

Celebrating community – 26 June

PAULINE

Over the past year we have explored many aspects of community – some in depth and some we will be continually working on. We have scratched the surface but still many questions come...

Reader 1 MYRA

Lord, as we pray for the renewal of community (live and on Zoom)

And the well-being of our local communities

Help us to tease out more what community means to us...

Is it, perhaps, people gathered round a common task or purpose:

Like-minded folk supporting each other through diversity,

Or even to enjoy recreation,

Or a physical sense of living within a specific location:

'my street', 'my town', 'my country'?

Is it a collection of people engaged in a common task?

Can we find it when we are with our friends in church,

When we pray together for the world,

Or sing in a choir?

Or perhaps we find it in a gathering of Christians who share a Rule of life:

A shared commitment to justice and peace?

We may also find it within the group of family and friends

Whom we love and support.

Lord, perhaps all of these are our communities,

And it is good to pray for them.

And so we take a moment to pray for them now ... (WE PAUSE TO REFLECT – 1 min)

Reader 2 CHRIS

We are mindful of those who live on the margins of our understanding:

Those whom we do not know,

Or even like,

Or who speak a different language

Lord, continue to keep us aware of them.

We think of the young man

Who sleeps rough in the doorway of the hall

In which the choir sings;

The young woman with needle-ravaged arms

Who begs on the road outside the church;

The young people squatting in the nailed-up house

At the end of our road.

These are people we don't see or know about:

Those alone, depressed, despairing;

The people across the world,

Those dying of COVID, AIDS, Ebola

And those who have a different faith or religion,

They are also our communities.

Community is an ongoing commitment to reach out in relationship;

Even if that reaching out is to those who we do not know,

Do not like,

Or do not understand.

Perhaps community is not about feeling comfortable with like-minded people,

But more about embracing the challenge of reaching out to others in the world...

(WE PAUSE TO REFLECT - 1 min)

Reader 3 ROSIE

Lord, as we pray for our local communities,
Help us to listen to those around us:
To notice those with whom we share an affinity,
And those we do not,
And to rejoice in,
Rather than fear,
Our difference.

Help us to include
Those who feel excluded
Due to mental health challenges, disability,
Poverty, gender, religion, age, race, sexuality...

Help us to reach out and offer hospitality,
Community,
To the unloved, those on the margins of our world.

Help us to include those we would rather exclude,
Embrace those we would rather disgrace
And learn from those we would prefer to forget.

PAULINE

**Help us to listen,
Rather than speak,
And enable us to embrace change
And not be fearful of difference.
Amen**

(WE PAUSE TO REFLECT – 1 min)