*Letters on our hearts*

Resource for worship week 14

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You will need a cross and a letter to or from a loved one

Opening verse:

‘It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart… all of you share in God’s grace with me.’ Philippians 1:7

Read through slowly the verses from 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 below:

1Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?

**2**You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.

**3**You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

**Reflection:**

After more than three months in lockdown, separated from friends and family, we are all craving human contact. We long to be back together again, to hear own individual stories and to rejoice in one another. But, although we are closer to that day, we must be patient for a little while longer. More than ever we have come to rely on social media, the telephone and of course letters to keep in contact. Letters are especially important for they enable us to communicate in a deeply personal way, from heart to heart. I still remember my mum waiting eagerly for weeks, even months, to receive an airmail from her brother in Australia. She would drop everything to read it and find out how he was doing. I’m reminded too, when at university, how each morning, all of us would gather excitedly around the mailboxes to see if we had received news from home.

Paul speaks a lot about letters in our reading. He describes the Corinthian believers as a ‘letter written on his heart, known and read by everyone,’ and how in turn ‘they are a letter from Christ written by the Spirit on people’s hearts.’ These letters are living letters, forged through relationship, founded on trust and rooted in deep abiding love. They speak to the world not as uncompromising commands written on stone but as living truth, engraved on hearts full of compassion and mercy. He is saying that Christ is able to communicate his love for the world through the lives of those who love him.

**Prayer Activity**

Take your letter in your hands. Think of the person to whom or from whom the letter is addressed. Is the letter faded from being read over and over or is it pristine? Was it hand delivered or posted second class? What does it mean to you?

Imagine Jesus sending a letter to someone through you, from heart to heart. What is the Lord saying to you? How is his love made known to others through his letter on your heart?

You may wish to pray the following prayer:

Lord Jesus,

A close up of a piece of paper

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To you, my heart is an open book, a letter

in which you have written your words of love.

Over the years I have often read these words

Taken great comfort in them and been guided by them

This letter may now be faded, worn by use

but the truths therein are as fresh and vital as ever.

Lord, may your love for the world

Be seen, written on the pages of my heart,

A message from your heart to theirs,

For the glory of your name. Amen.

Quote from Mother Teresa**:**

# I am a little pencil in the loving hands of God.

# He does the thinking.

# He does the writing.

# He does everything

# and sometimes it is really hard

# because it is a broken pencil

# and He has to sharpen it a little more.

**Time of prayer**

O God, the author and fountain of hope

Enable us to rely with confident expectation on your promises

Knowing that all things work to the good of those who love God.

Help us in all things to look to you

And the joy that is set before us,

that we may be steadfast in faith

and fervent in showing love to all in need.

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus

in this time of change and upheaval

Grant that the Church may hear your call

To step from the boat and launch out into the deep.

Give us courage before the waves that tower over us

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And conviction that you are able to save

All who put their trust in you,

so we may proclaim your gospel fearlessly

and your kingdom may grow to the glory of your name.

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our local businesses and charities

As they seek to reopen following the lockdown.

We pray for employers and employees,

for those who have been put on furlough

And those who have lost their jobs during this crisis.

Support and direct, sustain and provide for all in need.

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our communities

As the restrictions ease and we are able to meet.

Keep us safe and vigilant to the dangers,

protect those who are most at risk

and restore to us our joy.

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in isolation or alone

For those in care homes, hospices and hospitals

Those recovering and those who are becoming more frail

Visit them with your Spirit of healing,

Sustain them by your mighty power

And bless them with your love.

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we pray for those who are grieving,

That they may know your consolation and comfort,

Look upon them with peace and mercy,

Hear their cries and hold them close to your heart

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

Let us commend ourselves and all for whom we pray

to the mercy and protection of God, in the prayer our Saviour taught us.

Our Father who art in heaven,

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Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory

For ever and ever. Amen.

*A song to sing or reflect on:*

Fill Thou my life, O Lord my God,

In every part with praise,

That my whole being may proclaim

Thy being and Thy ways.

Not for the lip of praise alone

Nor e’en the praising heart

I ask, but for a life made up

Of praise in every part.

Praise in the common things of life

Its goings out and in

Praise in each duty and each deed

However small and mean

Fill every part of me with praise

Let all my being speak

Of Thee and of Thy love O Lord

Poor though I am and weak

So shalt Thou, Lord, from me, e’en me

Receive Thy glory due

And so shall I begin on earth

The song for ever new.

So shall no part of day or night

From sacredness be free

But all my life, in every step

Be fellowship with Thee.

*Closing prayers*

Lord, you have brought us through this day

To a time of reflection and rest

Calm us, and give us your peace to refresh us.

Keep us close to Christ

That we may be closer to one another

Because of his perfect love

In his name we pray. **Amen.**

The love of the Lord Jesus

Draw you to himself

The power of the Lord Jesus

Strengthen you in his service

The joy of the Lord Jesus, fill your hearts,

And so may you be enfolded in the heart of God

This evening and for evermore. **Amen.**