

A Six-day Personal Journey

Seek

“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground; **for it is time to seek the Lord**, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.” (Hosea 10:12)



INTRODUCTION

During this season of Lent, we want to encourage you as a Church Family to pray together as we approach the Cross of Christ.

This Prayer Journey gives you the opportunity for 6 occasions of prayer, these relate to the SEEK prayer space resource that has been produced for churches to use.

Together, we want to seek God, whether this is physically in a prayer space in church or from our own homes. For many the season of Lent is a one of fasting, confession, and praying for change, renewal and growth. Together, we seek to intentionally set aside time for self-examination and reflection as individuals and as church.

Set out for you are some reflections and guidelines, these will hopefully help you focus on the different areas in which we want to seek God during this Lent season. There are simple actions and items that should be easy to find in your home that may help you focus when you are praying.



DAY
1

SEEK PRESENCE

In preparation:

Sit by a lamp and have paper and a pen close by.

Read:

Psalm 139:1-18

Turn the lamp off and on a few times, watch as the light fills the room each time you switch it on.

Think about how easy it is to bring light into a space by the flick of a switch.

Where God is there is no darkness – He is the creator and the light of His presence shines through even the heaviest of darkness. Spend some time thanking God for His presence. He promises to never leave us or forsake us. Even on days that are long and leave us feeling weary and empty, we know that He has not left us. On the days when our circumstances have consumed us, God holds us. God is with us and will not let us go.

Read again Psalm 139: 1-18

Write some prayers of thankfulness for God who is with us. Welcome his peace and presence. Why not tuck these prayers into your bible or set them on your bedside table. God understands that some days can feel darker than others, use these prayers to start and finish those dark days so you can be encouraged.

Now, pray for those who may need the assurance of God's presence:

Father may those in our community who are tired and overwhelmed find you to be a close comfort. Show them that you are walking beside them, carrying them through today and every day. Lift their heads to see the ways that You are present. Thank you for being Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

DAY
2

SEEK FORGIVENESS

In preparation:

Get a piece of string/wool/ribbon or an old shoelace.

Read:

Romans 5: 1-11

The gospel is this: *"We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."* (Tim Keller)

Have you lost your temper today, forgotten your identity, worried about tomorrow, or walked in the flesh? Remember that Jesus is faithful to forgive. *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Rom. 5:8). He poured out his blood, scrubbed us clean, and won the victory. He exchanged our worthless, tattered rags for abundance and purity. This is the Good News of Christ for you! Once the gospel has captivated your heart, it grows and flourishes, transforming us from the inside out.

Pick up your piece of string/wool. As you hold it in your hand, consider what you seek forgiveness for. As these come to mind, simply make a knot in your string. Continue this process until you have 4-5 knots.

Go back to the first knot, holding the confession that knot represents. Hear God’s assurance that you are forgiven. You are loved. As you feel each knot, hear God’s assurance, your sins are forgiven.

Just as God will forget these sins as surely as he forgives them, the knotted string is not a reminder that we are sinners but a reminder that when we confess our sins God will always, always forgive us.

Together we can’t undo those knots but together we can seek forgiveness and find it in Christ.

Now, pray this prayer of confession for the church. We are after all, a gathering of imperfect people, but yet perfectly loved by God:

Almighty Father, forgive our sins. Forgive the wrong doings that we remember and the ones we have forgotten. We confess that we approach you with our mouths and our lips, yet our hearts are far from worship. We confess that sometimes what we offer costs us little, we often bring to you the leftovers of our time, gifts, energy and worship. Forgive us.

Forgive our failures in the face of temptation, and those times when we have been stubborn in the face of correction. Forgive the times we have boasted our church achievements rather than acknowledge your work. Forgive the harsh judgements we make of others, and the leniency we show ourselves. Forgive the pain we cause and the self-indulgence we favour. Forgive us when we have disregarded our neighbours’ needs, yet wondered why other people don’t meet ours. Cleanse us as church and give us the mind and heart of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve. Amen.

DAY
3

SEEK LOVE

In preparation:

Get a pen and paper.

Read:

Isaiah 43: 1-4

God wants you to see yourself the way he sees you, and then in turn to see others through His lens of love. **What is filling your heart?**

There are many things that can fill our hearts, some good things and some not. Do you ever find yourself resenting your family or friends, or any one, perhaps for something they may or may not have done; if unforgiveness and bitterness have taken hold of your heart; if the stress and burdens of life have you so weighed down that you find it hard to enjoy simple pleasures with those who love and care about you; if you have lost sight of your purpose, and are just living from day to day, then it's time to see with new eyes.

God wants you to see yourself the way He sees you, and then in turn see others through His lens of love. Yes, it's a difficult task if you try to do it on your own, but with His help, you can.

Looking at ourselves through our human lens does not give us a full view. When we look at ourselves through the lens of God's love, we are able to see as he sees, love as he loves and serve as he serves.

Take some time to remind yourself how much you are special and loved by God. He sees you! He wants to renew your heart with His special and unique love so that it grows and overflows from you.

God's written Word holds wonderful reminders of how He sees us and loves us. Sit for a while and read from the pages of His precious book. Reflect on these words and ask God to write them on your heart. If one of these verses stand out to you as you read them, write it down.

1 John 3:1

Ephesians 2:10

1 Peter 2:9

Psalms 138:8

Psalms 139: 13-16

Romans 5:8

Romans 8:38-39

Psalms 33:18

Colossians 3:12

1 Corinthians 3:16

Romans 15:13

1 John 4:16

*God wants the church to see itself the way that He sees it, and then in turn for the church to see the world through His lens of love. When God's love overflows in us, it is so that His love can reach others. Together let's seek God's love for others. Think about how your church already shows God's love to others.

Now, pray thankfulness over those things that come to mind and ask God to continue to be at work. Take a moment of silence and ask God to speak to you about what more He wants to do in and through your church. Then pray:

Loving God, you are a God of abundance, we pray for you to be abundantly at work here.

Within this church let your love overflow. Beyond this church let your love transform. Renew us. Grow in us. Let your Kingdom come. Amen

SEEK PEACE

In preparation:

Get a pen, paper, bin.

Read:

Psalms 119: 36-37



"To safeguard your contentment in Christ is to ask the Holy Spirit to whisper Psalm 119 into your ear every now and then: 'Turn my eyes away from worthless things.'"
(Joni Eareckson-Tada)

The world is shiny and glittery - full of all kinds of 'stuff' that competes for our attention on a daily basis. Without even thinking, we often pursue peace and contentment in our lives through these things. We turn our eyes to the world and let it alter our expectations and dictate our moods. We so often place our value and contentment in 'things,' and often we are let down.

It happens the most when we let the world creep in where Jesus should reside instead.

*"Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!
Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways."*

Psalm 119: 36-37

If we spend a lifetime looking for peace, happiness, and contentment in the things of the world it will amount to nothing. Why?

True and full contentment is only achievable through seeking God. To seek God's will, desires and plans for our lives will lead to a God focused peace and contentment which is immeasurable to the things the world offers.

When culture declares contentment in self, let's be a people who declare contentment in Christ.

Are you looking for contentment in the wrong places?

As you read these words, did your mind flicker to things that take your focus off God? Do you sometimes feel like there is something missing in your life? Or are there things that you are trying, that aren't working?

Seek peace by focusing on God, cast aside those things that distract you!

Write a list of the things that you need to focus less on, things that are worthless to gaining true contentment. As you write, pray that your loving Father will help to keep these things from you. Continue praying as you write, that your focus will remain on Him and that contentment will come and remain in you.

Once you have finished, simply tear up the paper and place it in the bin provided. These things are rubbish and worthless, they hold no value for you, let God renew you in His peace. As you finish pray Psalm 119: 36-37 over yourself.

*As followers of Jesus, we find peace and safety in the knowledge of Christ. However, this knowledge is not shared by everyone. Our world is filled with anxiety, worry, oppression and fear, peace feels distant. God invites us to be a people of peace, a non-anxious presence, just like Christ.

Now, using your hand, use your fingers to help you to pray:

- Hold your thumb and pray for people who are unwell and need to find peace within waiting, illness, and recovery.
- Hold your index finger and pray for leaders around the world that they may seek peace for the people they lead.
- Hold your tallest finger and pray for people to come to know the peace of Christ across our world.
- Hold your ring finger and pray for those that are vulnerable and need peace against oppression or addiction.
- Hold your baby finger and pray for children and young people asking for peace in their many worries and stresses.

Thank God that He hears and answers our prayers.

DAY
5

SEEK JOY

Read:

Nehemiah 8:10

It is His Joy that enables us to thrive not just survive! The joy of the Lord is our strength. Not a second cup of coffee, not our own abilities, time at the gym, or a full night rest. It is His joy that surpasses any trial, any feeling, and any emotion. His joy is a fortress of rest, a shelter from the sun, and a shield from the enemy's attacks. It keeps us going when we want to quit, strengthens weary bodies and souls, and transforms our perspectives.

God's plan for mankind has been to bring us joy and peace, we read this throughout the Bible. It teaches us that joy is a gift from God, and that it is something to be celebrated and shared with others. Joy is rooted in who God is. It is not fleeting or based on circumstances, it is sturdy and unbreakable. This type of joy isn't primarily a feeling. If it was, then it would be impossible to experience it in moments of grief or in the depths of trials.

When life is good and stable, we seek joy and find it easily. How easily do we lift our heads and speak prayers of joy when trials loom large and stormy seas threaten to overwhelm us?

Ultimately, this joy comes from Jesus himself. We experience the joy of the Lord specifically because we are united to Jesus Christ.

Sit for a time and reflect on all that you are thankful for, contemplate the joy you feel and that is available to you every day because of what Christ has done for you.

DAY
6

Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the unending joy that comes from lingering in Your presence, this joy is available to me every day. Please draw my heart ever closer to Yours. Help me always to seek joy in all circumstances of my life, whether in overwhelming and difficult times or in good news and celebration. Renew in me the joy that comes in the knowledge of your love and sacrifice. Amen.

Showing real and heartfelt joy is necessary and significant in our lives and that of the church. It is a sign of our salvation. This unending joy should be shared and shown by the church to everyone.

As we seek joy, we are trusting God in all circumstances. If we think of our opening verse from Nehemiah, he is teaching us that joy is found in persistence and the relentless pursuit of God.

It can be easy to be disheartened when we look at the world and see many people who turn away from God. For many the church feels irrelevant, yet we hold the good news of Christ that speaks freedom and joy.

Now, spend time praying for the impact of the church in your community. That in joy it would show Christ to many.

Pray:

Heavenly Father, as a church may we show your joy to others in our words and actions. May we be a church that represents your joy to the fullest, that those who see it and feel it may seek the same joy for themselves. Grow and renew us for your Kingdom's sake. Amen

SEEK RENEWAL

In preparation:

Get paper and pen

Read:

Isaiah 43:18-21

These individual days of prayer have brought you through some stages; confession, renewal, and growth, praying for these things on a personal level, in a relational way and as church. Your prayers have helped you think and reflect on how to action out being a follower of Jesus and knowing and feeling His transformative power for yourself, the church, and the world.

God's expectation of us as individuals, and as church, is not perfection but rather of doing our best under His guidance. Having an awareness of our limitations and in recognising them, seeking Him so we can discern His will.

Pause now and take a look at a Community Prayer for Waiting by Dan White. As you read invite God to be at work in your own life, bringing renewal and prompting growth.

A Community Prayer for Waiting

by Dan White
(adapted)

*When we are heavy with sorrow,
let us cling to a whispering hope.
When we are deep in the night,
let us not forget the light we've once seen.
When we are exhausted from waiting,
let us find strength in each other.*

*When we are hardened by conflict,
let love interrupt our bitterness.
When we are frightened by scenarios,
let us receive wisdom from each other.
When we are haunted by failures,
let grace heal our self-inflicted wounds.
When we are dismal and defeated,
let faith be our nourishment.*

*When we are weary and complaining,
let our hearts discover perspective.
When we are apathetic and clumsy,
let deep apologies flow from our lips.
When we are dashed by disappointments,
let us find footing to press forward.*

*We are sheep who wander in the waiting,
but the Shepherd knows our names.
We are strangers without a country,
but the Kingdom of God is our true home.*

*In this time of great meaning,
In the stillness of Lent,
Give us grace for the days before us.
Amen*

Now, spend some time focusing your mind to pray specifically for the Methodist Church in Ireland. How would you want God to renew and grow His people on the island of Ireland?

Write your prayer on a piece of paper, why not share it with others in your church over the next few days and invite them to write a prayer too.

Take a picture of your prayer and send it to: seek@irishmethodist.org

Together let's pray boldly and expectantly for God to be at work in the Methodist Church in Ireland.