



## A Stop in the Go-Go-Go

### **Opening Praise**

Praise to you Heart of all that is,  
I welcome you with me and within me.  
I welcome the silence outside me and inside me.  
I welcome each sound I hear.  
I welcome the feel of my body on the surface where I sit.  
I welcome the rising and sinking of my chest as I attend to my breath.  
I welcome your grace within my heart.  
For the daily miracle of your love,  
praise to you.

*Tess Ward, The Celtic Wheel of the Year*

I have been reading a book called *Soulful Nature: A Spiritual Field Guide* by Brian Draper. In this book he reflects on making the time to stop:

*"...in life we rarely afford the time to pause after we accomplish anything. The urge is to keep moving, and we need courage to go against the flow, to pause for long enough to reflect on what we've done, or where we've been."*

He suggests: *'to root this physically can be really helpful – to choose a bench for example, as a sacramental ritual – to say thank you or well done to yourself or even just 'Wow!' for making it through. It embeds a rhythm of gratitude and awareness, as well as placing a 'stop' within the 'go-go-go'.'*

Pondering this idea I have set up six prayer stations in the St Mary's grounds and linked them to our new prayer labyrinth set up by Revd Kyla and her Husband Pete. So in all there are seven prayer stations which make up a prayer trail using St Mary's Green, the space in front of the church and immediately to the side of it (See Map). Each station has a bible verse and a prayer and a suggested idea encouraging us to take some time to stop and reflect using what we find around us, which in this case are the trees, the flowers and a bench.

The last prayer station, number seven is the bench. The verses to focus on at this station is from Mark 6:31: *'Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not*

*even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."*

Jesus was busy but he knew that he needed time to withdraw from the crowds to connect with his Father. He knew he needed a stop in the go-go-go of life and ministry. The bench in our prayer trail acts as a prompt to do this.

Another writer, Chris Chapman author of a book called *'Earthed in God'* makes reference to seats saying that they *'are invitations to stop doing for a while and being present to the sun on your face, the fresh green light of spring foliage.'*

Looking in the bible where were the places that Jesus withdrew to? And when did he stop? The priority of Jesus solitude, silence and stopping is everywhere in the Gospels. It's how he began his ministry. It's how he made important decisions. It's how he dealt with troubling emotions. It's how he dealt with the demands of his ministry. It's how he taught his disciples.

Mark is a good Gospel to start with to focus on this aspect of Jesus life – the stopping in the go-go-go. Although many biblical scholars say that Mark tells his gospel in a hurry, his favourite expression being *'immediately'* or *'at once'*, there are repeated pauses which gives us a glimpse into Jesus solitude, silence and stopping to be with the Father.

I invite you to spend some time reading Mark. Perhaps sit and read it the whole way through – it took me just over an hour - and notice when and where Jesus stops – lakes, lonely places, fields, mountainsides, boats, whilst walking.....

Stopping to me doesn't just mean to be sat down in the silence. Withdrawing to quiet places and choosing physical stillness is important but I am not sure that is how I was made! One way I choose to 'stop' is to go for a very long walk. Although I am moving over the miles I choose to pray and be silent. I choose to still my mind. I choose to give God the space to talk. It's during these long distance walks that I cover the miles with God and make important decisions, deal with troubling emotions and the demands of life and ministry. It's where I become teachable and attuned to hearing Gods voice.

How about this week finding moments in your day to pause? Look around you and take in all you see and hear and feel. Let what you see around you sink in and speak to you. Why not come and try out the prayer trail? The map at the end of this reflection shows the seven locations where you will find a laminated sheet explaining each station. If you cannot physically get along to St Mary's you can join in from home by using this YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/hZhNJ8t73F0>

The prayer trail encourages you to use what is around you to stop and pause – the trees, some flowers, a bench. Jesus paused and noticed the beauty of creation around him and he

listened for what it taught him about his father. Jesus invites us to notice the flowers and the birds and how much God cares for them. He invites us to remember that God cares for us also. He teaches through the tiniest seed that the smallest act of faith can impact God's Kingdom in our world. He teaches the value of an intimate relationship with God by using the image of the vine and the branches.

I invite you today to listen for God in nature by using Jesus model. Next time you see a bench be prompted to take a seat. Allow moments to pause. Notice and reflect on what God is teaching you through the visual reminders in the beauty of nature. I assure you God has much to teach us as we simply pause to listen and stop in the go-go-go.

### ***Closing blessing***

By the blessing of God, may I trust this day  
that in the nothingness is everything,  
in the absence is your presence,  
in the silence is the still small voice,  
in the stillness is the life of your love,  
that keeps me this day and always.

*Tess Ward, The Celtic Wheel of the Year*

### ***Map of St Mary's Prayer Trail***

