

## Opening Prayers

Pure, loving and forgiving God, as we bring ourselves deliberately into your presence for this hour in a week of our full lives, we stop for a few minutes to reflect on just a small part of who you really are. The psalmist has said of you that you are sheer mercy and grace, that you don't treat us as our sins deserve, nor do you pay us back in any way for our wrongs. How amazing this is, and so contrary to our ways of thinking. What an extraordinary God you are that this should define you; not anger, not power, not revenge, but unmerited favour, forgiveness when totally unwarranted, and loving engagement when it just seems so illogical.

We agree with you that, as the sky soars above the earth, so the way you think and work surpasses the way we do. When we are wronged or hurt our first instinct is to be angry, to lash out, to want revenge and you, in sharp contrast, are not easily angered, nor are you vengeful and furthermore, are always quick to forgive. When you walked this earth, you told us to forgive seventy times seven, to never stop forgiving and you modelled it again and again. How extraordinary is this that you should be like this.

We come to you now, oh extraordinary God, in our brokenness and failure. Broken in our natures that need so much work to be like you, failure in the many times that we continue to bear a grudge, the times we hold onto grievances and wish harm on others for what they have done to us or others we love. We acknowledge that you have forgiven us for way, way more than anything anyone could ever do to us. You cleared our slate once, you did it again and you continue to do it out of your amazing nature. Please forgive us once again, beautiful God. Draw us in close that we may again be set free to know the freedom of forgiveness from you and the freedom of our forgiveness of others.

And, as we move into the rest of this time with you this morning, we know once again, that you have extended your hand of freedom and forgiveness. In your mercy you have seen a contrite heart, a willing spirit and in your love, you once again hear our prayer. We now turn together to you to prayer in the way you taught us ...