

## Opening Prayer

Loving, living God

This morning we come again before our extraordinary God; not one who is a consuming fire, inflamed with anger and bent on vengeance, but one of incomprehensible love who constantly reaches out to us, draws near, encourages, fixes and strengthens.

As we come near to you during this time today, to be with you and your family, we don't therefore come with fear of anger and punishment but rather, with a hard-to-believe security in a God whose nature is always to have mercy. As we reflect on this week, we readily acknowledge that we haven't always got it right; our ways have not always been like your ways - our thoughts not always lovingly laced with grace and mercy, our words not always supportive, encouraging and nurturing and our actions not always fuelled with loving intent.

Therefore, as we enter into this place of Sabbath rest, knowing that you welcome a contrite heart, we lay these thoughts, words and deeds before you. We ask you as the psalmist did thousands of years ago, to please to incline your ear to us, to forgive us and to deliver us. In our recurring cycles of walking, running, stumbling and falling, we deliberately choose to run to you again and hide in you, knowing that we will never be shamed, that you are a rock of security and acceptance to which we can repeatedly come. As your spirit brooded over the waters in the very beginning, as this same spirit has supported, loved and transformed millions over the centuries, so we ask that you would do the same this morning as you move amongst us.

I invite us all for a few moments to be silent, to yield the shadows of our week to this amazing God and to find the loving acceptance so readily offered.

What a joy it is now, to rest in the rock of your loving acceptance and forgiveness, to know that whatever battles rage around us, whatever challenges face us, whatever issues try to overwhelm us, you are always there, always open, always ready to receive us. We turn to you now together to speak to the most brilliant parent ever, in the words you taught us,

Our Father and Mother in heaven

Hallowed be your name ...