

## Pause for Prayer, 26th June 2020

On 6th March some of us met in church to take part in a service prepared by the women of Zimbabwe under the auspices of the World Day of Prayer. The theme was 'Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk', based on the reading from John's Gospel, Chapter 5:

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids - blind, lame and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

The congregation was asked to reflect on the following questions:

- Where in our lives and communities do we need to hear Jesus' life-changing question: "Do you want to be made well?"
- What are the obstacles or excuses that hinder our transformation?
- What does "Rise! Take your mat and walk" mean for us?

and then everyone present was asked to make commitments to support our communities with actions of love, peace and reconciliation.

How timely these commitments were made in view of the fact that, unbeknown to us at the time, in the space of 17 days afterwards, normal life, as we knew it, came to an end with the imposition of the lockdown in an attempt to stop the spread of the coronavirus!

Also, how apt the commitments were, with the overwhelming majority using words like

support others (neighbours, work colleagues, young people)

pray for others

to be a good friend and neighbour

caring

listening

make time for prayer and bible reading

more visible in the community for good

helping each other

patience

inclusivity

At the end of the service invitations were issued to discuss these commitments and pray about them during the Pause for Prayer slot on 27th March but that, of course, did not happen.

Let us pray now for ourselves, the troubled, reconciliation and all those affected by Covid 19.

Commitment to Action

Thank you, Lord  
that as we grow in faith  
so we grow in commitment  
to those you call us to serve.

May we serve with the love of Christ  
and bring comfort that comes from God.  
May we share burdens  
through the power of Christ  
and bring strength that comes from God.

May we view others  
through the eyes of Christ  
and show compassion that comes from God.  
May we respond  
with the forbearance of Christ,  
and show grace that comes from God.

May our faith in Christ be lived out  
in commitment to serve our neighbour. Amen

Dear God, thank you for the many acts of kindness that have been shown in our community as we strive to support each other during this strange time.  
You have taught us that we are members one of another and that none of us lives to himself alone.  
We thank you for the community of which we are part: for those who share with us in its activities and for all who serve its varied interests. Help us to make our own contribution to the community and to learn to be good neighbours, that by love we may serve one another.  
Amen

Come, Holy Spirit, come.  
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with us.  
Open our eyes, Father, to your world full of your beauty, love, grace.  
Remind us of your Son our Saviour, who brings forgiveness, reconciliation and hope to broken, hurting people.  
And may your Holy Spirit equip us with wisdom, truth and the desire to bring about your kingdom in our hearts, homes, communities and world.  
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with us.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Lord of the harvest, we rejoice in the bounty of your world;  
we thank you for the rich harvest it produces.  
We remember those who do not have enough: the families struggling to put food on the table. We pray for those who have more than they require: teach us to value people more than things.  
Please bless all the volunteers working tirelessly in food banks. Help us to set our hearts on your kingdom of love and justice, and to seek to do your will here on earth, Amen.  
Lastly, let us pray the Prayer for all affected by Coronavirus taken from the Church of England website:

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious,  
be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love,  
in Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen