

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

My name is Deryn Stewart and I will be your new Youth & Families Lay Worker, a job I am very much looking forward to starting. I first became a Christian when I was a child, and then was called to go to join a church. This was not as easy as it seemed as my family were not keen on the idea, and it meant leaving them for a while to take up God's word and thinking I would have to leave my college course too. So, I know a little about sacrifice.

I first came into contact with the Methodist church while I was at college through one of the chaplain's there. I have worked extensively with children and young people, teaching and in the community as a charity worker with disadvantaged groups and individuals, and I see myself very much as a practical Christian, serving God. On a personal side, I love animals, and have had lots of cats and chickens, and now have a black Labrador named Oscar, I am also very much a nature girl, so staying in is difficult for me.

It seems to me, not insignificant, that we are called to make these large sacrifices, perhaps of our lives, during Lent, and that we walk our Lenten path, hand in hand with our suffering Lord. He was abandoned, left by his disciples, alone, with none but God, and that is how it is with many of us, especially if you live on your own, today. It is not any easier if you are young and are used to a large group of friends around you. It also strikes me that this illness strikes both the rich and the poor, where ever you are. For many of us, our Lent will have been a protracted one. Be assured Jesus walks hand in hand with us in these times. I have been taking inspiration from the nature I see around me, the blossoms, the birds and the flowers. I look at nature flourishing and renewing all around me.

For me the psalms are a great source of inspiration and I pray these each day as part of my daily prayers. The psalmists were often in exile, away from the Temple and their places of worship, they had famine and illness, and death to contend with. They were often struggling with their faith, as everything they knew had been taken from them. So this is where I have taken my inspiration for a prayer for you from:

"A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me,
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit." Psalm 51: 10 - 11

"Lord be with us all, our families and our friends. Strengthen us and give us your Holy Spirit and the things we need today. Let us not worry about tomorrow, let us pray for those in need, and all our health workers, shop workers, refuge workers and key workers working so hard for us. We pray for a new creation, that your Spirit will come into the world, that it will be made anew, that this time of disease will pass, and all things will be renewed by your Spirit, and the world will be a new and better place, as good comes out of evil. Walk with us Lord this day. Let us stay faithful to your Spirit, Lord." Amen

Deryn Stewart

Your friend in Christ, united in prayer.