**September 2022 *Creation, Harvest, Creativity***

Welcome to the September Prayer, and the first one in a series of 12. Each month we will explore different themes and different ways of praying which we hope you will find helpful as ways in which to encounter God. *The Provincial Spirituality Group in the Church in Wales.*

**Introduction**

Prayer is our two-way conversation with God. To spend time in prayer can draw us closer to God, although at times we may wonder if God is listening to us. Faith though, tells us that we are listened to even if God doesn’t always respond in the way we expected! It may be that the way we sense our prayer is answered, leaves us feeling a little uncomfortable or uncertain. An answer to a prayer may come from unexpected people, or something we hear on the radio that reaches in to us.

During this month of September, the focus of the church is on God’s creation and our own creativity, and it’s a time when we begin to think of harvest festivals. The suggested method of prayer for this month will be a form of meditation that will focus on God’s Creation and the wonders of all that is provided and given to us for our day-to-day living.

This offers us a chance to be thankful and to wonder about God’s abundant generosity, and for our ability to create things with all that has been provided for our use.

**Opening Prayer**

 God of all creation,

open our eyes and hearts

to the wonder and beauty of creation;

the changing colours of each season,

the ancient woodlands and fragile flowers,

the mountain streams and ocean depths,

and all that grows and lives,

ensuring our world is renewed and sustained.

Reveal to us our part in the care of creation,

so all can find healing and peace within it,

today and in the future.

Amen.

**Bible Passage**

The bible passage for this month is taken from the Old Testament - Deuteronomy 28: 1-6. Read through the passage and take a little time to consider what you feel this means to you and how it may relate today’s world and the theme of creation.

If you will only obey the Lord your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the Lord your God:

Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, both the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading-bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

**Reflection**

This passage is taken from a way of life and praying to God that is many centuries old. It is a prayer of blessing to God and includes all the day to day objects of life and work. In the early Christian years this way of praying continued especially in the more Celtic areas of Wales, Scotland and Cornwall for example. A blessing would be prayed for hearth as the fire was lit, before a meal was prepared, for the day’s work; anything and everything would have a prayer of blessing.

St. Francis of Assisi is remembered in the church on 4th October, but he is included here due to his association with nature and creation. Among his writing is a Canticle [a song or hymn] which links our lives with that of God and creation and the natural world.

In the Canticle, we discover a prayer which includes ‘Brother Sun’ bringing us light; ‘Sister Moon’ and the stars of night-time; ‘Brothers Wind, Air and Fire’; ‘Sister Water and Bodily Death’; ‘Mother Earth’ who nourishes and sustains creation.

By using some of the themes of the Canticle we can write our own song which weaves something from our own lives to that of creation:

 **Blessings of Creation**

 All blessings come from you, God of Creation,

nature blossoms under Brother Sun,

warming the ground beneath our feet, and

nourished by Mother Earth and Sister Water.

Sister Moon fills the night sky with stars

and the rest of sleep and renewal,

until the seasons come and go

and all creatures rest in Sister Bodily Death.

Brother Wind and Brother Fire,

gentle as a breeze, strong in a gale,

calmness and chaos alongside Brother Air,

life for all nature and creation.

To God, we give our thanks. Amen.

 *If you were to write a canticle about creation, what would you include within it?*

**Prayer of the Month: The Prayer of Meditation**

Meditation is a quiet reflective way of praying; an inner thought through prayer rather than an outer spoken one. A verse or phrase from a bible passage or hymn could be used, or an object to hold and gaze upon. This month as we consider the beauty of creation our prayer of meditation is with an object, or an item. This may be something from your kitchen cupboard [a bag of flour, a banana, or box of cereal], or you could look at something growing in your garden; it may be something you could take to a harvest festival service.

**Beginning**

If this is a new way of praying, read through the ‘how to do it’ below.

Decide what your item or object will be. Once have that item or object, find somewhere quiet to sit, to hold it and look at it.

Try to become still and quiet within, perhaps by taking a few deep breaths in and out, or asking for peace and calm to fill your body.

If it feels right to you, ask God to be with you in this time of prayer, in the quietness and in your thinking or considering and noticing of the item or object you have chosen. If you can, let thoughts come to you without forcing them!

**Next**

*After each of the suggestions below take time to pause with each for as long as you need.*

Look at what you are holding and consider why you chose it.

Look at its shape size and colour; was it made or did it grow from the earth?

Consider how it came into being; was it created in the mind of someone, manufactured?

Was it planted in the earth and nurtured and cared for?

Consider where it came from and the journey it had to reach you; and the people involved.

Is there anything distinctive or creative about it; packaging, a logo, artwork?

 Consider why and where and how you went to buy it.

 What else may this item or object, or God, ‘say’ to you in this prayer?

**To Close**

When you feel the time is right, lay down your item or object, and end with a simple ‘thank you’ or a prayer; perhaps the Opening Prayer or the Blessings of Creation above.

Then take a little time to reflect on this time of prayer, and you may find a cup of tea or coffee helps.

Is there anything of importance you would like to remember, or something that surprised you? It may be helpful to make a note of it in case you would like to think and mediate on this again.

**Suggestions for Prayer**

There are many different ways in which to meditate upon the wonders and beauty of all things created.

***Collage of Creation***

From a walk or from your garden, look at the leaves falling to the ground and collect them to make a collage, or reflect and write a prayer or random thoughts; and offer them to God in prayer.

***Passages from the Bible***

A small selection of some passages relating to creation:

Genesis 1 and 2:1-4 – ‘In the beginning’

Genesis 41:46-49 and 53-57 – famine in Egypt

Psalm 65 – thanksgiving for the bounty of the earth

Isaiah 35:1-10 – the wilderness and the land shall be glad

Matthew 13:1-9 – the parable of the sower

Luke 8:22-25 – Jesus calms a storm

Luke 12:22-31 – ‘do not worry’

**Something to Explore**

Search for ‘*The Canticle of the Sun’* by St Francis

**Next Month**

We hope that you have found these reflections and prayers helpful, and they may of course need thinking about and praying more than once. Next month our theme and prayers will be looking at wholeness and healing.