acknowledge that this may well be different from the culture in which you have been brought up. But that is the way this kingdom works. I hope you will continue to work for us, and we are certainly happy to continue our relationship.

With best wishes

J BarJoseph (Partner)

### **Labour Litany**

God of all things, we thank you for work.  
For in our work you call us to give you honour,  
serve others and create a loving community.

God of grace and hospitality,  
we thank you for the many immigrants  
who come to work and live in our land.  
May we serve them as they serve us.  
May we welcome them,  
for the Word tells us that as we entertain strangers  
we entertain God.  
When we give drink to the thirsty or feed the hungry,  
we serve Jesus our Saviour.

God of justice,  
you call us to treat the labourers in the vineyard fairly.  
Your prophets decry the oppression of the workers.  
Your people travelled forty years  
to escape the oppressive work of the Egyptians.

Merciful and forgiving God,  
when we establish just and living wages,  
when we create safe and healthy working conditions,  
when we provide harassment-free working places,  
we are setting free the oppressed.  
We are creating justice.  
We are doing God's work.

Thanks be to God that in our work we can be faithful  
and that working with others makes us faithful to our God and Saviour.  
Amen.

*(adapted from Interfaith Worker Justice, "Labour Litany".)*



## Thanksgiving Prayer

God,  
you are  
bighearted  
with no limitation.  
You overgive and overpay,  
handing us not only the rewards due us,  
but heaping on us the fortunes of everlasting life and love.

We thank you that heaven is not just like our earth,  
that grace does not abide by our rules  
We are grateful that  
our little ways  
open out  
when  
we  
listen to you.

Lavish your spirit of kindness upon us.  
Help us give and never  
count the  
cost.

*(written by A. Osdieck, and posted on the website of The Center for Liturgy at Saint Louis University.)*

## Closing Prayer

Go out from here  
as workers in God's upside-down kingdom,  
where the last are first and the first are last,  
where needs are met in miraculous ways,  
and there is grace enough for all!

And may the blessing of God,  
the love of Jesus Christ,  
and the presence of the Holy Spirit  
surround you and sustain you in the coming days.  
Amen.

## Reflective music

*Our closing music- 'Autumn Equinox: A Quiet Journey' does just what it says. A gentle way to end the day*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yA7RtUGmbD0>

## Thanks

*Thanks to everyone who has contributed to these services: Especially Richard for the morning's reflection and intercessions. Other material taken or developed from various websites and blogs is normally identified in the text.*

