

Week nine: Monday 30 October
A prayer for strengthening relationships
From Wessex Synod

This week's theme is 'strengthening relationships'. Each day we shall explore and reflect on different types of relationships, and how they affect us and our relationship with God.

The image we shall be using each day is a tree, with seven branches representing each day. Please feel free to use this tree template as your daily devotion as we explore relationships

Each day will include:

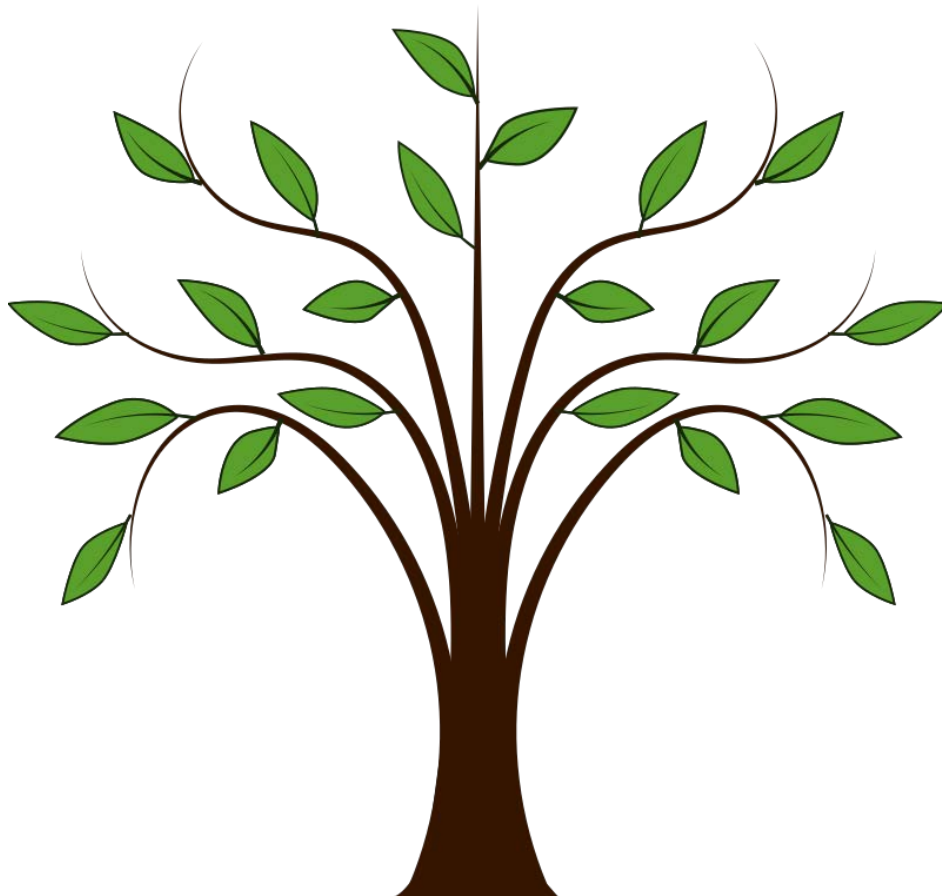
W What does the Bible teach us? A short passage will introduce the day.

A Activity Reflect on the passage and move towards the suggested activity.

L Listen and pray Each day will have a different piece of music/video to listen to.

K Knowledge As you progress through the day, reflect on meditation and the relationships you have encountered; are they assisting or hindering your relationship with God and God's people?

This material is suitable for daily devotions, small groups and within worship.





Monday 30 October

Enriching relationships

W *'Encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.'*

1 Thessalonians 5:11

A Think about situations and people who have enriched your life.

- Look out of your window/your office/your home/your church.
- Can you see people talking?
- Is the sun shining outside or is it raining?
- Are the leaves a rich colour of red or brown or green?

Look at the world and your environment, or if possible go outside for a short stroll. But **really** look; beyond your sight, look with your heart. Use the tree template, and focus on the **first branch**, and add more leaves and acknowledge people who enrich your life.

L https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6OVOk1yUJM&index=4&list=RD5Htrmq0g_Nk

Deep within

David Haas

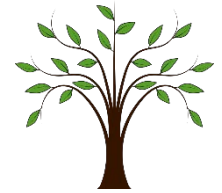
Open link above, listen to the music and bring before God all the people that have deepened your Faith.

K *'Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone – we find it with another.'*

Thomas Merton

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the many people who have given me holy moments to treasure.
In the myriad of ways your love and acceptance has enriched my life.
Thank you for the small ways you have made yourself known to me;
Thank for the guidance you bring me;
Thank you for creation and its many colours and hues.
Enfold me with your Love and grace this day.
In Jesus name.
Amen



Tuesday	Challenging relationships
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W 'Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honourable' Romans 12:17

A Consider people and situations that have caused you anguish and restlessness, during your days and nights; or are you a challenge to people?

- What does it feel like to be at odds with someone?
- Can you hear God speaking?
- What comes to mind? Is it how you feel, or are your thoughts with the other person and how they are feeling?

Working through challenging and difficult relations, takes patience and forgiveness, and even though we may need to challenge a person or situation, we are called to peacemakers. Use the tree template, and focus on the second branch, and add more leaves and bring before God people and situations.

L <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Skgc03R2wxg&list=RDSkgc03R2wxg#t=23>

Calm me Lord **Margaret Rizza**

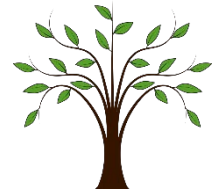
Open the link and listen to the music, and bring to God the people and situations that challenge you.

K Maybe we can't study, maybe we live with mental health issues, maybe we experience conflict in our families, maybe we are victims of violence or abuse. We didn't choose any of it, but these things are our crosses. We can ignore them, reject them, refuse them or hate them. But we can also take up these crosses and follow Jesus with them. *Based on words from Henri Nouwen*

Prayer

Lord, I did not seek conflict or challenges,
but they have found me.

In the midst of heated words, tempers and emotions *rising*,
still my soul,
calm me Lord,
enable me to make decisions based on wisdom and love.
And may your Loving Spirit be ever close to me.
Amen.



Wednesday Fragile relationships

W 'Jesus wept.'

John 11:35

A Feeling fragile, whether physically, emotionally or spiritually is a vulnerable place to be. We can't be bothered to speak, or explain for fear of crying or emotionally crumbling. Yet every day we meet people who carry their fragility behind a smile. Walking the road of discipleship means that we carry for a short while our fellow sojourners' fragility. It is a privilege, not a burden.

- How can we help them feel loved?
- Are we willing to share their burden and carry their load?
- Have you ever sat silently and wept with someone, because they have felt too exhausted to speak? Sometimes the gift we give another person is the gift of silence and presence.

Use the tree template, and focus on the **third branch**, and add more leaves and bring before God people who are feeling frail and vulnerable.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJrBXMp2E5M&index=76&list=PLQVEpXBAIvUir06QNi5Uj8qKF6ReOhfy>

Ubi Caritas sung by Matthew Curtis (Ola Gjeilo)

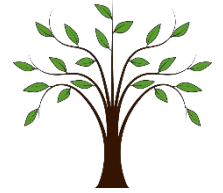
Open the link and listen to the music, and bring to God people who are feeling frail, vulnerable, weary and hurt.

K 'And in this he showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, 'What may this be?' And it was answered generally thus, 'It is all that is made.' I marvelled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God. In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it.'

Julian of Norwich

Prayer

God who knows my inner most thoughts,
bless me and those I love in our fragility. Amen.



Thursday New relationships

W *So she said, 'See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.' But Ruth said,*

'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you!

*Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people, and your God my God.*

Ruth 1:15-16

A To enable new relationship to flourish you need to invest in time. We live in a pressured environment, where demands are upon us daily, plus we live in a 'fast' world. However new relationships need to be nurtured.

- Do you invest time in friendships?
- When as the last time you met a new friend?
- What do you think the other person sees in you, that friendship could flourish between you?

Use the tree template, focus on the fourth branch, and add more leaves and acknowledge the new friendships that God places before you on your journey through discipleship and what we can learn from them.

L <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taanHO13WXE&index=2&list=RDQMHcoZWhRoNLg>

O pastor animarum (Plain chant)

Hildegard von Bingen

Open the link above, listen to the music and bring before God all the relationships that are starting to flourish and bud under the guidance of your the Holy Spirit

K Laugh and grow strong

St Ignatius of Loyola

Prayer

Spirit of God,

May the well of Living water

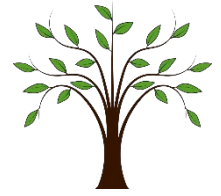
Refresh and quench my thirst;

Thank you that I see you face to face in friend and stranger,

Bringing light and depth into new relationships

In Jesus name

Amen.



Friday Transient Relationships

W *After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. Every Sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.* **Acts 18:1-4**

A As we walk the way of Jesus, we will have many different travellers as companions. Some linger longer than others, some may stay for a short while, yet they leave a mark, an imprint which will never leave us.

- Can you recall a person whom you travelled with for short time, yet they left a legacy with you?
- Can you recall a memory, a laugh or a conversation with them?
- How did you feel when you both parted?

Use the tree template, focus on the fifth branch, and add more leaves and acknowledge the people who have come and gone from your life, but their imprint has never left you.

L https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLQu6_Tjk9M

Come down O Love divine Fernando Ortega

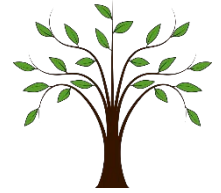
Open the link above, listen to the music and bring before God the people that have journeyed with you, name them privately before God.

K 'I have held many things in my hands, and lost them all, but those I place in God's hands, I still possess.'

Martin Luther

Prayer

Lord, I give thanks this day
for all people who have entered my life, and for their wisdom and gifts
they have generously shared with me
May I also be a gift to others through their journey of discipleship.
Amen



Saturday	Past relationships
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W *The Lord said to him, 'This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over here.*
Deuteronomy 34:4-5

A When we have arrived at our destination, we are tempted to look back at the journey we have made; to see the twists and turns the mountains and valleys. Looking back can be painful, especially this year as we remember those men, women, children and animals who lost lives in the Great War.

- Is looking back at your past relationships helpful or painful?
- What have you learnt from your past mistakes or challenges?
- Does it make your future seem brighter knowing what has happened to you and past relationships?

Use the tree template, focus on the **sixth branch**, and add more leaves and acknowledge the people who have contributed to shaping you as disciple, and those who have encouraged you to walk the way of Christ.

L https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t64p_HRhnhg

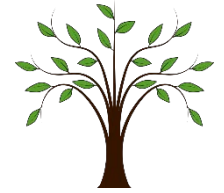
Mother of God, Here I stand (John Tavener) Clari Cantus

Open the link above, listen to the music and bring before God all the people and situations that have contributed to your views of life, whether they were valleys or mountain top experiences.

K 'The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children'
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Prayer

Lord there are times
when I want to leave the past behind me ,
those times when I have walked my way , not your way ,
those times when hurt has pierced my soul,
those times when judging has been the master.
Help me Loving Lord, to learn from the past,
to seek your desire for me, to gather up the threads,
and weave and new cloth to take into the future.
Amen.



Sunday	Our relationship with God
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W *'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.'* **Luke 10:27**

A as we have considered different relationships this week, we come before God knowing that this is the most important relationship we shall ever encounter. To Love God totally is a commitment, involving our bodies, our minds and our emotions. God delights in us, delights in our diversity and so let us delight in the relationship we have with our Maker. Let our song be loud and true and join in harmony with others as we walk the way of Christ.

- How do you recognise God's presence in your life?
- What do you need to do to develop your relationship, sustain it and enable it to flourish?

Use the tree template, focus on the seventh branch, and add more leaves and acknowledge the God in whose image we are made.

L <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoJz2SANTyo&list=RDfjiVG1QKZJs&index=10>

Amazing Grace

Sowato Gospel Choir

Open link above, listen to the music and bring before God all the people that have deepened your Faith

K *'For I tell you this: one loving, blind desire for God alone is more valuable in itself, more pleasing to God and to the saints, more beneficial to your own growth, and more helpful to your friends, both living and dead, than anything else you could do.'* **The Cloud of Unknowing**

Prayer

*God in whom we live and move and have our being,
I adore you for loving me,
I adore you for sending Jesus into my life,
I adore you for the guidance of your Spirit.
Enable me to rejoice always in your presence,
And always hold me in to palm of your hand.
In Jesus name.
Amen.*



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