

April Prayers

Desert Places

God of heaven and earth: God who made the universe beyond our knowing and the hairs on our head, we are told to believe that you are everywhere; but so often, and for so many, it feels like you have withdrawn.

For the people of Japan, for those still hoping for good news of friends and relatives; for those suffering the effects of radiation; for those already grieving; for those feeling the effects of hunger and thirst; for all living in a desert from which you have withdrawn. Come to us, we pray

For those in Libya; for those living with injustice in Palestine; in Myanmar; in Indonesia; in Sri Lanka; countless places and people, living in a desert from which you seem to be absent. Come to us, we pray.

For the church and our church; facing pressure from beyond; discord from within, when our churches feel like a desert place from which you have withdrawn. Come to us, we pray.

For ourselves, our families and friends, when loneliness, fear, shame, and anxiety, and busyness, take root, and you seem to have withdrawn from us. Come to us, we pray.

Lord, in our world, in our church, in our lives, when it seems to us that you have withdrawn, Make yourself known to us afresh. Make your presence felt anew. Make it true for us, for our church, for our world, that your name is Emmanuel, God with us,

Because that is the name in which we pray.

Lambing Season:

Loving God, we come to you in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

As we look at the effects of sin in our world, we despair and lack the power to change. We tell ourselves it will be alright, that you are victorious, that the Spirit will overcome. But the suffering goes on – and we feel powerless to change it. And then we see the powerlessness of the lamb.

So beyond our imagining, and our natural capacity to hope, may your strength be made perfect in our weakness.

When we see the insanity of trade laws that favour countries like ours, but keep in poverty the millions we will never see – we long for the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

When we see our government making rules that seem to widen the gap between the powerful and the powerless, we long for the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

When we see your church, preoccupied with secondary issues, and feel our own guilt in doing the same, we long for the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

When we feel ourselves ashamed in your presence, proud in your presence, repulsed by your presence, Lord Jesus, look us again in the eye, Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world and our sin.

Show us how to be weak in your presence, in order that your strength may somehow be made perfect here and now.

Our Father in Heaven

Our Father, who art in heaven

Hallowed be thy name

Loving God, we keep calling you that, but there is a lot in our world which seems to suggest otherwise. In our own lives, in the world under our nose, in the darkest corners of our planet's injustice, it seems ridiculous to pray to an all powerful God, who is also a God of justice. There is much in our world that questions either your power or your goodness. In every place of darkness, it seems that your name is dragged through the dirt. And so we pray,

Our Father who art in heaven ...

And yet we have seen and felt and heard you at work, active, in the very places where you seem to be absent. Active in the lives of those who seem to suffer most; bringing freedom and liberty to those whose lives seem hopeless. We have seen your Gospel bring liberty in all its fullness. And in the quiet we remember those situations in our lives, and in our world, where we have seen you at work, and are able to praise your name.

Our Father, who art in heaven...

We praise you as the God who has not wound the world up and left it to tick, but who is active here and now. So we pray for the discernment to see the places where you are at work, and for the courage to find you in those places. Forgive us for separating people from issues, but may we see your face in both. Forgive us when we allow some righteous cause to justify loveless action, forgive us for allowing programmes to eclipse relationships.

Our Father, who art in heaven...

(we pray for the church in all places, that by our relationships with one another, your name will be made holy)

(we pray for our friends, and those dear to us...)

Make us members of your body, and may your body here on earth be Christ-centred in our worship, and life changing in our ministry. In your loving grace, sanctify the church that goes by your name, make us ever more the body of Christ, ever more faithfully engaged in the mission of Christ, whose people are characterised by the pray he taught us, and which we now pray in full.

Grace

God of grace, for the everyday blessings we take for granted and think of as ordinary, and for the acts of grace that we encounter as extraordinary, we give you thanks.

For the warmth of friends, the availability of food and water, the advantages of education, we give you thanks.

For the freedom of our decisions, for the gift in every breath we draw, for the blessing of every moment we live, we give you thanks.

We thank you for all that you have made us to be, and pray that by your grace we would grow into who we truly are in your sight,

So that those who hunger and thirst and have no education, might benefit from our abundance.

So that those who live under the darkness of injustice and the yoke of the oppressor might be affected by our worship of you.

So that those who oppress and exploit and trample the poor, might be confronted by your loving grace, and when we are to be found among them, open our eyes.

God of grace, forgive us our sin, remake us from inside out, change our characters, and change the world through us.