**One Church One Day – December 2023**

**‘The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.’ Lamentations 3: 22-23**

How wonderful to pause in the busyness of the season and spend some quality time with our Lord. Our Mission Focus for December is the orphanage CCD supports in India, and so at Prayer & Praise we watched a video that Luke made when he was 16, of our last Christmas Mission trip 2019, just before Covid. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-S5ebH8-2g&ab_channel=ChristChurchDownend> We then prayed over the pressures and hopes of the season, keeping Jesus at the centre. We prayed over the wars taking place, and we prayed for opportunities to share the gospel with loved ones this Christmas. It was a time of beautiful prayer, hearts to heart with the Lord.

The oil of prayer continued to burn throughout the 24 hours. Sonia shared:

**‘As always, a wonderful time of prayer.  No TV, phone, just me in the presence of my Heavenly Father, when I can pray for an hour or more without interruptions, it is such a blessed time**.’

Sandy shared:

**‘So comforting. A wonderful time for all of us praying together, strengthened by our faith.’**

Graham shared:

**‘Thanks for the times of refreshing and prayer last weekend. It was an oasis of calm and peace in a too busy December. Thanks again for organising.**

**Lovely and such joy to hear of the work in India. I was able to gently pray for local people and their families.’**

Angela Avent shared:

**‘Thank you Diane for organising the 24/7, such a positive experience each month. Each month, I try to focus on the months verse, I looked it up in a different bible to get a deeper perspective, “yet hope returns when I remember this one thing: the Lord’s unfailing love and mercy still continues, fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise, great is your faithfulness “**

**I looked out my window, running in condensation, not good, another job to do! Then the sun came out and shone through the window, the condensation shone like diamonds. I thought to myself, I am like the condensation, not good, but with God’s love shining through me, I can shine, thank you God that with your help, however bad we are, we can all shine ✨ . Sending God’s light and love to everyone this advent. Xxx’**

Sally Swann shared:

**‘Following group discussion about the many deep divisions in society triggered by inequality leading to conflict, I reflected how God can give hope and comfort as well as inspire.**

**The true story behind: It is well with my soul, is such an example!**

**My prayer time was interwoven by re watching on You tube Hugh Bonneville with the Tabernacle choir sing plus perform the story.**

**It's powerful & moving!’**

Anita shared:

**‘As part of my hour, I read news stories on the BBC news app, and prayed for the situation and people in each story as I went, also widening the prayer to pray for people I knew who might be affected by the event/ situation.’**

James shared:

**It was a comedy of errors on my behalf this month. I forgot to set my alarm and slept through my prayer hour, only to find out that I had booked the wrong 2 o'clock slot!  So it was a different OCOD prayer experience for me this month.**

**Front of my mind on Saturday were the horrific images of suffering from Gaza and the testimony from the inquest into the death of headteacher Ruth Perry, who was in despair following the Ofsted inspection. I really struggled with the upbeat tone of the designated verse from Lamentations 3,**

**Fortunately, I found a commentary on Lamentations very helpful. Explaining how Jeramiah was probably writing from the middle of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Jeramiah, distraught in the suffering and openly bitter and very angry with God; but somehow he re-finds the kernel of true hope in our God.**

**I offered these words from immediately before the verse as a bitter-sweet advent prayer for new mornings for those in Gaza and people in a similar situation to Ruth Perry:**

**[God] has filled me with bitterness;  
he has sated me with wormwood.**

**He has made my teeth grind on gravel,  
and made me cower in ashes;  
my soul is bereft of peace;  
I have forgotten what happiness is;  
so I say, “My endurance has perished;  
so has my hope from the Lord.**

**Remember my affliction and my wanderings,  
the wormwood and the gall!  
My soul continually remembers it  
and is bowed down within me.  
But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:**

**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
therefore I will hope in him.**

**I ended with a smile, thanking God for the loving relationship between Christ Church and Haven House.  What a lovely example of advent hope.’**

Thank you to all those who have shared testimonies of your OCOD prayer time. They really are a most precious blessing and gratefully received.

Planning ahead, and offering an opportunity to make prayer a priority in 2024, our January One Church One Day will take place 7pm Friday 5th to 7pm Saturday 6th January. The Mission Focus for January is Mission Direct. The Prayer & Praise Together link for 7pm on the Friday is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82670522846>

and the virtual prayer room can be found here <https://signup.24-7prayer.com/signup/2a06c9>

Praying that we all know the advent hope that James speaks of in his OCOD reflection, and that we all have, and are able to share with others, a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Much love

Diane x