

Prayer for others 2 February 2020

We pray to a God we cannot see, we cannot hear, and cannot easily describe. Many people around the world do the same and we all have varying concepts of God which develop and change as we go through life. God is within us and unites us with our parents, their parents and the whole host of believers, past and present. God unites us with creation – the world in which we live.

Robyn and I went by bus to town on Thursday, to the Art Gallery. On the way we looked in at St Patrick's Cathedral – my first service there, years ago, was Joyce's funeral – she was a cousin of Dad's. Joyce had lived and died in Gosport and Sydney but her family brought her home to lay her to rest. Just inside the main door of the cathedral is a marble wall-plaque, and on it are engraved the words known as St Patrick's Breastplate. We will use them today to start our prayer, let us pray:

Christ be beside me, Christ be before me, Christ be behind me,
Christ be below me, Christ be above me, Never to part.

Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left hand, Christ all around me, shield in the strife.
Christ in my sleeping, Christ in my sitting, Christ in my rising, light of my life.

Christ be in all hearts, thinking about me, Christ be on all tongues, telling about me,
Christ be the vision in the eyes that see me, in ears that hear me, Christ ever be.

Our God, Jesus showed his disciples how they should live, and how we should live, accepting your unconditional love, and doing our best to show that love and care, to everyone we live, work and share our lives with. Help us to be more and more like Jesus in our actions, speech and attitudes to everyone we meet. Help us, we pray, to recognise the needs of others, especially the weak, the poor, the sick and the vulnerable, and to do whatever we can to meet those needs: we can offer friendship, a listening ear, support through foodbanks and church social services. We can donate to agencies which meet these needs here and overseas.

This week we became aware of the numbers of people in China and around the world affected by the Corona virus. We pray that scientists and health practitioners are successful in alleviating the suffering it brings. May their families receive the support they need to cope. In many first-world countries like Italy and the United States, hate and dissension is rearing its ugly head again and we pray that good people will speak out so tolerance and love can prevail.

At this time children in New Zealand are back to school after a long summer holiday. Many 5-year-olds are at school for the first time. Help them and their teachers to make the most of their learning opportunities. May they develop healthy attitudes, and the skills they need to make positive contributions to our society.

We thank you that the close friendship of our two congregations has brought us to this stage and we look forward to its further development as we worship together. We think of some of our friends like Ena Milroy, who cannot join us in worship, because of poor health or limited mobility. May they know we care for them and remember them, and be always conscious of your love, we pray. We remember some of our friends like Colin and Pat and trust they will return refreshed. We thank you for the work done in our name by Christian World Service overseas, and by the Glenfield Salvation Army close to home, who distribute our Foodbank offerings. Finally we pray for ourselves, that however inadequate we sometimes feel, we will, with your help, love you with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength and our neighbour as ourselves, as Jesus taught us. In his name we pray, AMEN