**Prayers of praise & thanksgiving**

The beginning of the gospel of John assures us that:

 ‘the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not over come it.’

This evening, we are invited to join with other Christians across these islands to place a lighted candle on a window sill, where it may shine into the physical darkness, just as the light of Christ shines into the metaphorical darkness of the times in which we find ourselves.

The prophet Isaiah records these words:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God, Speak tenderly to Jerusalem…

Lift your eyes and look to the heavens – who created all these these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name.

In the letter to the church in Philipi, we read that we should:

Shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of Life

With these thoughts in mind, let us pray:

God who is Light and Love,

We praise and thank you for your inextinguishable presence in the darkness that surrounds us.

As the Psalmist reminds us, you, our Creator, know every star by name, and ensure that not one of them is lost. So it is with your human children. You know each one of us by name, and your desire is that none be lost. For this we offer thanks and praise.

As the Apostle reminds us, you, our Sustaining Redeemer call us to shine brightly where we are. This is an awesome privilege, and a huge responsibility. So we thank you for your Holy Spirit, recalling how she descended as tongues of fire on frightened followers and empowered them for service and mission.

We pause briefly, looking back over the past week, recalling moments when the light pierced the darkness of fear, anxiety or busyness and we found ourselves smiling or laughing, refreshed or renewed; and, in the privacy of our hearts, we name them before God…

This week, when so many of us feel that we have been running to stand still, we are grateful for this brief opportunity to slow down, to ‘be still’, to ‘desist’, and recognise that our lives are lived in the safe embrace of the God whose name is revealed to be ‘I Do’, but ‘I Am’…

God who is light and love, accept our prayers and give us your peace. Amen.

**Prayers for others**:

These prayers for others include a response, which, if you find it helpful, you are invited to join in with at home:

When I say, Jesus Light of the World, you are invited to say, ‘*Shine in the darkness*’

Let us pray…

God of compassion, we come to you in these moments with our prayers for others, and for each other.

Jesus tells us that we are the Light of the World, called to shine like stars in the universe, so help us not only to pray, but also to live the answers in our own homes and communities.

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

Day by day, the news media are filled with updates from politicians, medical experts and scientists.

We pray for those who serve in governance of the four nations of this United Kingdom, in Westminster, in Holyrood, in Stormont and in Cardiff, especially for the Prime Minister, First Ministers and Presiding Officers. Grant them wisdom, insight and compassion.

We pray for the devolved Public health bodies, working collaboratively to ensure that all appropriate measures are implemented across these islands.

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

We pray for all leaders of industry, business and commerce, in organisations large and small, as they face new challenges every day, and have to make complex and unpalatable choices. Grant them wisdom, creativity and compassion.

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

We pray for all faith leaders, those serving local congregations and those who are chaplains in healthcare, educational, prison, military and workplace settings. From learning new skills to managing others’ expectation, from the challenges of being defined as ‘key workers’ to feeling inadequate and exhausted, this has been a hugely demanding week and uncharted territory. Enable them to care for themselves and those closest to them, taking time for rest and refreshment,

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

We pray for those in nation who are especially vulnerable because their already fragile lives are now further endangered. People who have no homes, people who have sought asylum or refuge from terrible situations, people who live in food, fuel or period poverty, people whose mental health and wellbeing is impacted. Show us how, to these neighbours, we can be the light of the world, how we may shine like stars in simple acts of kindness, compassion and grace.

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

We pray for the people of Croatia following the major earthquake in Zagreb earlier today. Grant wisdom to their national leaders as they seek to respond to both this and Corona virus; strengthen all whose work it is to undertake the work of rescue and care, and bring a measure of peace in the inevitable bewilderment and fear.

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

We pray for the Baptist churches of these islands, among whom are many who are fearful about loss of income in these uncertain times. We pray for wisdom and compassion as they discern their way forward; and also for those employed by our Unions who offer advice, guidance and support.

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

Lastly, we pray for ourselves, each one of us with a unique mix of emotions, fears and challenges. In the quiet, we name them before God…

Jesus, Light of the World *Shine in the darkness*

God who knows and names the stars in the universe, hear our prayers, and empower us to shine like stars in the days ahead. We make our prayers in the name of Jesus, Amen.