

St Thomas Methodist Church, Exeter

July 2025

Weekly Worship Resources

You are invited each week to offer prayers for others, and speak aloud, or think about, the words of the Lord's Prayer ...

Prayers of intercession

Hold before God in love, the people of the world: communities living in warfare and conflict ...; communities living with injustice ...; communities suffering from the effects of natural disasters and the climate crisis ...:

Hold before God in love, the people of this country: communities living in tension and uncertainty ...; families living with the shadow of domestic violence and abuse ...; people struggling with daily life and facing tough situations ...:

Hold before God in love, the people of your own community, your family and friends. Name those known to you who are in any need at this time ...:

Loving God, I pray that society may become characterised by the desire to serve one another; to help the weak and seek the common good. Help me to work out my place in the community of those who follow Jesus, and bless me to be a blessing to others.
Amen

Lord's Prayer [modern form]

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

06 July – Growing community

Paul concludes his letter to the Galatians by reminding them to look out for one another and bear each other's burdens while not shirking their individual responsibility to live a life of freedom and love. We are all called to care for and nurture one another so that we all grow in the love of Christ.

Carrying your own load but sharing your burden sounds complicated! But responsible members of a community work well together and help each other. Carrying our own load does not mean we can't also ask for help.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 9 Year C

Isaiah 66.10-14; Psalm 66.1-9; **Galatians 6.(1-6),7-16**; Luke 10.1-11,16-20

Galatians 6:7-16 [NRSVA]

⁷Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. ⁸If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Final Admonitions and Benediction

¹¹See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! ¹²It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to

compel you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. ¹⁴ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! ¹⁶ As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.



Thought for the week

If you have ever been to the gym, have you noticed what happens when people are lifting very heavy weights? For those who don't know, when people lift heavy weights, they often do so in pairs. One person will lie down and lift the weights; the other will act as a 'spotter'.

It is the spotter's role to stand by the person lifting the weights and ensure that they are OK. Sometimes, they don't need to do anything except be there. This gives the person lifting the weights confidence that, if anything goes wrong or the weights become too heavy, they have back-up and the spotter can step in and help them, either because they have been asked to help or because they spot something in their form that will hurt the weightlifter. The weightlifter and spotter then swap roles. Often, these pairs are not people who knew each other before being at the same gym, yet they are united around a common goal, of encouraging each other to lift weights safely.

Today's reading from Paul's letter to the Galatians asks something similar of us. Being responsible members of the community means that we should walk well together and help one another. Like the spotter in the gym, sometimes just being there and walking alongside someone is enough to give them confidence. However, sometimes people have burdens that are too heavy for them to carry alone, and we should be there to not only help when asked but notice when we can step in and help them carry those heavy weights.

A prayer of adoration

Holy Trinity, you are the perfect community and your partnerships are both beautiful and inspiring.

So we praise you, Creator God, for your heart of love that calls us to serve, to care, to give.

We praise you, Lord Jesus, for showing us how to encourage, to bless, to live.

We praise you, Living Spirit, for equipping us with the gifts to grow, to flourish, to share.

Holy Trinity, we praise you for calling us to persevere together in deed, worship and prayer. Amen

13 July – Encouraging words

At the start of his letter to the Christians at Colossae, Paul commends them for their faith in Jesus, which is bearing good fruit. He prays that they may continue to build up a community of love and mutual encouragement where everyone's needs are met.

Encouraging words are so important for ensuring people have the confidence to do the things that are asked of them. Today, we will consider some of the encouraging words Paul said to the church in Colossae and how they may also encourage us today.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 10 Year C

Deuteronomy 30.9-14; Psalm 25.1-10; **Colossians 1.1-14**; Luke 10.25-37

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

Paul Thanks God for the Colossians

3In 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.

9For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10**so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. **11**May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully **12**giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. **13**He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, **14**in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Thought for the week

There was once a man who was admitted to hospital for a procedure. The procedure was seen as routine and something he was expected to go home from that day. However, the man was scared; he had never been to the hospital before and wasn't sure what was going to

happen or how he was going to feel. He had to go in alone as he had no one to accompany him.

Once in hospital, he encountered a nurse who changed his experience. The nurse was full of encouraging words. She didn't tell him he was being silly for being worried about something minor; she noticed the way he was feeling and listened to him. This kindness and encouraging words not only affected the man in the hospital but also had ripples that went out into the wider community years later.

When the man returned home, he told his family how this nurse had spoken to him and made him feel. His granddaughter was listening and was inspired; years later, she became a nurse and remembered how the words had affected her grandad. Every time she met someone anxious while waiting for an operation, she treated them with kindness and encouraged them, just as that nurse had done for her grandad all those years before.

This is what we can take from the Colossians reading today: not only should we find the words Paul gave to the church inspiring, but it is showing us how we should be encouraging of others.



A prayer of approach

Loving God, when we are hesitant, encourage us; when we are afraid, reassure us; when we are struggling, bless us; when we are complacent, challenge us; when we are divided, unite us

and wherever we are, use us to encourage, reassure, bless, challenge and unite others, in Jesus's name. Amen

20 July – Seeing the invisible God

In one of Paul's richest theological reflections on the coming of Jesus, he talks about the crucified Christ as the invisible God made visible. True authority and power are not found in the pomp and might of Caesar, but in the humility and suffering of Jesus.

Today we consider how we see God, not just with our eyes, but how we perceive and know his character, as revealed in Christ.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 11 Year C

Genesis 18.1-10a; Psalm 15; **Colossians 1.15-28**; Luke 10.38-42

Colossians 1:15-28 [NRSVA]

The Supremacy of Christ

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;

¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him – ²³ provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

Paul's Interest in the Colossians

²⁴I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. ²⁵I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. ²⁷To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

³⁸Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Thought for the week:

In the Colossians reading, Paul points out that it is in Jesus that we see the invisible God made visible. Can you imagine if the invisible God was suddenly present in your own front room? Would you be too busy and distracted to notice? Perhaps we're a bit like Martha in today's Gospel reading – we are so busy running around that we don't have time to sit and spend time with the important people in our lives. We can feel resentful of those who do seem to have time to sit and chat – why don't they come and help us with our many tasks instead?

But Jesus encourages Martha to stop 'doing' and to follow Mary's example of sitting at his feet and listening to him. This would have

been an even bigger deal in Jesus' time; religious teaching in the synagogue took place in a room where only men were allowed. Martha was doing what was expected of women in Jewish households and being in the kitchen preparing the food for the guests. However, Jesus still didn't tell Mary she should be busy and help Martha! He told Martha the best part was to listen and hear him with him. However much we have to do, and however we are restricted by other people's expectations of us, we should sit and listen to Jesus, the invisible God made visible, just as Mary did.



A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

We praise you, God of encounter and promise, for those kingdom moments in our lives that have been turning points; those encounters that have given us fresh eyes, new insights, warmed hearts; those people whose eyes have been so fixed on you that they have inspired us in our faith and in our daily lives. We praise and thank you for all the ways you meet us in one another, and most of all we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen

A sending out prayer

Lord, life is busy.

Help us this week to take some time to sit at your feet

and truly see and hear from you.

Be in our decision-making and in our thoughts. Amen

27 July – What really matters?

The congregation in Colossae is being pulled towards concerns about special foods and days, but Paul encourages them to keep focused on Jesus. He uses a number of images to highlight the completeness of our life in Christ.

Paul is keen to stress to the Colossians that, in a world where philosophies and fads come and go, what really matters is Christ – the one in whom the fullness of God dwells and in whom we find fullness of life. This week, we seek to place Jesus at the centre of our lives and concentrate again on the things that really matter in a world full of distractions.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 12 Year C

Genesis 18.20-32; Psalm 138; **Colossians 2.6-15,(16-19)**; Luke 11.1-13

Colossians 2:6-15

Fullness of Life in Christ

⁶As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. ¹¹In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; ¹²when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴erasing the record that stood against us with its legal

demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.



Thought for the week:

Today's Bible passages call upon their readers and hearers to think about what really matters and embrace again the centrality of Christ Jesus, who himself was completely centred on the divine community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is depth, permanence, creativity and wisdom in these relationships, a deep sense of what really matters. All this is in contrast to so many things that are superficial or transient. So many fads and fashions are here one moment and gone the next – does anyone remember flares and platform boots, cool Britannia, girl power? Today's newspaper headlines are tomorrow's chip papers. Philosophies and festivals that are all the rage today will be passé tomorrow.

Last year saw a relentless series of elections around the world. All sorts of philosophies and ideologies have been used to promise all manner of utopian futures with varying degrees of honesty and compassion. At the same time the celebrity world, aided and abetted by social media, offers images of beauty and happiness that so often result in disappointment when they prove to be vacuous. The *Barbie* movie of 2023 cleverly critiqued the shallowness of the popular cultures of beauty and consumerism in a search for authentic human experience.

In contrast to the transient and the ephemeral, Colossians is clear that the centrality of Christ provides the reference point from which to

examine the philosophies and fashions of the age and to see what really matters. For the Christian, the centrality of Christ in their life is symbolised in their baptism (Colossians 2:12), which is a clear, counter-cultural statement demonstrating to whom we belong. The language used about baptism in Colossians – dying and rising – makes it very clear that to be in Christ is to be in a new relationship with God, oneself and the world around.

In Christ, we are enabled to see what really matters. This is no viewpoint from which to gaze passively at the world around. Rather, it is a viewpoint that informs how we live, for we ‘have been made *alive* with Christ’ – alive to the beauty, fragility and needs of the world around; alive to who God is, God’s love for the world and to what God is doing, and seeking to do, in the world; and alive to our own potential and possibilities as partakers in God’s mission to the world.

The Olympic Gold Medal swimming champion Adam Peaty spoke to the BBC in 2024 of how he had achieved so much but felt so empty. Faith in Christ and the support of the Christian community rescued him from a place of brokenness and gave him the peace and fulfilment he craved: *‘Sport is not the real world, I spent most of my life kind of validating, getting my gratification or life's fulfilment from my results and that led me to some dark moments. And it's really living your life on a quantifiable measure of results, results, results instead of how are the people around me? How am I, how is my son, how is my family? All these things actually do matter; it's not about your job, it's not just about performance. And to get that, the only place I found it was at church.*

‘For me, the only fulfilment and the only peace is every Sunday at church. It gives me a nice balance. It is those everyday conversations or prayers with myself that keep me inspired, but also keep me on the right track that I’ve got a gift that I will use every single day. Why wouldn’t I use this gift?’

It’s not only Olympic Champions who need to reorientate their perspective on life and faith. All of us can know moments when we feel lost or God seems distant. Perhaps today is a day for some of us

to stop and take some time to centre ourselves again on Jesus, the one in whom we find the fullness of life that is truly divine.

A prayer of confession and assurance of forgiveness

Faithful God, forgive us when we lose sight of what really matters; when we get sidetracked by the trivial and the trite, the superficial and the shallow.

Forgive us, and draw us back to your Son Jesus Christ, who embodies all that is truthful, vital and eternal.

Creator God, thank you for hearing our prayers and for your reassurance that we matter to you.

You love us so much and long for us to be fully rooted in you, to rely on you and to reflect your forgiveness, grace and redeeming love to all the world. Amen

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