

Pause for Prayer: August 2021

Theme: Rest and renewal

30 minutes of prayer with periods of silence throughout for your own private prayer.

We meet in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

As we acknowledge God's presence with us now, let's take a few moments of quiet, to still our hearts and minds and to put aside all those things that have occupied us so far today.

Lord God, we sit here, aware of your presence, in us and around us.
Help us to attune our hearts and minds to your will
as we bring our needs, and the needs of others, before you in prayer.

The month of August is traditionally a time for holidays, a time to take a break from the routine of our day-to-day lives and seek instead a period of rest, relaxation and renewal. Jesus recognised the importance of rest, of getting away from it all, both for himself and his disciples, as this short reading makes clear.

A reading from Mark, chapter 6 (verses 30-32)

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

And so we pray

Lord God, be with all those who are holidaying at this time. Keep them safe on their travels, whether by road, rail, air or sea, and no matter whether their journey is long or short. Grant them a period of rest and relaxation; a time to enjoy the company of family and friends, a time to meet new acquaintances and forge new friendships, a time to discover new experiences or re-discover past interests. May it also be a time to re-assess priorities, to reconsider what are the important things in life, and seek to find a good balance between working hours and leisure time.

Although many look forward to holidays with eager anticipation, we recognise that this is not always the case. Holidays are not always a joyful and positive experience.

And so we pray

Lord God, we ask that you will be with all families for whom holidays are a stressful time, where the extra hours spent in each others company create additional tension, where tempers become frayed and the bonds that once held the family together become stretched to breaking point. Hold these families in your gentle hands; help them to step back from the brink of breakdown and to turn away from anger, hatred and violence. Sow the seeds of love, understanding and compassion in their hearts, allowing them to rebuild relationships and grow together.

The last 18 months have been difficult for businesses reliant on tourist and holiday trade. Many have closed permanently, unable to withstand such a long period with little or no income. The irony is that, this summer, there has been a big increase in the numbers of people wishing to holiday in this country, taking advantage of our beautiful

beaches and picturesque countryside. And so we think today of these businesses, large and small, that serve the tourist trade - the cafes, pubs and restaurants, the shops and hotels. We think of those that have worked hard to adapt to a constantly changing situation. And we think of all those men and women, employers and employees, who now find themselves without a job.

We might like to bring to mind specific people, whose names we may not even know, who have made our own holidays all the more successful and enjoyable. And bring to mind too, specific people who have lost their jobs in the tourist industry.

And so we pray

Lord God, we bring before you now all those who work in the tourist industry, serving the needs of holiday makers. Many work unsociable hours and are low paid, and we often overlook them or take them for granted. And yet we must acknowledge that they make a valuable contribution, both to the success of our holiday plans and to the economy of their local area and the country as a whole. Teach us to be more appreciative of their skills and contribution, and to be more aware of how much we depend upon the work of others.

We ask that you look with compassion on those who, because of the collapse of the tourist trade during the pandemic, now find themselves unemployed. Give them the will to seek new jobs, the courage to re-train where necessary, and the hope that the future can look brighter than the present.

For some families the possibilities for taking a holiday, a break from the routine of daily life, are few and far between. The reasons are many and varied, but often include financial restraints and caring for someone with special needs. Many charities and organisations endeavour to help out by providing holiday breaks designed specifically around children or adults with special needs, and by assisting with financial support.

We might like to bring to mind specific organisations and projects we know of, like, for example, the Mothers' Union Away From It All scheme.

And so we pray

Lord God, we commend to you all charities and organisations who recognise the additional pressures that some families face in their day-to-day lives and who seek to support them by providing opportunities for short breaks or holidays. We know these organisations rely on financial donations to be able to continue their work and so we pray for a generosity of spirit amongst the general public. They also rely on the willingness of others to provide voluntary support, working under the guidance of the paid staff, and so we pray that volunteers will continue to come forward, offering their skills with patience and understanding, always mindful of the particular needs of those for whom the holidays are designed.

We recognise that periods of rest and renewal are not for only holiday times; they are a necessary part of life and we should try to build them into our regular routine. As Christians we are invited to come before God, to lay down our burdens, our fears, our anxieties, and ask for his rest and renewal.

A reading from Matthew, chapter 11 (verses 28-30)

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

We might like to bring to mind the burdens that we would wish to lay down.

And so we pray

Lord God, when we are weary, teach us to come to you for refreshment.

When we are worn out, call us to come to you for restoration.

When we are lost, help us to come to you for guidance.

When we are troubled, teach us to come to you for peace.

When we are lonely, call us to come to you for love.

For in you we can find all we need; you are our light in the darkness and chaos of our lives. You are the love that will not let us go. You are our strength in hours of weakness.

You are our rock and our refuge, protecting us from the storms of life.

We are your creation and you are our God.

As we come to the end of this time of prayer, and of rest and renewal in God's presence, let's close by saying the grace together

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen**