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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

This email from LICC (London Institute of Contemporary Christianity) written by Matthew Greene dropped into my inbox this week, and I thought I would share it with you, as we move towards the autumn and beginning again afresh.

**‘Refreshing Prayer**
**Who's Pursuing Whom?**
*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**John 1:14*
September is a blink away. And it often feels more like a new beginning than January, where nothing much changes except the number of the year. In September the school and university years begin, work gathers pace, club programmes reignite, things get going.

This year, that sense of a fresh start is perhaps intensified as we adjust to life after lockdown. September may not be the time to make resolutions, though it may still be a good moment for us to rethink the rhythm of our devotional lives. In doing so, there’s one vital lesson to keep in mind – Jesus came for us.

We did not ascend to heaven; God descended to earth. As John puts it, ‘the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.’ His was the initiative, ours only the response. It is ever so. We only seek God because God first sought us. Indeed, whenever we feel a stirring to pursue him, it’s his grace that has put it there, his wooing that has roused us.

At the beginning of a new year, and perhaps in September too, many of us resolve to read our Bible more, to pray more, to be more fruitful in our everyday lives. We grit our teeth and ‘try harder’. But we’re already on the back foot.

If we forget that God has taken the decision to come to us, our prayers become an exercise in striving. We try to pray for longer than we desire, or pray the ‘right’ prayers. Soon we can feel dejected. Perhaps we have forgotten the grace of the incarnation, the coming of God to us. And so, the right response is not to strive but to rest, trusting that God wants to be with us, wants to listen, wants to speak.

So, instead of trying to manufacture an experience, it can be helpful simply to acknowledge his presence, repeating quietly to oneself a short phrase like ‘You are here. And I am here’. Even in this situation. On this frontline.

In this position of prayerful trust, we can be confident that the places in which we find ourselves, the people among whom we live and work, and the tasks to which he calls us will all be permeated by the presence of the one who is ‘full of grace and truth’.’

**WONDERING HOW TO PRAY FOR AFGHANISTAN**? **Suggestions from Pete Grieg, 24-7 Prayer**

First-hand insights from someone whose organisation needs to remain anonymous for obvious reasons:

“The fear for the Afghan people is not so much the unknown, but rather the known: a brutal regime where daily life is filled with unbearable tension: regular public executions, oppression for women, fear of a knock at the door from the Taliban.

For too long people in Afghanistan have looked for salvation from Western powers. Well, that hasn’t worked. It’s failed spectacularly. We need our brothers and sisters in the global church to take spiritual responsibility and stand with us in prayer. “

Let’s lift our prayers urgently to heaven for:

1. The Afghan church. Protection, peace and courage for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are understandably terrified. Let’s pray that they experience the Lord walking with them and among them, saying: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

2. Political and humanitarian solutions for the vast number of Afghan refugees, ordinary people suddenly displaced from their homes by the terror the Taliban. May they discover that “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who take refuge in Him.” (Nahum 1:7)

3. Wisdom for world leaders as they seek to respond diplomatically, building an essential international consensus for peace. “Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power. By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just;”(Proverbs‬

With my love in Christ and my prayers

Alison

**Sunday 22nd August 10.30**

St John’s 10.30 am All Age

St Leonard’s 10.30 am Holy Communion

Zoom 6.30pm Service of the Word

**Wednesdays 10.00-12 noon -** St Leonards open for private prayer