



Sunday March 22nd, 2020

Morning worship at St. Leonard's Parish Church
Dunfermline

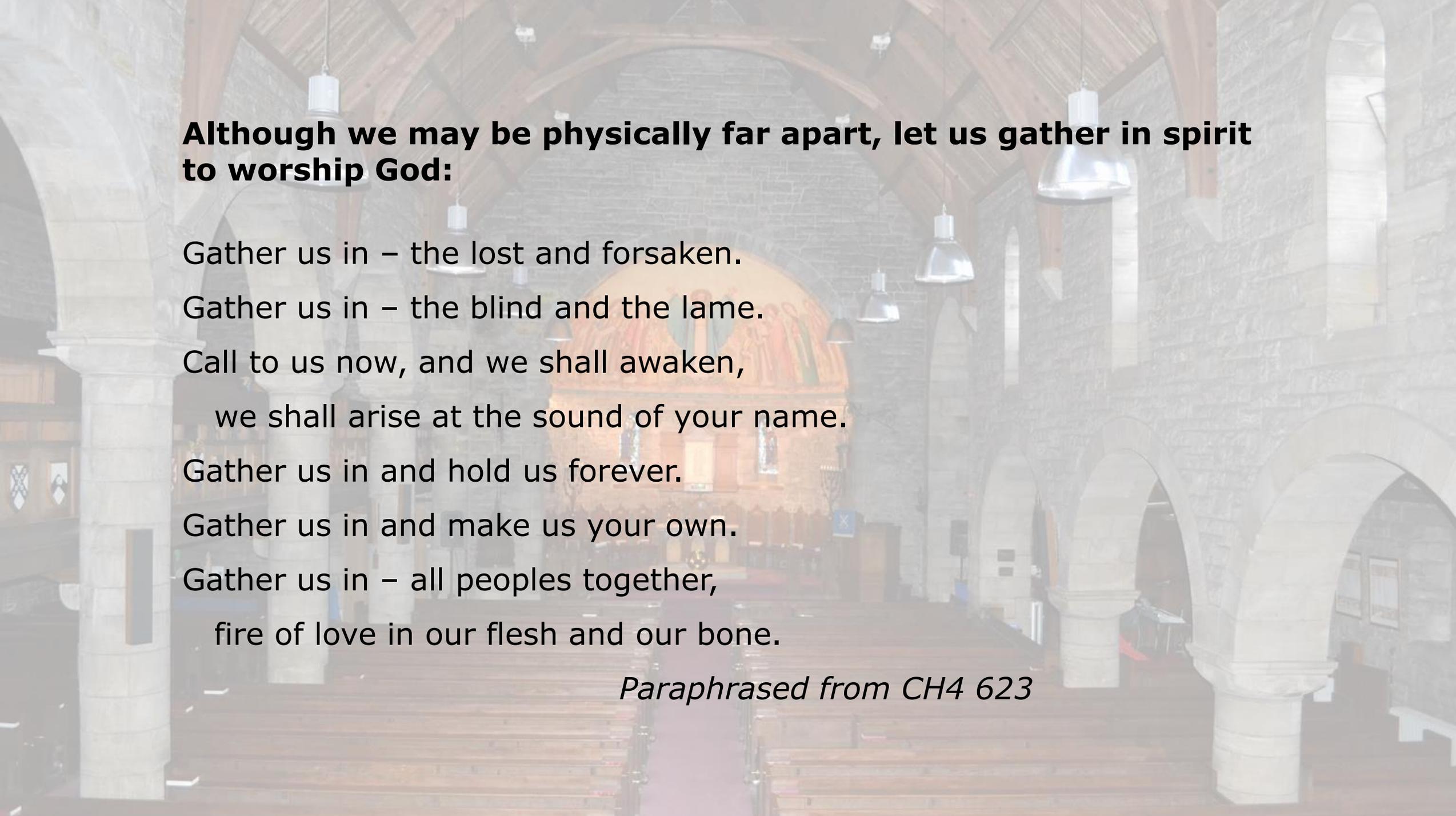
(originally posted on Facebook)



Welcome - We've had a week of the 'new normal' -
I do wonder how we are all doing?

Before all this happened, the plan had been to take a pause in our series on 'Call' for our Stated Annual Meeting...but we paused to face our fears instead.

Now we are in the 'just have to go through it' (Bear Hunt!) phase, and so I've decided we are going to finish our series. We've thought about the call of God on our lives - what a joy and privilege it is, what a blessing and a revolution it is. And today we are going to think about how we are called to mission - and if you've been around St L's for the last week while of Path of Renewal, you'll know I prefer to talk in terms of 'missional living' - and today is no different!



**Although we may be physically far apart, let us gather in spirit
to worship God:**

Gather us in – the lost and forsaken.

Gather us in – the blind and the lame.

Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of your name.

Gather us in and hold us forever.

Gather us in and make us your own.

Gather us in – all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Paraphrased from CH4 623

Call to worship

Strange though it may seem, we are called to worship God in all times and places, all situations - easy or hard:

Almighty God - maker of all that is

We worship you.

Jesus - the One who shows us how to live

We adore you.

Spirit - enabling us to live abundantly

We praise you.

Mysterious God, three in one, may we bring you glory.

Song: Be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you.

Prayer

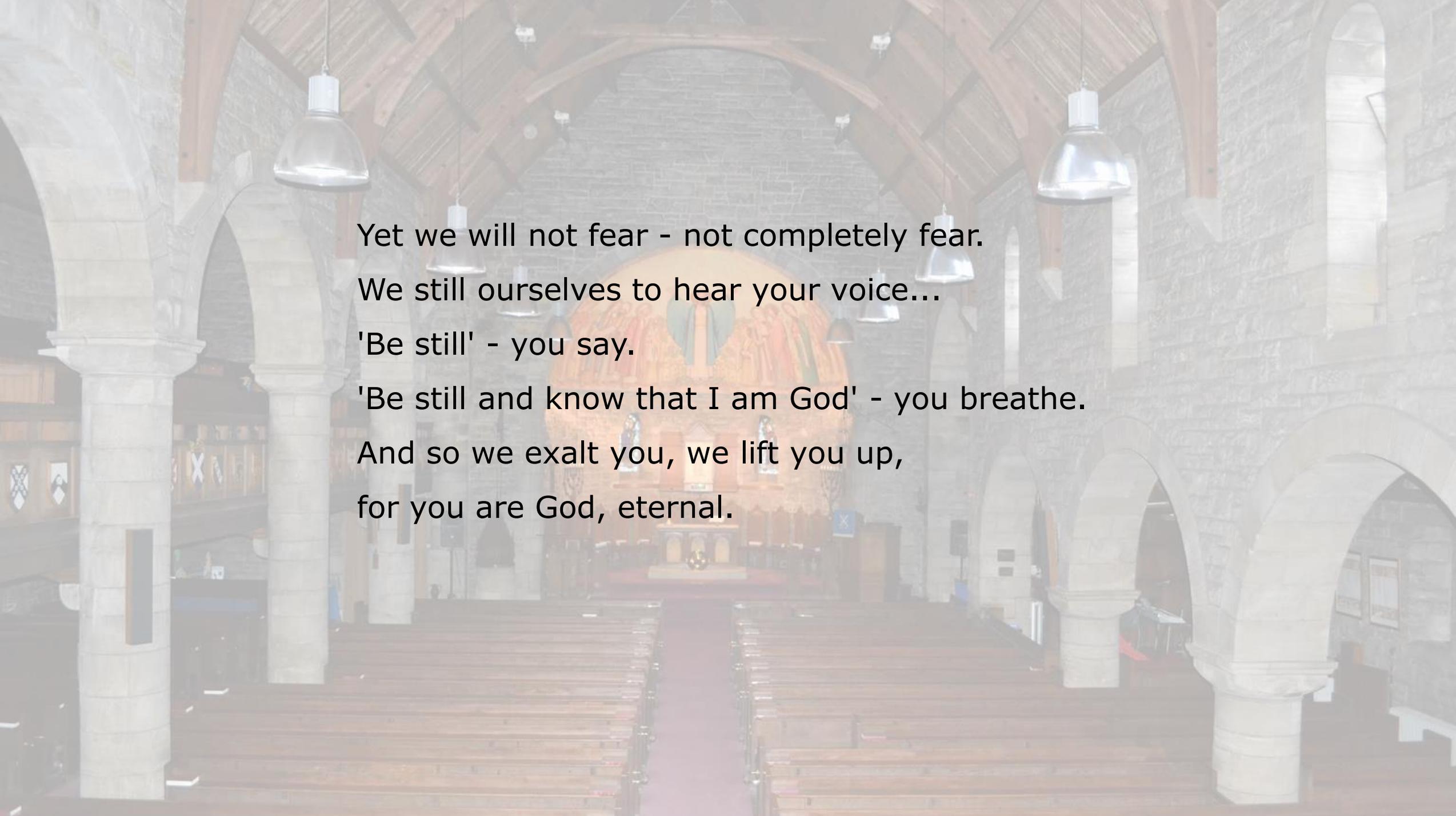
We are going to be using Psalm 46 as the basis of our first prayer. It's a wonderful place to go when the world feels like it's gone crazy, so let us pray together:

God - you are our refuge and our strength
we will hide ourselves in you when we feel overwhelmed
we will rely on you completely when we feel unable, incapable...at the end
of ourselves.

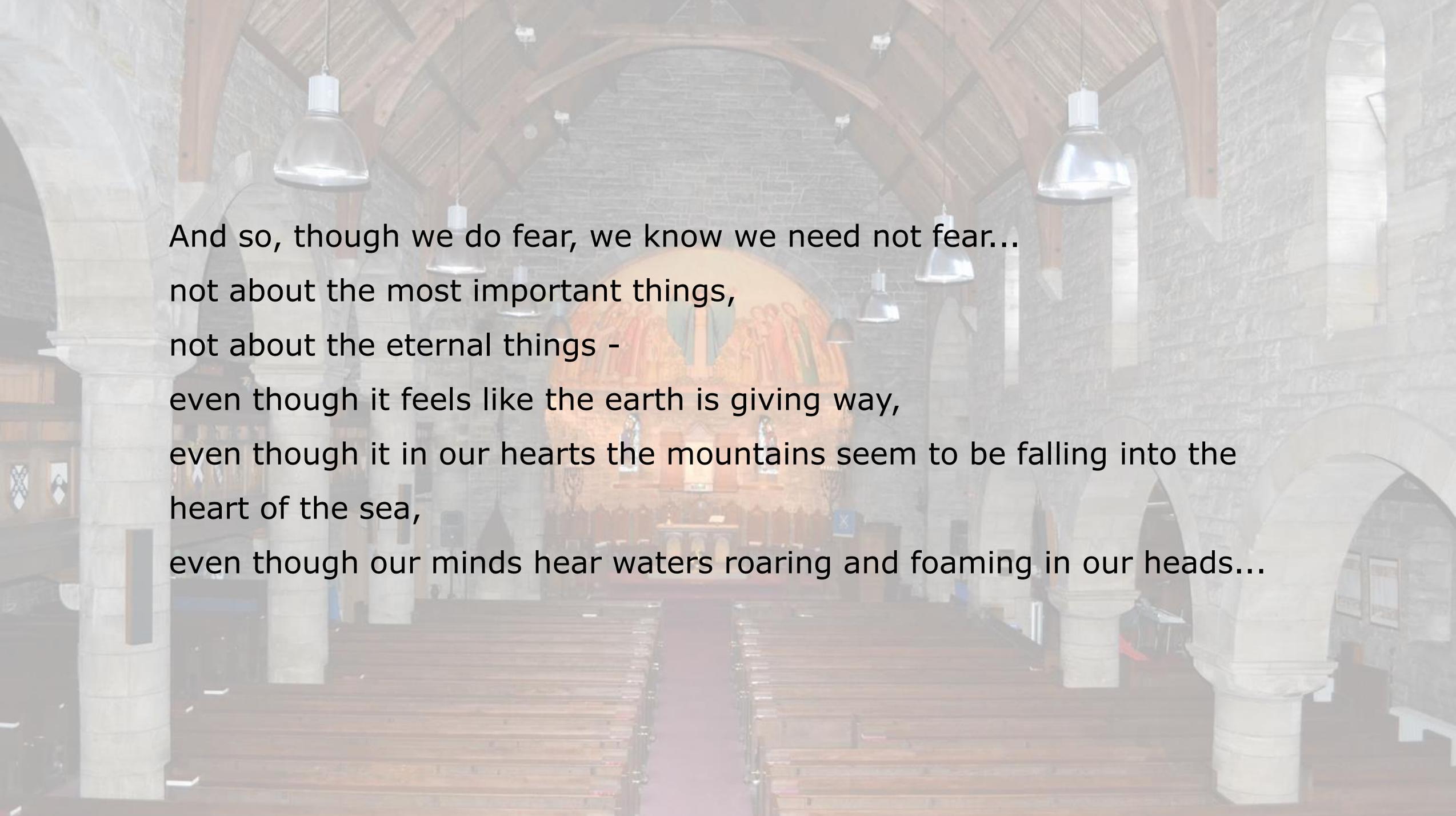
For you, God, are an ever-present help in trouble -

You promised never to forget us, never to forsake us,

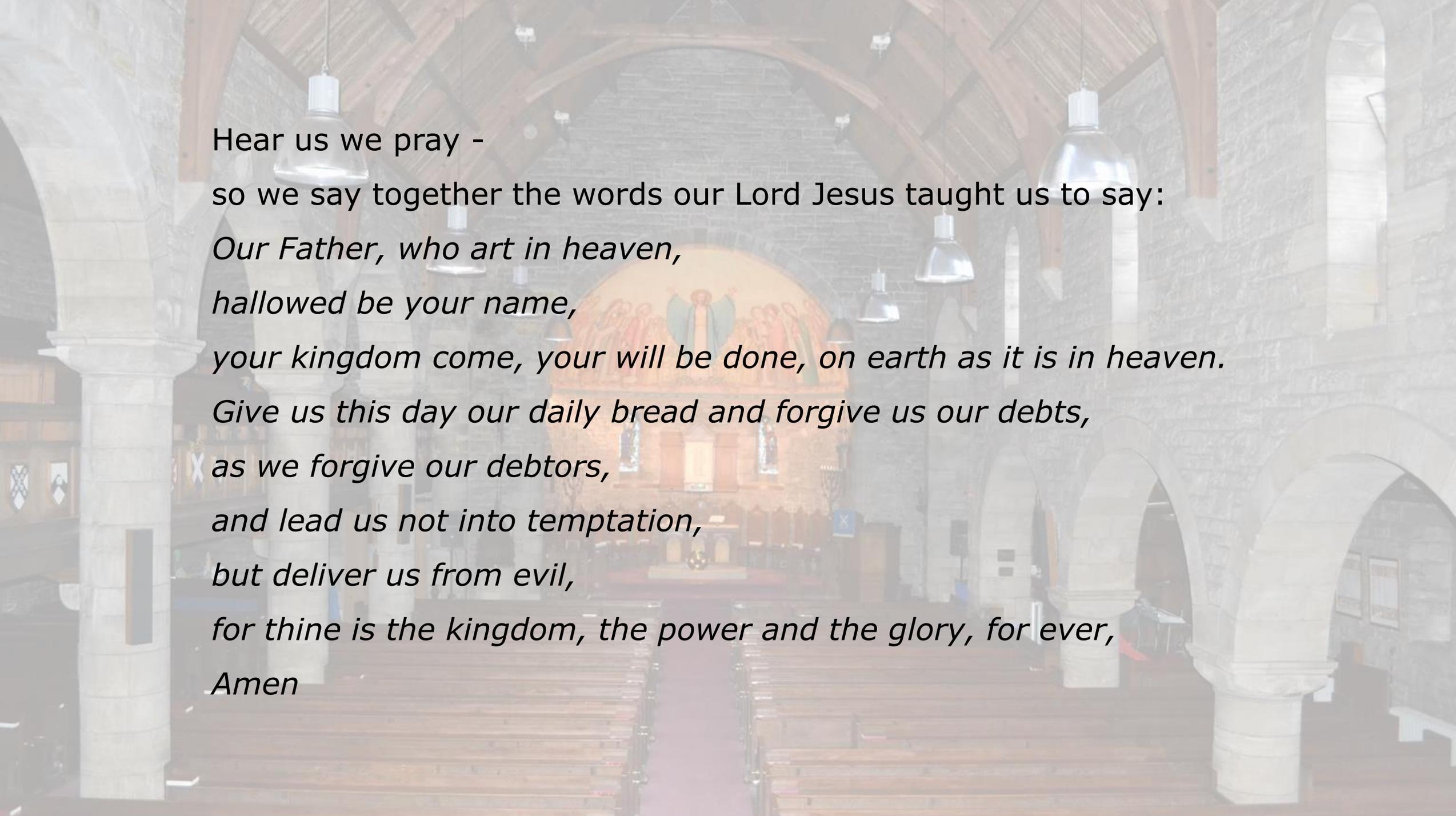
We will rely on you completely when changes are happening faster than
we can keep up with.

The background image shows the interior of a church. It features a high, vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams and several large, silver, dome-shaped pendant lights. The walls are made of light-colored stone blocks. A central aisle is lined with rows of dark wooden pews. At the far end, there is an altar area with a colorful, draped canopy. The overall atmosphere is quiet and solemn.

Yet we will not fear - not completely fear.
We still ourselves to hear your voice...
'Be still' - you say.
'Be still and know that I am God' - you breathe.
And so we exalt you, we lift you up,
for you are God, eternal.

The background image shows the interior of a church. It features a high, vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams and several large, silver, dome-shaped pendant lights hanging from the ceiling. The walls are made of light-colored stone blocks. In the foreground, there are rows of dark wooden pews arranged on either side of a central aisle. At the far end of the church, there is an altar area with a large, colorful stained-glass window or mural. The overall atmosphere is solemn and architectural.

And so, though we do fear, we know we need not fear...
not about the most important things,
not about the eternal things -
even though it feels like the earth is giving way,
even though it in our hearts the mountains seem to be falling into the
heart of the sea,
even though our minds hear waters roaring and foaming in our heads...

The background image shows the interior of a church. It features a high, vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams and several large, silver, dome-shaped pendant lights hanging from the ceiling. The walls are made of light-colored stone blocks. In the foreground, there are rows of wooden pews. In the background, there is an altar area with a large, colorful mural or stained glass window depicting a religious scene. The overall atmosphere is solemn and reverent.

Hear us we pray -
so we say together the words our Lord Jesus taught us to say:
*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever,
Amen*

2 Timothy 1:3-7

(3) I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

(4) Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.

(5) I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

(6) For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

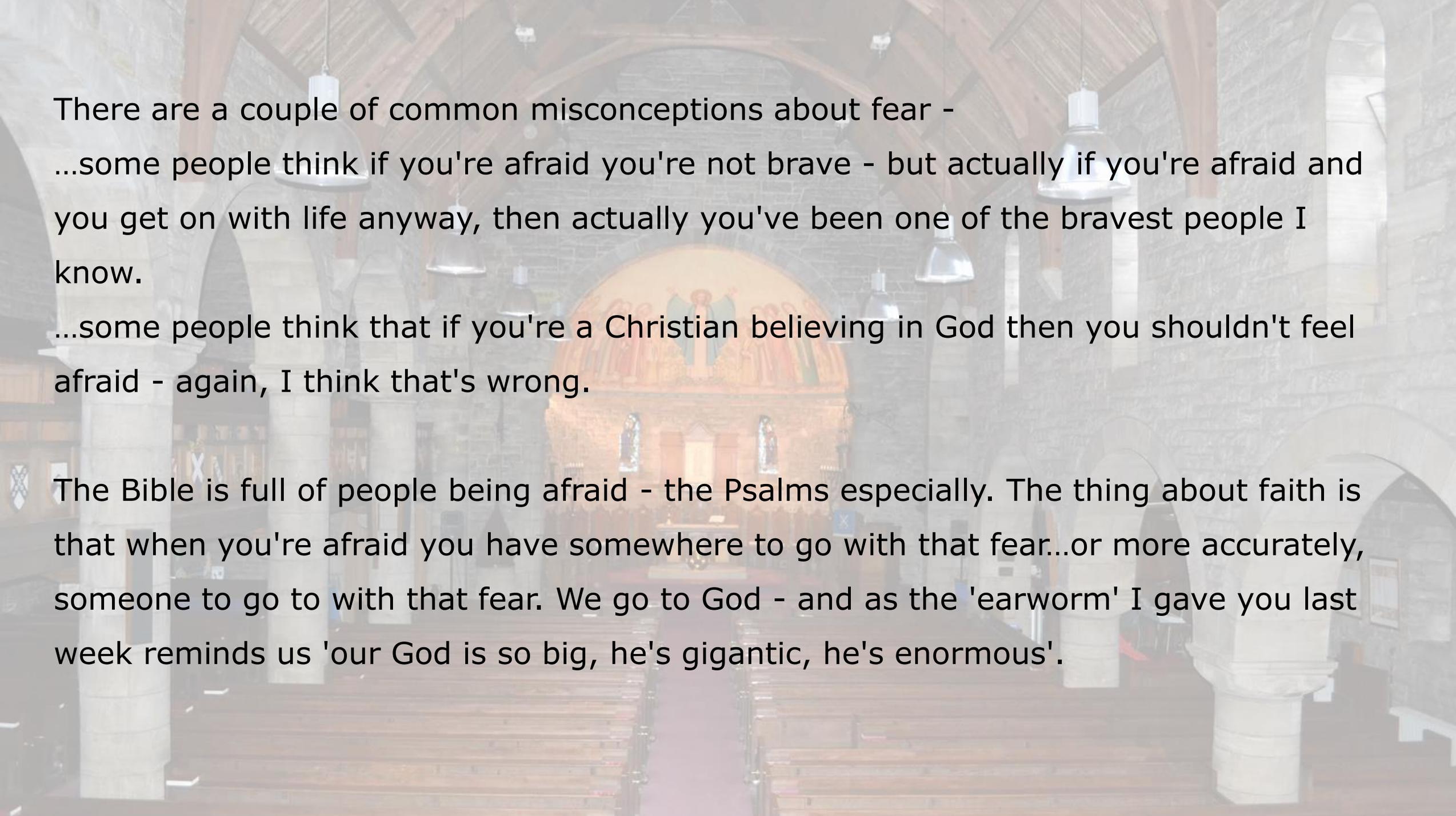
(7) For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Some thoughts

Remember - if you were in church last week - we were talking while the kids were still with us about fear?

We mentioned some strategies for dealing with fear; taking a deep breath; using our minds to think ourselves into understanding or wonder and so dispel fear; having friends alongside us; living through the fear anyway (bear hunt style!); remembering that God is God, and so our eternal 'living for ever' bit (soul) is eternally safe.

Well, now we're in the middle of what then we were only anticipating, and we may well feel fear (if we hadn't been feeling it already).

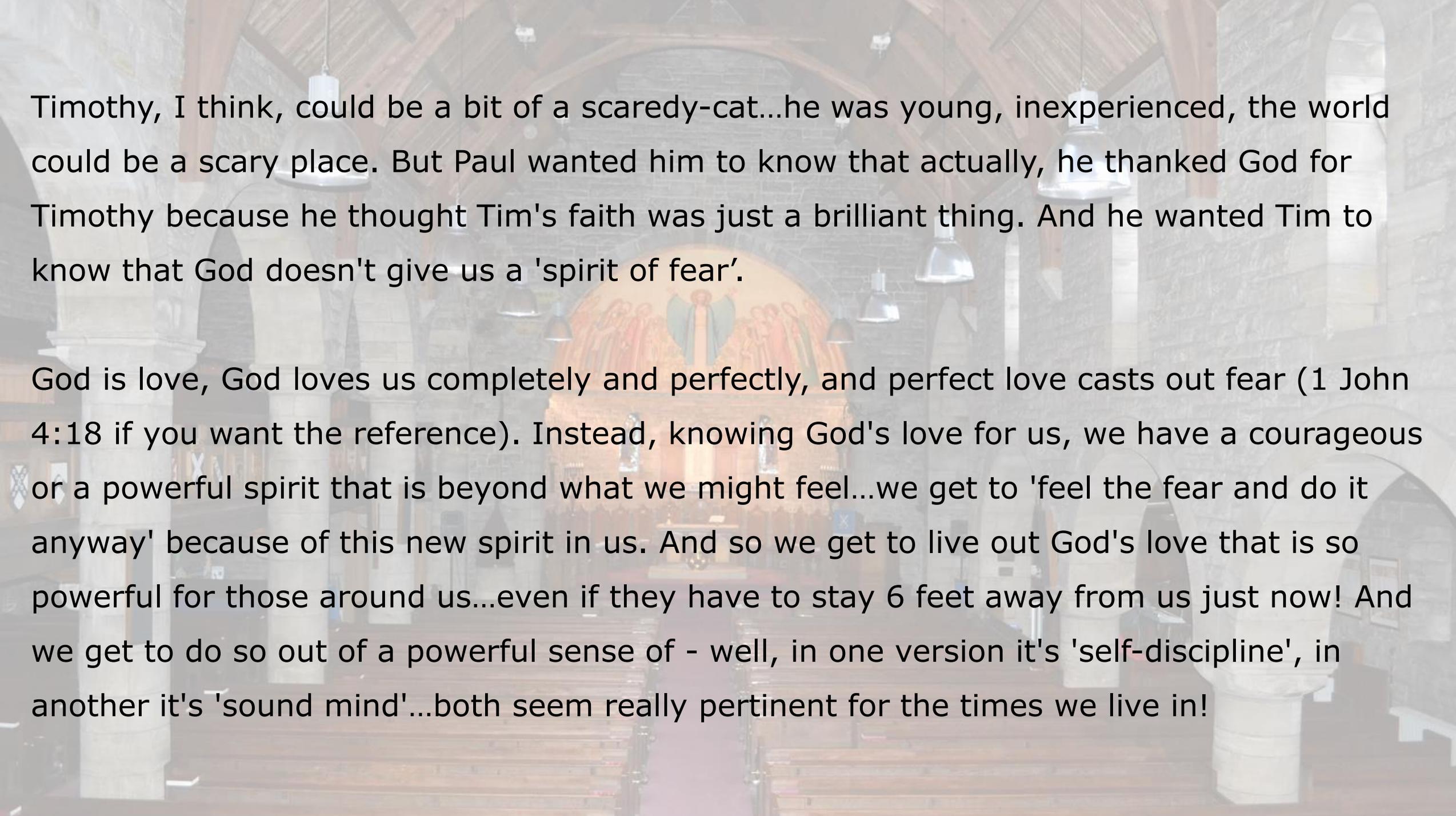


There are a couple of common misconceptions about fear -

...some people think if you're afraid you're not brave - but actually if you're afraid and you get on with life anyway, then actually you've been one of the bravest people I know.

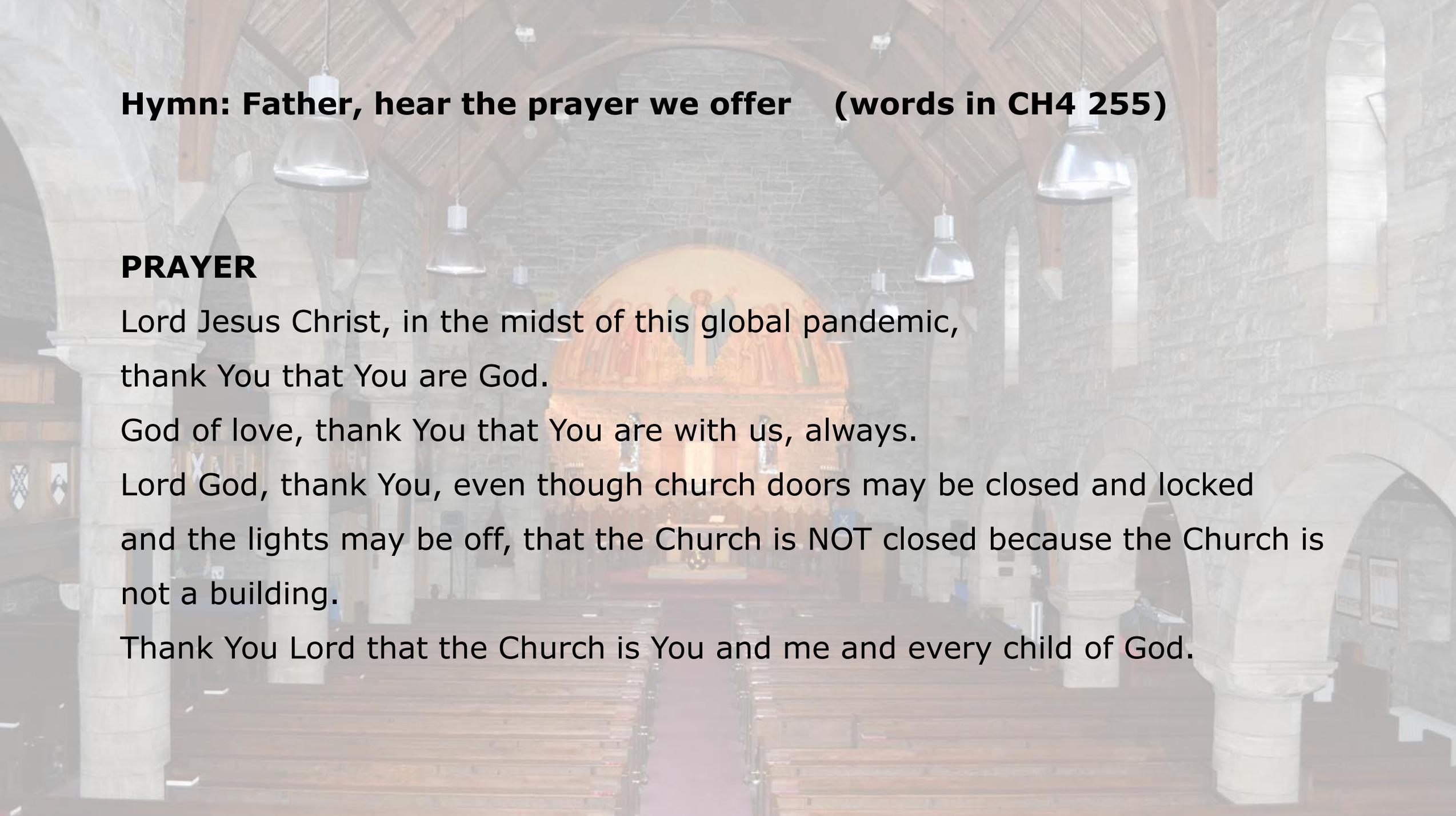
...some people think that if you're a Christian believing in God then you shouldn't feel afraid - again, I think that's wrong.

The Bible is full of people being afraid - the Psalms especially. The thing about faith is that when you're afraid you have somewhere to go with that fear..or more accurately, someone to go to with that fear. We go to God - and as the 'earworm' I gave you last week reminds us 'our God is so big, he's gigantic, he's enormous'.



Timothy, I think, could be a bit of a scaredy-cat...he was young, inexperienced, the world could be a scary place. But Paul wanted him to know that actually, he thanked God for Timothy because he thought Tim's faith was just a brilliant thing. And he wanted Tim to know that God doesn't give us a 'spirit of fear'.

God is love, God loves us completely and perfectly, and perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18 if you want the reference). Instead, knowing God's love for us, we have a courageous or a powerful spirit that is beyond what we might feel...we get to 'feel the fear and do it anyway' because of this new spirit in us. And so we get to live out God's love that is so powerful for those around us...even if they have to stay 6 feet away from us just now! And we get to do so out of a powerful sense of - well, in one version it's 'self-discipline', in another it's 'sound mind'...both seem really pertinent for the times we live in!



Hymn: Father, hear the prayer we offer (words in CH4 255)

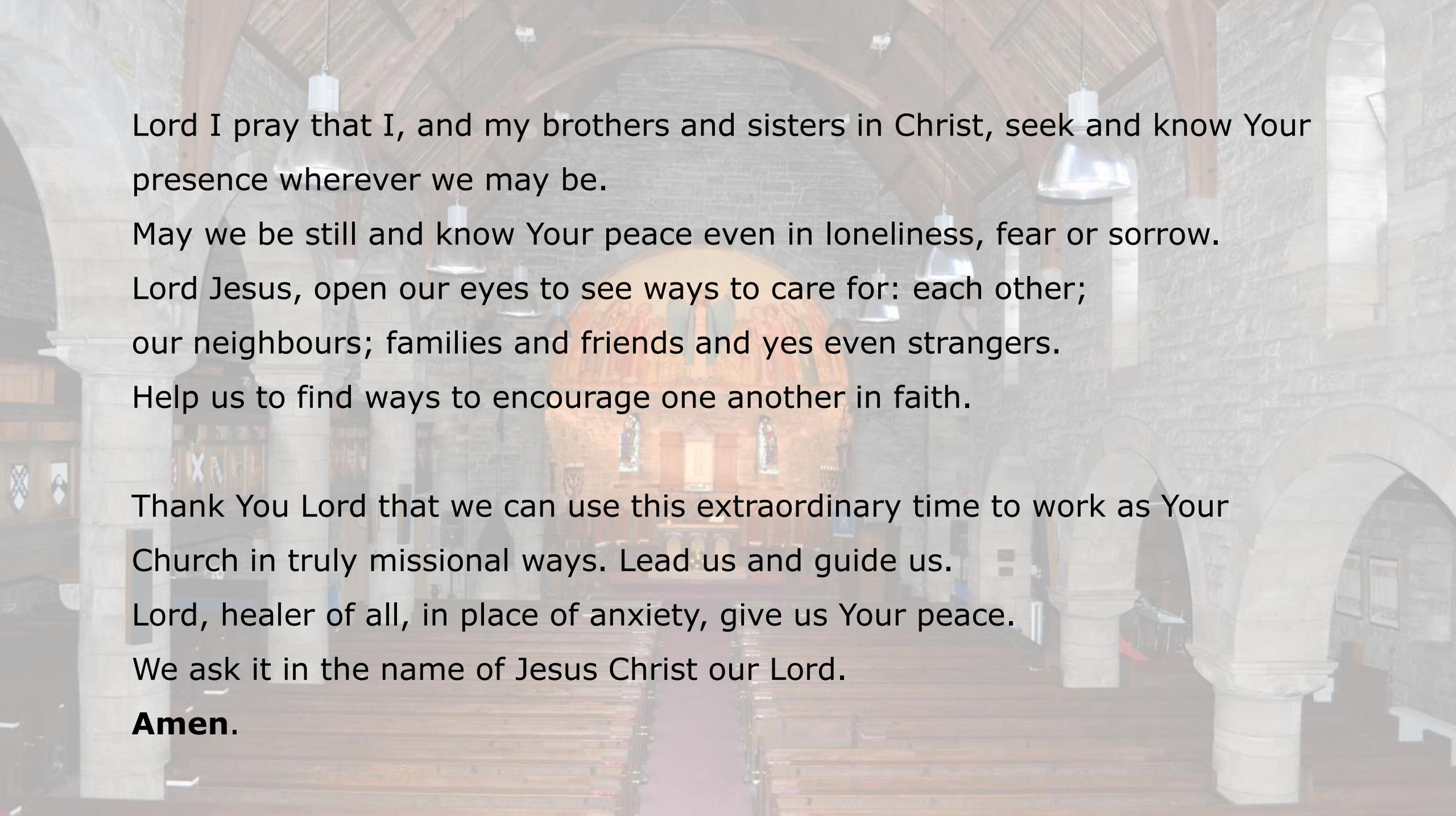
PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, in the midst of this global pandemic,
thank You that You are God.

God of love, thank You that You are with us, always.

Lord God, thank You, even though church doors may be closed and locked
and the lights may be off, that the Church is NOT closed because the Church is
not a building.

Thank You Lord that the Church is You and me and every child of God.



Lord I pray that I, and my brothers and sisters in Christ, seek and know Your presence wherever we may be.

May we be still and know Your peace even in loneliness, fear or sorrow.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see ways to care for: each other; our neighbours; families and friends and yes even strangers.

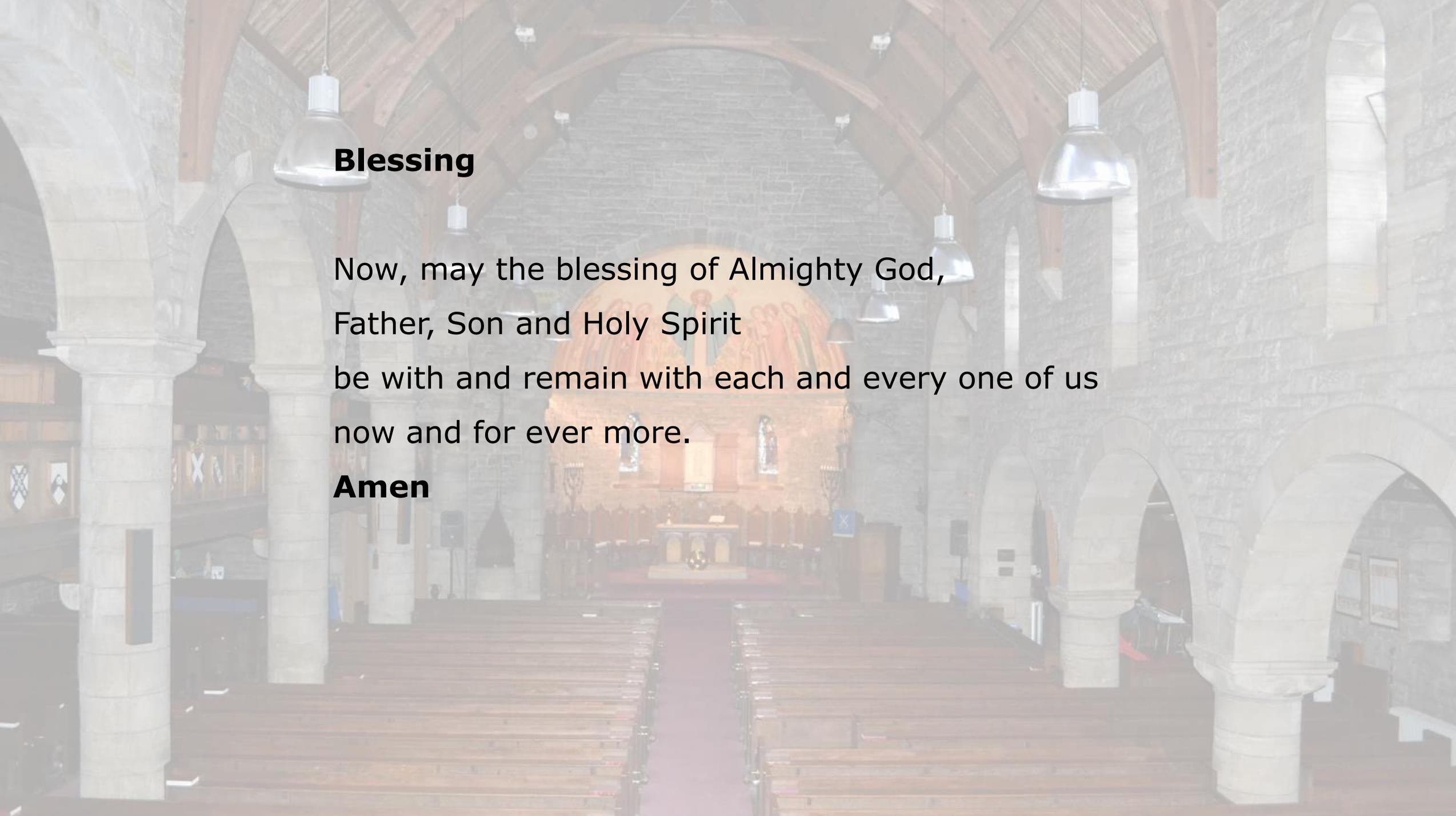
Help us to find ways to encourage one another in faith.

Thank You Lord that we can use this extraordinary time to work as Your Church in truly missional ways. Lead us and guide us.

Lord, healer of all, in place of anxiety, give us Your peace.

We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The image shows the interior of a church with a high, vaulted ceiling made of stone and wood. The walls are constructed from light-colored stone blocks. A series of large, rounded stone arches support the ceiling. In the foreground, rows of dark wooden pews are arranged on either side of a central aisle. At the far end of the church, there is an altar area with a large, colorful mural or stained glass window depicting a religious scene. Several modern, silver, dome-shaped pendant lights hang from the ceiling. The overall atmosphere is solemn and architectural.

Blessing

Now, may the blessing of Almighty God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with and remain with each and every one of us
now and for ever more.

Amen