**CONTROL: Accepting what we cannot change**

As we face the limitations of another lockdown and accept that that life won’t be returning to normal for some time yet, we can feel that we have no control over our lives, and start to feel disheartened and despondent. Has this prayer come into your mind?

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,*

*the courage to change the things I can*

*and the wisdom to know the difference.*

*(Reinhold Niebuhr)*

These familiar words offer up the reassurance that God is in control. And while we know in our hearts that this is the case, it doesn’t always stop us from feeling frustrated and downhearted about what we can and can’t do.

This simple prayer activity can help us to be thankful for what we can do and to accept the things we cannot change.

You will need a supply of small pieces of paper, a pen and an empty bowl.

If you want, you can light a candle or play some soft music to help you relax and reflect.

Think about everything that we would like to change, but over which we have no control, for example:

* So many people becoming ill with the virus
* Being able to meet with our family and our friends
* Visiting those who are lonely, isolated or experiencing ill health for non-Covid reasons

Include those things that may seem a bit selfish, such as not being able to go shopping, to the theatre or to the hairdresser. These things are all part of our overall well-being.

Write each of those things on a separate slip of paper, fold it over and put each slip into the bowl.

Then think about what we can do – and celebrate this.

* Appreciating the beauties of nature, whether by getting outdoors for daily exercise or looking out through your window
* Having a trip to your local shops for essential shopping – or having these delivered to your door
* Speaking on the telephone or making video calls to your loved ones
* Experiencing a wider world through YouTube and other technologies

Take time to reflect and to thank God for all that we have and all that we can do.

*Lord, we come to you with grateful hearts for we know that you give us countless blessings, both large and small. Help us to recognise all the good things that you give to us and to give thanks for all that we are able to do in our daily lives.*

Then take your bowl with those things you are unable to change.

Reflect on this passage from Paul’s letter to the Philippians (4:6-7)

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests to made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*(*NRSV)

Offer all the things we cannot change to God, either collectively or by taking each of your slips individually, saying *“Lord, into your hands, I commit……….”*

Once you have offered all these things to God, take time to reflect and be open to what God is trying to say to us. Are there small things we can do to make life better for ourselves and others?

We can’t make everything better, but we can let go of things we can’t change. As Christians, we are able to offer these up to God with the confidence that we pass our concerns to him, and he will share our burdens.

*When we put our problems into God’s hands, he puts his peace into our hearts.*

*(Anonymous)*