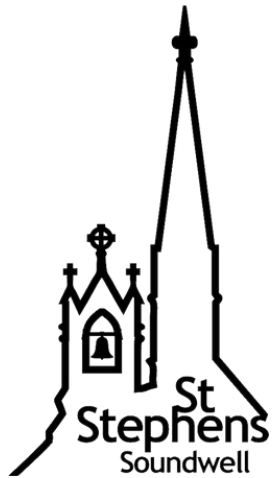




Seeking
Solace
with
God ...



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Seeking Solace with God ...

Autumn Glory

Psalm 65:11-12

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy.

Autumn is a time of great colour as nature reveals its glory and the leaves prepare to fall from the trees. There is coolness in the air as we head into winter and then look forward to the spring. We thank God for his creativity and offer gratitude for all that nature provides. As our God of all seasons transforms the earth, we too can be transformed, by his Spirit.

Dear Lord, I thank you for this special season where we can appreciate your awesome wonders and creation. As we look at the autumn time, we give you praise and glory because through you Lord, all things were made, and without you, nothing was made that has been made.

I pray that we see the beauty of your creation, and not man. Have your divine way in our hearts, souls and minds.

Amen.

God of the seasons, there is a time for everything; there is a time for dying and a time for rising. We need courage to enter into the transformation process.

God of autumn, the trees are saying goodbye to their green, letting go of what has been. We, too, have our moments of surrender, with all their insecurity and risk. Help us to let go when we need to do so.

God of fallen leaves lying in coloured patterns on the ground, our lives have their own patterns. As we see the patterns of our own growth, may we learn from them.

God of misty days and harvest moon nights, there is always the dimension of mystery and wonder in our lives. We always need to recognize your power-filled presence. May we gain strength from this.

God of harvest wagons and fields of ripened grain, many gifts of growth lie within the season of surrender. We must wait for harvest in faith and hope. Grant us patience when we do not see the blessings.

God of geese flying south for another season, your wisdom enables us to know what needs to be left behind and what needs to be carried into the future. We yearn for insight and vision.

God of flowers touched with frost and windows wearing white designs, may your love keep our hearts from growing cold in the empty seasons.

God of life, you believe in us, you enrich us, you entrust us with the freedom to choose life. For this we are grateful.

Amen.

Creator God, for daily bread and all who work to bring your harvest home, we bring our thanks today.

Forgive our ingratitude, we who have so much, yet waste what you have given.

For those whose harvest is poor, whose crops have withered, water tainted, children starve, help those who bring relief and bestow on us an unaccustomed generosity, that all might share from your garden and all might sing your praise.

Creator God, provider of all, we bring our thanks today.

Amen.

Hymn

For the fruits of his creation, thanks be to God;

For his gifts to every nation, thanks be to God;

For the ploughing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,

Future needs in earth's safekeeping,

Thanks be to God.

Morning Reflection

Psalm 143:8 (The Message)

If you wake me each morning with the sound of your loving voice, I'll go to sleep each night trusting in you.

When we awake, it takes between thirty minutes to one hour for our bodies to be switched on. We leave our dreams and the impressions they have left on us, to focus upon the day ahead. Praying as we wake creates a sanctuary for our souls as we allow this "coming to" process to begin.

Although we may need to act and move and begin our day, by praying we can dwell a little longer in our Father's arms. This time allows us to take our thoughts captive and give them to God. Whether it is a dream memory, an anxiety or worry or sadness, as we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and open to the Lord we see transformation in these areas. In addition, morning prayer allows us time to give thanks, to count our blessings and feel the love of God at work in us.

Dear Father,

I give you this day, may your Spirit be at work in me. Clear the mix of dreams and thoughts from my mind and help me to embrace everything that you have for me today. I give you the mental and physical tiredness I can feel and ask for your life to flow through me. May your hope stir in those who are close to me, and bring joy into their hearts. May your love cause me to find new energy, ideas and solutions throughout the day. And may your truth allow me to stay on track and walk confidently in all that I do.

Father, I give you this day.

Amen.

Lord God

You are the glorious morning,
you are refreshment and peace.

You are the sounds as the dawn breaks,
you are the rose that smells sweet.

You are the Lord, my creator,
you are the wonder of life.

You are the great words of wisdom,
I read them and fill up inside.

You are the wonderful sunrise,
you are the restorer of hope.

You are the air that we breathe now,
you are the warm winter coat.

You are the Lord, my creator,
you are a love without end.

You are all grace and forgiveness,
I stand loved and free as your friend.

I come before you O Lord.

As the sun rises may your hope rise up in me.

As the birds sing may your love flow out of me.

As the light floods into this new day,
may your joy shine through me.

I come before you, O Lord

and drink in this moment of peace,

that I may carry something of your hope,
love and joy today in my heart.

Amen.

Hymn

Morning has broken like the first morning.

Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.

Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!

Praise for them springing, fresh from the Word.

Evening Rest

Psalm 4:8

I will both lie down, and sleep in peace; for you alone
O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

There are many things that we process as we sleep. It is known that the body carries out essential repairs, that our minds do the critical work of sorting and processing our experiences, and our emotions can find solace in sleep. Praying is a little like making a bed. Our prayers soften the place to lie and rest, they cover us with warmth and love and hold us when we are alone.

So many times we can almost feel too tired to pray before sleep, yet just a short prayer can draw us into a good place for rest. As we pray we allow God to "hold" and "keep" things for us, our worries or hopes, our sadness or joys.

O Lord, I long to find true rest and so I come to you,
As I lay down I need you near, to hold me all night
through.

Please help my mind to wind right down and guide my dreams to heal.

O Lord, restore my tired limbs.

Help me to find peace here.

As I close my eyes to sleep,
come help me to trust in you,

And all the loved ones I hold dear,
that you would hold them too.

O Lord, the night time flies so fast,
may I be blessed with time,

And sleep that is deep and peaceful,
a heavenly dream-time.

So, as I lay down into bed tonight,

I rest within your care,

And trust that you'll be beside me,
you hear my every prayer.

Amen.

Dear Father in Heaven,

Here, safe with you, I drink in your peace. Help me to sift through the many experiences, feelings and thoughts I have encountered today. I allow myself to rest, to wind down and to be still. Help me to surrender all I am to you, my fatigue, my concerns, my hopes and fears. As I sleep tonight, I choose to hold your hand. I choose to live with you. I choose to believe, I choose to trust, I choose you always.

Amen

Father,

You know my worries and care for my troubles. So I give these heavy concerns to you. I lay these situations at your feet.

The empty cross is a place of rest, where I can reflect upon your resurrection and the moment when love overcame. Thank you that your love in me can transform the landscape of my life. I walk with peace into the new day, and put my hope in you. Nothing is outside of your redeeming love, might I rest now in the knowledge that you will light my path and guide my life.

Amen.

Hymn

The day thou gavest Lord has ended:
The darkness falls at thy behest;
To thee our morning hymns ascended;
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

Peace and Comfort – as you pray

Psalm 29:11 (The Message)

God makes his people strong, God gives his people peace.

Finding God's peace is a never ending process of receiving. We cannot collect what we need for a week or a day or even an hour. Only in the moment can we

choose to receive it. How?

We begin by acknowledging that Jesus is Lord, that we live in grace and that eternity awaits us. The enemies of peace are fear, shame and pain. Even when we ask for this peace and don't feel it, it is there underpinning the whole of our being. Like a safety net beneath us, this peace that passes all understanding is a constant. It does not change, it cannot fail. It is wider and deeper than we can ever imagine. Peace is so important to our hearts, our minds and our bodies, so coming before God will always bring more peace into our lives. It's important that we take time with our prayers, because God knows that we need to slow down, we need to still our minds, we need to rest our hearts.

Lord God,

You promise the peace of a still lake
even in the midst of a storm.

You promise the peace of a slumbering child
even in the middle of tension and disagreement.

You promise the peace of a poppy field
even in the place of heartbreak and devastation.

Your promise is a peace that surpasses our human understanding. So I choose to rest by the still waters, to lie down and rest amongst the poppies. Your resurrection declared peace over trauma, power over death, and life everlasting. I trust in you.

Amen.

Dear Father,

We come before you our Lord, Saviour and friend. We journey with you through every season of our lives.

Thank you that you hear every prayer and petition of our hearts. We lay out before you the great trouble we feel, the stresses we are under, the losses we have endured, the burdens we carry and the doubts and fears that can consume us. You hold each of us in your care. You remain, you abide with us and within us. We are always safe in your care.

Amen.

Come dress us Lord in comfort. Give us new shoes, so that our feet might tread steadily across this difficult life terrain. Give us new clothes, so that our vulnerabilities are covered and our souls protected at this turbulent time. Give us a new crown, perfect to our size, unique and real, one that reminds us of who we are in this season.

Come shower us Lord with peace. Cleanse us with grace, may it fall softly upon each moment, bringing restoration in these harsh days.

Come shower us Lord with peace. Refresh us with hope, may clean dew pour into every shadow of despair that we endure.

Come shower us Lord with peace. Refill us with faith, may it overflow in our souls and rise high in our hearts. Lord, thank you that you are our comfort and peace. Amen.

Hymn

Put peace into each other's hands
and like a treasure hold it,
Protect it like a candle flame,
with tenderness enfold it.
Put Christ into each other's hands,
he is love's deepest measure;
In love make peace, give peace a chance,
And share it like a treasure.

Healing and Strength – feel his presence

Psalm 34:17-18

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

Healing can often be a hard thing to pray for. We find it easier to accept that God can heal in an emotional or spiritual sense, yet find it hard to believe that he can change the physical world. Praying for healing requires that we engage with the Creator who is always renewing and transforming the natural world around us. Prayer is like a fragrant oil bringing grace, love, truth, hope and healing. Prayer is faith in action, always causing change and connecting with eternity.

Lord God,

We dwell in your house, drink in your presence
and find peace and rest in your arms.

We believe in your name, ask for your healing,
and believe and trust in your love.

We thank you for your sacrifice, receive all you have
for us and pray and ask for restoration.

We need your touch. We wait on you.

You are our Saviour, our friend, and our hope.

Amen

God of heaven and earth, in these times of isolation
apart from loved ones, distant from friends, away from
neighbours, thank you that there is nothing in all of
creation, not even coronavirus,

that is able to separate us from your love.

May your love that never fails continue to be shared,
through the kindness of strangers looking out for each
other, and for neighbours near and far. As we
recognise our shared vulnerability, each of us grateful
for every breath, and willing everyone to know the gift
of a full and healthy life – keep us all in your care.

Amen.

Almighty Graceful One

(a prayer for strength and patience)

I need to give out so much more than I can give alone.

I need the strength that comes from you, Almighty
graceful one.

I need the strength of wisdom, so that just like a tree, I

can grow roots deep in you, that others do not see.
I need the strength of gentle peace, so that just like
the sea, I can rise and fall each day and lead others
gently onwards.

I need the strength of steady love so that just like
wind, I can blow or hold my breath with patience deep
and kind.

I need to give out much more than I can give alone.
I need the strength that comes from you, Almighty
graceful one.

Amen

Hymn

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear,

It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,
and drives away our fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
and calms the troubled breast;

'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary, rest.

Hope and Love – there for all

Psalm 33: 22

Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as
we hope in you.

Hope is like a light within us, illuminating each moment of our lives. Yet there are times when we feel hopeless. It is possible to suffer for days, or long periods of time. So it is important to pray daily for hope to arise in our hearts.

The things that lead us into a hopeless place have all been overcome, redeemed and restored by Christ's death on the cross. The resurrected Lord triumphs over decay and destruction, covers rejection and failure, and transforms tragedy and fear. As we focus our hearts and minds on God's kingdom we are reminded that we are in the world but not of it. We carry this light within our souls, like a torch shining the way for us and providing light, guidance and hope for others.

Almighty God,

Author of life, Lord of all creation, from whom comes the beauty of each flower bud and every new born child. Thank you for your everlasting forgiveness and eternal hope. You turn the pages of our lives, filling everyday with forgiveness, erasing our failings and encouraging us to try again.

You are the author of life, who brings fresh expectation into each day.

You reach into the darkness with hope, truth and light. Stretch out your strong hand in this situation, hold and rescue those who have suffered. Let your almighty love move mountains, cross seas and breathe life into the darkest places. Light that redeems. Light that

restores. Light that heals. Light that protects. Light that saves. There is nothing higher, stronger or greater than your love.

Come flood this heart with your hope.

Amen.

Dear Lord,

Where does my hope come from when I wait on you?

Yes, hope flies in with wings of truth

and changes life anew.

For love has risen up with Christ,

it reigns for all to see.

And more than this I know

your life and Spirit work through me.

Amen

Love never fails. Even in the darkest moments, love gives hope.

Love compels us to fight against coronavirus

alongside our sisters and brothers living in poverty.

Love compels us to stand together in prayer with our neighbours near and far.

Love compels us to give and act as one.

Now it is clear that our futures are bound together more tightly than ever before.

As we pray in our individual homes around the nation, and around the world,

we are united as one family.

So, let us pause and find a moment of peace, as we lift our hearts together in prayer. Amen

Hymn

In Christ alone, my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease.
My comforter, my all in all,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

Thank You God

Psalm 100 (The Message)

On your feet now – applaud GOD! Bring a gift of laughter, sing yourselves into his presence. Know this: God is God, and God, GOD. He made us; we didn't make him. We're his people, his well-tended sheep. Enter with the password; "Thank you!" Make yourselves at home, talking praise. Thank him. Worship him. For God is sheer beauty, all-generous in love, loyal always and ever.

Our thankfulness is like a bedrock to our lives. It keeps a firm foundation of God's saving grace. To sing songs of praise and live with this gratitude in our hearts is a gift from God. Our praise is a brilliant reminder to ourselves, those around us and those that oppose the truth, that Jesus is alive! And yes, as we begin to "count our blessings", live with gratitude and

*lift our eyes to heaven, we can drink in the truth,
majesty and promises that have been laid out before
us.*

Gracious God, as we go about our busy and frenetic lives, we thank you for your on-going unfailing love, that at times we almost forget is there.

We thank you, that you are always present in our lives, behind and before us.

Your love is so great that we know you will never let us down, you will never betray or deny us.

You will walk alongside us every step of our way for you are the light of creation's dawn.

You are the very breath of our lives.

You are the promise of renewal, you are the harvest of our soul.

You are the loyal and dependable friend and companion.

In you we place our trust, in you we hold out our hands in adoration and praise.

Amen.

Our thanks can lift our hearts each day,
our thanks can build your church.

Our thanks can wave a flag to say,
on this day it was done.

Our thanks can change each circumstance,
our thanks can shift and grow.

Our thanks is more than afterthought
it's kingdom work begun.

And so my heart will stretch out wide
despite my circumstance.

For on the road of thankfulness I return to your Son.
I stand beside the empty cross and understand again.
That I've so much to thank you for,
my Saviour and my friend.
Amen.

Dear God,

You have given me such wonderful blessings. I am
rich in so many ways and aware of your love for me. I
am so grateful for such lovely friends and family, for
their warmth and their love and support. I am blessed
by the beauty of your creation that I enjoy each day.
And I am so thankful for the grace you have poured
into my life, for your truth that guides me, your hope
that leads my heart and your love that dwells in my
spirit. I am surely rich, and so thankful.
Amen.

Hymn

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One,
Give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his son.
And now let the weak say 'I am strong',
let the poor say 'I am rich',
Because of what the Lord has done for us,
give thanks.

Memories and Remembering

Psalm 147: 3-5

He heals the broken-hearted, and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

During the month of November we especially remember those whom we have loved and lost. We are grateful to them for the faith and for the gift of family they have passed on to us or the friendship they have given us. We are grateful to God for all those who have touched our hearts and lives. We remember the good times, and the not so good times, the joys and sorrows we shared with them, and hold these memories deep in our hearts. It is also the month that we remember the men and women of all nations who have died as a result of war. At the going down of the sun and in the morning – we will remember them.

Almighty and eternal God, from whose love in Christ we cannot be parted, either by death or life: hear our prayers and thanksgivings for all whom we remember today. Family, friends and relatives whose lives touched ours and added to the richness of our existence.

We are grateful for all that we shared in our times together and for the celebration of life. Lord of gifts and memories, we rejoice and are grateful for the great treasure of memories that we possess. These people who have gone before us have intermingled with us and caused us to be who we are today. Our love for them is beyond the touch of death and our love for them remains until we meet once again. Lord of mercy and compassion, grant eternal joy and peace to those we have lost, but who are now safe in your tender care.
Amen

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of war:

- For the injured and the disabled;
- For the mentally distressed;
- And for those whose faith in God and man has been weakened or destroyed;
- For the homeless and refugees;
- For those who are hungry;
- And for all who have lost their livelihood and security;
- For those who mourn their dead; those who have lost husband or wife, children or parents;
- And especially for those who have no hope in Christ to sustain them in their grief.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, infinite in wisdom, love, and power: have compassion on those for whom we pray, and help us to use all suffering in the cause of your kingdom; through him who gave himself for us on the cross, Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. Amen.

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those men and women who have died and continue to die in active service.

As we honour their courage and cherish their memory, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever.

Amen.

Father, you know our hearts and share our sorrows. We are hurt by our parting from those whom we loved. We are angry at the loss we have sustained, we long for words of comfort, yet find them hard to hear.

Father, have mercy on those who mourn, who feel numb and crushed and are filled with the pain of grief, whose strength has given up.

You know all our sighing and longings.

Be near to us and teach us to fix our hope on you through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn

I heard the voice of Jesus say,

“come unto me and rest;

Lay down, thou weary one,

lay down thy head upon my breast”.

I came to Jesus as I was, so weary, worn and sad;

I found in him a resting place,

And he has made me glad.

Waiting, Celebrating and New Beginnings

Psalm 119:89-90,105

The Lord exists forever; your word is firmly fixed in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Mother Teresa said – “It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you...yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand”.

This year, our celebrations of Advent, Christmas and New Year are most likely going to be very different from what we normally experience. Many families will either not be able to visit loved ones, or they may have to meet them in smaller groups. Church services will not be like those we normally offer to our community, but the message will be no different. Advent, the season of expectation, remains the same for Christians the world over as we await and then celebrate the greatest gift of all, Jesus. As we look ahead to the New Year we can be certain that God’s only Son will be beside us as “We follow Jesus”.

God of hope, who brought love into this world, be the love that dwells within us.

God of hope, who brought peace into this world, be the peace that dwells between us.

God of hope, who brought joy into this world, be the joy that dwells between us.

God of hope, the rock we stand upon, be the centre, the focus of our lives always, particularly at this Advent time.

Amen.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in unity, that our praise and worship might echo in these walls and also through our lives.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in mission, that the hope within might be the song we sing, and the melody of our lives.

In this Advent of expectation draw us together in service, that the path we follow might lead us from a stable to a glimpse of eternity.

Amen.

A Christmas Prayer by Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven.
For Jesus' sake
Amen.

Lord God, we thank you for helping us through this difficult year. Thank you that you've carried us through the uncertainty, anxiety and pain of hard losses. Thank you that you came to give new life, peace, hope and joy. Thank you for your reminder that both in seasons of celebration and seasons of brokenness, you're still with us. Thank you for your daily presence in our lives, we are assured your heart is towards us, your eyes are over us, and your ears open to our prayers. As we approach the New Year let us be reminded how much we need you, your grace, your strength, your power working through even the toughest days. We struggle and worry, get weary and worn, yet you never leave us. Thank you for your healing power, thank you for bringing us to the new season and New Year up ahead. Thank you for your care over us, thank you that you breathe renewal right into our souls. We ask for your Spirit to fill us, to draw us close to yourself, and to work your purposes through us, as we set our eyes on you in the new year and always.
Amen.

Hymn

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.

Longing for truth, we turn to you.

Make us your own, your holy people,

Light for the world to see.

Christ be our light, shine in our hearts,

Shine through the darkness.

Christ be our light, shine in your church,

Gathered today.

