

Heavenly Father, we come to you today to hear you in the sound of sheer silence.

Imagine you are walking with Jesus through an olive grove on the way to visit Mary & Martha. The heat is rising from the sandy path, the dirt catches between your toes, the sweat rolls down your back.

Then, the relief of getting out of the scorching sun when you arrive at their cool house and Martha rushing forward to greet you ready to wash your feet.

You sit at Jesus' feet as he starts to talk.

Martha is rushing round only managing to catch snippets of his teachings and getting more resentful, whilst Mary is sitting beside you; silent and engaged with every word Jesus says.

So let us put away our distractions and listen to God as we request his guidance and wisdom in creating a stronger sense of community in our church as we ask ourselves:

How can I improve my relationship with others?

Pause

How can I encourage others on their journey of faith?

Pause

What should I do to help someone in need?

Pause

What are MY gifts and how can I use them for the growth of the church?

Pause

Heavenly Father we now take this opportunity to voice our concerns.

God of history, witness of the struggles within families; we pray for the divided families of Syria and Egypt & other war-torn countries, as brother fights against brother, and sister rejects sister.

We pray for those whose love of neighbour has been destroyed in the bitterness of hostility.

May fear be submerged in compassion.

May distrust be diluted by hope, as a vision of peace illuminates darkened minds and hate-filled hearts.

We pray in the name of Christ, our source of light and love.

Heavenly Father we hold up the names of people we know who are sick, bereaved or going through times of trouble, so they will know your outpouring of love upon them.

Pause

Finally, **Heavenly Father** we know you are an awesome God and we give thanks for the many gifts we are given: a country of peace, a democratic system, a health service, education for all, plentiful food & housing but most importantly the opportunity to worship you freely without fear.

Merciful Father

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ - Amen.

Prayers written by intercessor Jan Taylor (the section of the prayer for Syria & Egypt was provided by the Church of England)