

St Thomas Methodist Church, Exeter

August 2026

Weekly Worship Resources

02 August – I will not let you go

Jacob is dreading meeting his estranged brother, Esau. He has all his belongings sent ahead of him so he can meet Esau in peace. At night, he wrestles with a mysterious figure, refusing to let go until he receives a blessing – a powerful encounter that leaves him permanently changed.

Jacob's encounter reminds us that God knows the journey we've been on and invites us to bring every part of ourselves to him, so that, ultimately, we can be close to God and he can bless us.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 13 Year A: **Genesis 32.22-31**; Psalm 17:1-7,15; Romans 9.1-5; Matthew 14.13-21

Genesis 32:22-31 [NIV]

Jacob Wrestles With God

²²That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

²³After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.

²⁸Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

²⁹ Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.”

³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.



Thought for the week: Stay in the fight

Some small children really enjoy wrestling. Attempting to physically overpower someone much bigger than themselves presents as a fun challenge, even when the odds are overwhelmingly stacked against them. The image of a five-year-old launching themselves on a parent comes to mind when thinking about Jacob wrestling with God. We know that, in reality, most parents will match their child's efforts, just enough that the child has fun and no one gets hurt. The aim is not to defeat the child but to allow the child to test their strength and to enjoy the fun.

In Jacob's story, he wrestles the man through the night, but the man has the power to dislocate Jacob's hip with a touch. Jacob doesn't win the fight, but he perseveres until the other man ends the fight and agrees to bless him. Jacob fears meeting Esau again and has just sent his entire family and possessions ahead of him to an uncertain fate. His emotions will have been in turmoil: full of anxiety, anger, guilt and

more. Maybe it is this that keeps him fighting even though he doesn't win.

Sometimes we think God cannot handle our anger and frustration, but perhaps God welcomes us bringing those emotions to him – even when we think we are kicking and hitting out at God. We can't hurt God, and we need his blessing. This passage gives us permission to come to God with all that we are carrying and to express all our emotions, positive and negative, to him in prayer. In the same way, a parent can manage their child kicking and fighting, God can handle all we bring him.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

All-powerful God, how can we ever thank you enough for what you did and continue to do for us?

You hate sin but love the sinner.

You never give up on us. Your love never wanes.

You know and understand us.

Whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, we can cling tight and draw strength from you, for you have hold of our right hand.

You never let go. You never abandon us.

Thank you that you work all things for our good, nurturing us and strengthening our character.

Lord God, we give you thanks and praise. Amen

09 August – Holding on to hope

Jacob shows favouritism to Joseph, buying him a special robe. His jealous brothers plot to kill Joseph but end up selling him into slavery in Egypt.

The story of Joseph takes many twists and turns. He is favoured and given promises for the future, but this doesn't turn out so well in his family relationships. His situation could seem pretty hopeless, yet God held on to him – and it becomes clear as his story unfolds that he also holds on to God. How can we do the same?

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 14 Year A:

Genesis 37:1-4,12-28; Psalm 105:1-6,16-22,45b; Romans 10.5-15;
Matthew 14.22-33

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 [NIV]

Joseph's Dreams

37 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

²This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. ⁴When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Joseph Sold by His Brothers

¹²Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, ¹³and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied.

¹⁴So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, ¹⁵a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁶He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?"

¹⁷"They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'"

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹"Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. ²⁰"Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a

ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."

²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. ²² "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe – the ornate robe he was wearing – ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.



Thought for the week: Holding on or letting go?

Maybe you've watched the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and enjoyed the glorious spectacle of Joseph

delighting in what Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber call his 'dreamcoat'? And maybe you can imagine the trauma of having that coat ripped off him, in an act of terrible violence, by his own brothers? (Genesis 37:23-24)

Joseph had no power in the situation or in what followed; he soon found himself chained up as a slave and forced to walk at least 250 miles among strangers. How might he have reflected on his childhood and youth in the green and pleasant valley of Hebron?

As the story unfolds, we see him facing one injustice after another, but he never seems to ask 'Why?' He displays extraordinary resilience in the face of ongoing trauma. He no longer has his coat to hold on to, but he still has his prophetic dreams and a deep sense of his personal calling and destiny. His identity does not depend on anything external; it depends only on the God who has called him. Whatever happens, God is faithful.

Sometimes we too will face such challenges: when something central to our identity – a particular role or way we are seen by others – is suddenly snatched away from us. It can take a long time to recover from such trauma, but slowly, with the right support, we will find ourselves letting go of the pain. Sometimes we lose our sense of God and can no longer hold on to his faithfulness. We can only hope, and try to believe, that God holds on to us – and that the darkest night will turn to day. Many chapters later, Joseph was able to say to his brothers, 'Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.' (Genesis 50:20)

Sometimes, however, we have a choice: what will we hold on to and what will we let go of? Perhaps you have watched 'Sort Your Life Out' on BBC One or 'Big House Clear Out' on Channel Five? People face tough choices! The same can be true in our life with God: dare we ask what might God be inviting us to let go of? Dare we hold everything in open hands before him? If we do, we need not be surprised if God asks us to let go of some of the things that give us

security: our money, our time, our space. But in the process, we can rediscover more of our true identity and vocation and refocus our lives on the One who always holds on to us.

A prayer of approach

God of wonders and miracles, worthy of our praises.

Let us lift our voices and our hearts, rejoicing and singing praises to our God.

A prayer of adoration

We give glory to your Holy name, director of our hopes and dreams.

With our lips we express adoration, rejoicing in your wonderful acts.

Your mighty deeds work all our trials to your purposes.

In our hearts, we praise and adore our glorious King. Amen

16 August – From the heart

Joseph is now a powerful leader in Egypt. Having tested his brothers' motivations, he reveals himself to them and an emotional reconciliation ensues. Joseph sees the hand of God in all that has happened to him.

As Joseph's story concludes, we see him showing great emotion to his brothers and treating them with boundless generosity, which leads to restoration and reconciliation. As we consider these examples, we might question whether we operate 'from the heart' in our response to situations in our lives.

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 15 Year A

Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 133; Romans 11.1-2a,29-32; Matthew 15.(10-20),21-28

Genesis 45:1-15 [NIV]

Joseph Makes Himself Known

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So

there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

³Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. ⁷But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸"So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. ¹⁰You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me – you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

¹²"You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³Tell my father about all the honour accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

¹⁴Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

Thought for the week: Reconciled without revenge

Picture the scene: Joseph is now an important person in Egypt who has helped prepare the country to survive the famine. He now stands, looking at his brothers who have come from the neighbouring land to buy grain. Joseph, whose life had changed at their hands, looks at them again as they ask him for help.

How will he respond to the people who forced him from his home by selling him into slavery?

Joseph, no longer able to keep his brothers at arm's length, weeps. His emotional response comes from his heart and his love for his brothers and family. It comes from the core of who he is; a man who draws his strength from God.

His response is perhaps unexpected compared with the actions and attitudes we see around us today. In Joseph's shoes, would most seek revenge for what had happened? Joseph could have reminded the brothers of his dreams, where they bowed down to him, but instead, he gives glory to God.

He attributes his success to God, who has guided him throughout the ups and downs of his life, leading him to Pharaoh and successfully preparing for and managing the famine years in Egypt. His trust and belief in God's guidance reassure his brothers that Joseph has forgiven them and is looking for reconciliation.

As Joseph weeps, a reaction showing his deep emotions at reuniting with them, he invites them to come closer to him, to close the gap physically and in reconciliation.

Joseph acts with generosity that comes from who he is, shown in his steps of reconciliation and his offer to provide for them and the family through the remaining years of famine.

What about us? How do we respond to people or situations that have impacted our lives? All around us, we see people locally and globally engage in 'revenge culture', which can encourage us to see this as an expected reaction. Is reconciliation a faraway dream impossible to achieve? Where might we see opportunities to take a step towards someone, to say 'sorry', to offer hope that reconciliation and restoration are possible? For some people generosity, forgiveness and reconciliation with people who have caused trauma

and damage seems far away. Forgiveness is often a process – it's not always something we're ready or able to do, but asking God to help us with the next step, whatever the next step is, is a start, knowing that the first step may be to ask God to be willing to consider any steps. Joseph's response to his brothers suggests that deep within us we too can be people responding and acting with love and generosity, characteristics that come from God, whom we hold in our hearts. Our challenge may be to find opportunities to act 'above and beyond' what is expected of us and to continue to develop an attitude of generosity that comes from the heart of who we are.



A prayer of confession

Father, life is far from easy at times.

We can experience pain in various forms – through humiliation, rejection, or prejudice.

Words can be like arrows piercing the heart.

Actions can inflict wounds that can fester.

Father, you offer everyone forgiveness.

Please help us to forgive others.

It can feel hard to forgive those who hurt us, but you can lead us in the process.

Help us also to forgive ourselves, when we have been the ones

inflicting pain.

Forgive us. Cleanse us. Draw us closer.

Give us healthy hearts and minds that reflect you in all we say and do.

Assurance of forgiveness

Jesus, you came in love, showering us with goodness despite our wrongdoing.

You shed your blood to atone for our sins and reconciled us to the Father.

Through your loving grace and mercy, you freely bless us with forgiveness. Amen

23 August – Empowered

A new era has begun in Egypt, and the new Pharaoh views the Israelites with fear and suspicion. Baby Moses is in danger but, aided by God, the midwives, Moses' mother and sister, and even Pharaoh's daughter take steps to protect him.

In the struggle and suffering of the Israelites, we see the people standing up for what is right. What issues of injustice might God be encouraging us to stand up against?

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 16 Year A

Exodus 1:8–2:10; Psalm 124; Romans 12.1-8; Matthew 16.13-20

Exodus 1:8-2:10 [NIV]

⁸Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. ⁹“Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. ¹⁰Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

¹¹So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴They made their lives bitter

with harsh labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

¹⁵The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiprah and Puah, ¹⁶“When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” ¹⁷The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. ¹⁸Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, “Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?”

¹⁹The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.”

²⁰So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. ²¹And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

²²Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.”

The Birth of Moses

2 Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, ²and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. ³But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. ⁴His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. ⁶She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said.

⁷Then his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?”

⁸“Yes, go,” she answered. So the girl went and got the baby’s mother. ⁹Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and

nursed him. ¹⁰When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Thought for the week: Empowered to rebel

The story of Moses, the baby in the bulrushes, is familiar to many, but there is a quiet rebellion by the women in the story that also flows through it. The king, threatened by the growing number of Israelite slaves, orders baby boys to be killed at birth in an attempt to control their numbers. His insecurity and fear motivate him to act in a way that is cruel and inhuman as he wields his power to try to resolve the problem.

The midwives quietly rebelled against the orders of Pharaoh, who had commanded them to kill the baby boys at birth. They cannot agree to do this as they know it would be wrong in the eyes of God. They are empowered by their beliefs, enabling them to stand up to something they see and know is wrong. They stand firm when questioned by Pharaoh, explaining that they arrived too late at the birth to carry out his decree. They acted with great courage, standing up to a man with such power, and they are subsequently blessed by God, who gives them families.

Moses' mother and sister also quietly rebelled against Pharaoh's wishes. His mother was empowered by her love for her precious baby and by her faith in God, who she trusted to look after him.

Hiding him and putting him in a basket on the river took faith and courage, as did the actions of her daughter, who approached Pharaoh's daughter when the baby was found.

Pharaoh's daughter also quietly rebelled against his orders, although she may not have known the orders or that this baby was subject to them. She acts with compassion when she rescues him, names him and arranges for his care.

Faith in God empowers these women.

We see around us the misuse of power as leaders and regimes promote war, killing and bloodshed. We see the misuse of power creating oppression and fear globally and locally through religious intolerance, slavery and the mistreatment of others. We see the devastating effects of flood, famine and fire, along with the impact of pollution and the disregard of habitats and ecosystems, often caused by poor choices and decisions. We can feel overwhelmed and powerless, but the women in today's story were empowered by what they knew was right and by their faith in God. Let us look for opportunities to stand firm in our faith, knowing that we can make a difference with our actions and our voice – and even through our quiet rebellion.



A prayer or commitment

Lord, let our words be words of kindness,
our thoughts be those of care,
our ears be ready to hear your voice,
our hearts filled with your love,
our hands reach out to help others
and our feet be ready to march for truth. Amen

A sending out prayer

May we be empowered to show loving resistance, inspired by Jesus' example and strengthened by his Spirit.

May we stand strong in our faith, to challenge injustice, speaking up for those with no voice, showing and sharing Christ in our community.

Amen

30 August – One step at a time

Having fled Egypt, Moses is now a shepherd. He encounters God through the burning bush, and God urges him to take up a new role – freeing the Israelites from Egyptian oppression. Moses feels unready for the task ahead but is assured that the great I AM will be with him every step of the way.

Moses' story shows us we can move one step at a time to accomplish amazing things. Do we know what God is inviting us to step into? And that God is with us as we go?

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Proper 17 Year A

Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:1-6,16-22,45b; Romans 12.9-21; Matthew 16.21-28

Exodus 3:1-15 [NIV]

Moses and the Burning Bush

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up."

⁴When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."

⁵"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God

of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

¹¹But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

¹²And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

¹³Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

¹⁴God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you.’”

“This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.

Thought for the week: Too big a task?

On an ordinary day in the life of Moses the shepherd, he encounters God and his life changes. God draws Moses to him step by step. The flaming bush isn’t too uncommon in the desert, but the fact that it was not burning up drew Moses’ attention. God calling his name drew him closer to this place, and finally God revealed himself. God built up his call to Moses bit by bit, which would be echoed in the stages of the task he was about to be asked to do. The task God has for Moses,

to free the hundreds of Israelites from the oppression of the Egyptians, seems more than Moses is capable of. Moses sees the barriers in his mind as insurmountable. For starters, Pharaoh was unlikely to release his workforce, the people he controlled, just because he was asked. To make matters worse, Moses had a history with him that had not ended well. Would Pharaoh even listen to Moses?

Moses suggested to God that he was not the best candidate for the task. The Israelites did not know or trust him, but God had a plan, and Moses was the man. He gave Moses the words to say, words that would reassure the Israelites that Moses was God's messenger and they should trust him. It is almost as if God knew Moses would question his suitability, so he assured Moses that he would be with him and lead and enable Moses step by step.

Where do we see insurmountable problems or tasks? Looking around our community and around our world, there seem to be huge problems, and we cannot work out how things can change, the part we can play or how we can even begin to make a difference. Let's be encouraged by God's strategy with Moses. Moses identified the problems he would face, and God helped him to see them as steps on the way to completing the task. When broken down into steps or stages, sometimes a task can look less daunting or impossible. God promised to be with Moses every step of the way, supporting him and encouraging him. God gave Moses the words to say and the reassurance that those hearing the words would themselves be reassured.

Perhaps we, like Moses, can express our doubts, fears, and feelings of inadequacy to God as we discuss the tasks and problems we face personally and in our world. This is the first step towards their resolution. Sometimes we can see the steps to take to tackle the task, but sometimes the solution may involve us taking the first step and trusting God for the second step. However the steps are revealed, we can find encouragement when we take one step at a time, recognising and celebrating each small step of progress. Moses was a

seemingly unlikely candidate for the task God had for him, and we know that he went on to rescue a nation! Maybe we can start on a smaller scale and hold before God the tasks before us, trusting, like Moses, that God will be with us, enable us and show us the way one step at a time.



Prayers of intercession

Lord God, creator and redeemer, we often find it difficult to know how to pray when we see so much suffering throughout our world. Should we pray, Lord, for you to bring down retribution on the persecutors? Can we accuse you of letting us down because the world is still in pain? Yet, Lord, we hold onto your promise that evil will not prevail against us, that you will deliver us from the wicked and the ruthless. You call us, Lord, to turn to you, to be faithful and obedient, that your will may be done in our lives.

So, help us to be the answer to our own prayers, to make a difference where we are, with the people you give us to share life with. May we hate what is evil and hold fast to what is good. Help us to rejoice in

hope, to be patient in suffering, and to persevere in prayer. Lead us into opportunities to contribute to the needs of your people; to extend hospitality to strangers and to live in harmony with one another.

We bring before you situations in our world where harmony is particularly lacking at this time.

We pray for wisdom to prevail among the leaders of nations, and for those working for the benefit of others that they may find protection and courage to stand up for those with no voice of their own.

We think of people closer to home who are suffering in many ways, and who find it hard to forgive those who have caused their pain. Lord, help us to demonstrate in our own lives that forgiveness brings healing: that the words 'I'm sorry' can close an open wound. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us, in our lives, not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good.

Through Jesus Christ, who conquers death and gives us life, we pray these prayers. Amen

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