

**To Begin:** Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



**Opening Prayer:** Almighty God you reign supreme and yet stoop to show us such love in Jesus. Thank you for your grace and mercy, thank you that you offer forgiveness if we turn towards you. Grant us strength and wisdom today, to seek and receive your forgiveness and walk forwards in faith and fulness of love for you and our neighbour, that we might live to the praise of your glory. **Amen**

**Song:**

King of love and grace, my Guardian,  
All my hopes and fears are in Your hands;  
I'm in Your hands.  
Where You go, I'll go; show me the way.  
Every step I take be now my guide,  
God on my side.

*You go before me, You're there beside me,  
And if I wander Love will find me.  
Goodness and mercy will always follow.  
You go before me, my Guardian.*

When I hear You say, 'trust and obey',

I will walk by faith and not by sight,  
God of my life.  
So let Your kingdom come, Your will be done.  
All Your promises will stand forever.  
You're my defender.

*You go before me, ...*

*(Bridge)* You are God, our great defender,  
Strong in love, forever faithful.  
We are Yours and we will trust in You.  
You are God, our great defender,  
Strong in love, forever faithful.  
We are Yours and we will trust in You.

*You go before me, ...*

**Read:** Colossians 3:18-4:1

***Friends in Christ Jesus.*** A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright.

This is the final talk of our Colossians series. What have we learnt?

It's a letter with big ideas, but it's written to ordinary people, people about whom Paul and Timothy cared. People like us, who must also take Jesus seriously and not be drawn away by ideas or stuff outside of Jesus.

1. We have seen in the first chapter and a half how Jesus Christ is supreme – he is the answer to all questions of life and living.

2. In in the second half of chapter two, we see how our relationship with Christ is more important than ritual and religiosity – it's not whether we do religious things, even including praying or attending church, it's whether we know Jesus.

3. In chapter three we see the implication of living in relationship with God means we are led away from some things and towards other things, as, in our relationship with him we take on the likeness of Jesus in all areas of our life.

5. In this final chapter today how do we work with others?

**Firstly, Speak to God about others.**

Read again verses 2-4. The best starting place for relationships with others is to speak to God about them.

Paul and Timothy humbly ask for prayers – please pray!

I am so grateful for your prayers for me and would ask that you continue to pray for our whole church leadership, along with our regional and national leaders.

Prayer is vital to our relationship with Jesus, and the word here is 'devote'.

I try to make time to pray at the beginning of each day but it's amazing how many important other things I can find to do! Included in this time is praying through my contacts list – including the electoral role – I try to pray for you all regularly, giving thanks for you. I hope that, if not already, you might be inspired to join in.

How great to be a church 'devoted' in prayer, praying for each other, our family, friends, neighbours, communities, country, and world. Listening to God, being 'watchful', and seeking God's blessing for others.

And if it is good to talk with God about our friends, it's even more powerful to talk with him about our enemies. Read Matthew 5:43-45. What do I pray? Pray for blessing, which means peace and relationship for them with Jesus.

**Secondly: Speak with others about God.** Read again verses 5-6.

We are God's visual aids to a watching world – what do they see?

We are encouraged to behave 'wisely' and speak with 'grace' and 'salt'. In other words, to act and speak with love, kindness, and flavour.

How are we to ensure we are loving and 'interesting'? I have two suggestions:

Practice listening to others and their questions. To do this we have to love, being interested in the other person – probably praying for them – not waiting to get our story in.

Hadley Bennett, former chaplain at Alton College once said, 'my job is to get people to ask questions.' As we listen to a person and ask them questions, their questions might come to us. Read 1 Peter 3:15 to know how to answer when questions come. We may need to practice this, and this means talking with others, leading us onto our next point.

**Thirdly: Share the load, cooperate and collaborate with others.**

In verses 7 to the end, we read Paul and Timothy sending greetings from their team to the team in Colossae. There is such a bond of friendship and love here even between people who have not met. Notice some interesting things:

The Mark mentioned was the young man about whom Paul 'fell out' with Barnabas in Acts 15. Here they all are on the same team beloved family in Christ. Jesus' command to love one another has seen the barriers broken

down. His resurrection power will work in dead relationships bringing life, if we will pray and let him! The Gospel is the priority – not our hurts and prejudices – be at peace with each other. Love W-O-N another!

The letter finishes with the encouragement to share letters with the church in Laodicea. It's a strong possibility that this letter is what we know as Ephesians today, but either way, here is a strong push toward cooperation and collaboration between churches – as Ephesians puts it, 'Each part doing its work.'

Over the coming months we will have to think about how we work with others. This has always been true for our teams within the church, but as we emerge from this pandemic, we'll need to think about how we work in new ways here in COGS as our PCC team led us on our new strategy, AND also about how we work across the deanery and, for us in particular, how we might partner with Medstead.

Be speaking to God about each other, in COGS, Medstead and our wider communities. Be asking for wisdom, grace and salt as we talk to each other, within the church, churches and wider community, seeking to testify to Jesus.

Be looking to see how we can cooperate, collaborate, and share so that the Gospel might be heard and lived to the glory of God!!

**Prayers:** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

**Collect: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent.** Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**



**The Lord's Prayer:** Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

**Blessing** to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV)

**The Notices:** The building is still closed for services, but we are currently hoping we might return to (ticketed and socially distanced) services for Easter Sunday.

If you know of others who would like to receive this, or you would rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends, or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

0800 804 8044  
**DailyHOPE**  
A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers