**Prayer Moment 1**

Good evening everyone. I invite you, just for a moment, to reflect on the name of this event – Emmanuel. [As you can see on the logo in your song books] Emmanuel means God With Us. Look around you for a moment: take in the atmosphere, take in the space we find ourselves in tonight. We are gathered as a community to raise our voices with songs of faith and therefore we can truly say that God is with us in a special way tonight. I invite you to take a moment for us to prayerfully reflect together; to take a moment to be still in the presence of God. [Two prayer moments tonight – at the beginning and end of each we’ll sing:]

We Lift Our Prayers to You, We Lift Our Prayers to You.

*Justice Shall Flourish* – which we have just heard – is based on Psalm 72 and foretells of a better time when a great leader, a great king will reign and that during his time; justice will flourish and his people will know peace in its fullest sense forever more…

The ‘king’ & ‘kingdom’ foretold in this song is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God featured many times in Jesus’ preaching. It was and is Jesus’ vision of a way of life that loves God and does good to other people. In this teaching, Jesus calls us to be honest and just, to give, to do and to be all that we can. He calls us to love God and love our neighbour as ourselves.

Pope Francis tells us where we can find this ‘Kingdom’ on Twitter: *The Kingdom of God is already in our midst like a hidden seed. Anyone with pure eyes can see it blossom.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

The Kingdom of God exists in the quiet, peaceful space within us, in the depths of our hearts. This song tells us that where the Kingdom of God becomes a living reality – where we strive to give, to do and to be all that we can – discord and injustice comes to an end; in our hearts, in our homes and in our communities.

A visible sign of building the Kingdom of God can be seen in the work of Trócaire. Psalm 72, as we know, describes a world where justice shall flourish, but the psalm is also a clear message to those in power and authority to take special care of those living in poverty, of those most in need. Trócaire maintains the strong view that the greatest challenge in the world today is **climate justice.**

Climate Justice features predominantly in the Trócaire Lenten campaign for 2017, in which reference is made to Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si’* where he says: *The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming.* (51)

Jesus was forced to carry his cross, the very instrument of his death, to his crucifixion. There are particular populations of humanity who, like Jesus are innocent and must carry the burdens of others’ carelessness and selfish disregard. Ethiopia has one of the lowest carbon footprints of any other country in the world, yet suffers severe drought caused by a warming climate.

So to conclude, we ask for help that we might become more considerate of the plight of those living with the harsh realities of climate change:

Jesus, may we make real sacrifices to lessen our carbon footprint so that others may live. Open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters; especially those who suffer the most from climate change. Inspire us in our words and actions, so that our resolve is strengthened and we find joy and purpose in what we do without. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the earth and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Help us to honour this commitment, that we may be a living witness to truth and freedom, to justice and peace. **Amen.**

We Lift Our Prayers to You, We Lift Our Prayers to You.

In the parables devoted to forgiveness and mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy; this is beautifully echoed in our next song: *Come Home.*

**Prayer Moment 2**

We have just heard Dona Nobis Pacem – the Latin phrase meaning: Grant Us Peace. Three simple words, but let us reflect on the depths that they hold as we take a moment for prayer… *Grant Us Peace.*

We Lift Our Prayers to You, We Lift Our Prayers to You.

Dear Lord, help us to be open to you for this time as we put aside the cares of this world. Fill our hearts with your peace, with your love. **Amen.**

For many people, peace is something far-off and longed for, as they struggle to cope in war-torn regions, around the world… Pope Francis was once quoted saying: ‘Peace is a precious gift, which must be promoted and protected… never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war, violence begets violence.’

We take a moment to place ourselves in the shoes of those for whom peace is a far-off hope:

God of Mercy, pour out your peace upon us all. Watch over our brothers and sisters in Syria, Iraq and any other part of our world in the clutches of war. We pray especially for those who have fled their homes. Lead them to a place of safety and bring comfort to those who mourn. Inspire us all to share the light of your hope, to reach out in a spirit of compassion. Make us channels of your peace, so that all people may live free from fear, conflict and pain.

The wars that we see reported in the media, however, are not the only situations where people experience upheaval or an absence of peace. As Pope Francis has said: Let us pray for peace and let us bring it about starting in our own homes.

We take a moment to ask God to be with us in all that we say and do – peace is a daily commitment, it is a homemade peace. When we allow a space for God in our daily lives, He can help us to radiate the gifts of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in our families, in our communities and throughout the world. (Galatians 5:22) Saint Teresa of Calcutta once said: ‘If we do not have peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.’

We conclude our prayer moment with a blessing entitled: *May the Beauty of God Surprise Us*; which is fitting as we look forward to the next lively gospel piece by Ciaran Coll; *My Soul Give Praise to the Lord*.

May the beauty of God surprise us. May the presence of God guide us. May the Word of God inspire us. May the dream of God enfold us. May the passion of God love us. May the wisdom of God instruct us. May the call of God invite us. May the healing of God hold us. May the wonder of God humble us. May the love of God renew us. May the compassion of God strengthen us. May the forgiveness of God reconcile us. May the mercy of God mould us. May the friendship of God bless us. May the truth of God challenge us. May the peace of God surround us. And may we delight in ‘God-with-us’ (Emmanuel) always. **Amen.**

We Lift Our Hearts to You, We Lift Our Hearts to You.

1. Pontifex Twitter Jan 28, 2017 @ 4:45am [↑](#footnote-ref-1)