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ORDINARY 23A

6th September 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

God is everywhere,
In this space and all spaces
In this time and all times.

God is waiting to meet you and is ready to welcome you
Just as it has been for all eternity,
So be still.

Pause

Get ready to notice the spirit working,
Through words on the page,
Through sounds around you,
Through familiar and unfamiliar smells,
Through all that you see when you look up from what you are reading,
Through the touch of your hands as you hold them together to pray,
So be still.

Pause

If you feel able speak aloud the following words:

God of all time and space I notice you here.
I am ready.

Amen

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: Matthew 18:15-20 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Relationships are rarely simple.

Even among people who love one another, misunderstandings happen. We say the wrong thing. We make assumptions. We cause hurt, sometimes knowingly, often unknowingly.

Jesus knows this, and that is why this passage is so refreshingly realistic. He does not imagine a community where conflict never happens. Instead, he imagines a community that knows how to respond when it does.

His first instruction is remarkably personal:

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone."

This is not an invitation to gossip, nor cause public embarrassment, but neither is it about quietly nursing resentment. Rather, Jesus begins with honest conversation.

There is something deeply respectful about that. It assumes that every person deserves the dignity of being spoken to directly rather than talked about behind their back.

Of course, Jesus also knows that reconciliation is not always straightforward. Sometimes relationships cannot be repaired immediately. Sometimes deeper wounds require wider support. Sometimes healthy boundaries are necessary.

Throughout this passage, however, the goal is never punishment; the goal is always restoration. That matters, because churches have not always got this right. Too often, difficult conversations have been avoided until resentment grows, or conflict has been handled in ways that shame rather than heal.

Jesus points us towards another way: a way of courage, a way of truth spoken with compassion, a way that values people more than winning arguments.

Then come some of the most beautiful words in the Gospel:

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

We often hear these words at prayer meetings or small gatherings, and rightly so. But in their original context, they come in the middle of a conversation about reconciliation.

Perhaps Jesus is saying something profound. Christ is especially present whenever people gather with humility, seeking understanding, healing, and peace. Not because agreement is easy, but because love is willing to do the difficult work of listening, of disagreeing, of holding the space for tension and reconciliation. This passage reminds us that discipleship is not about avoiding conflict, it is about learning how to disagree without losing our humanity.

Here, Jesus calls us to speak honestly without cruelty, to listen generously without surrendering our convictions, to seek reconciliation without pretending that wounds do not matter.

Above all, it reminds us that God's presence is found not only in worship and prayer, but in every sincere effort to restore relationship and build community.

So today, you might like to reflect on these questions:

- Is there a conversation you have been avoiding that might benefit from honesty and grace?
- Where do you need to listen more carefully before reaching a conclusion?
- How might you become someone who helps build peace rather than deepen division?

The Church is not called to be a community without disagreement. It is called to be a community that learns, however imperfectly, to love one another through disagreement. And perhaps, in these divisive and difficult times, that may be one of the most powerful witnesses we can offer the world.

This week, may you have the courage to speak truth with kindness, the humility to listen with an open heart, and the wisdom to become a maker of peace. And may you discover, again and again, that Christ is already present wherever people gather in love, seeking reconciliation and hope. Amen.

Hymn / Song

36 STF – There's a quiet understanding – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

May you go from this place, knowing that the God of reconciliation and healing goes with you.

May you step out in faith, seeking to play your part in bringing restoration to a broken world.

May you know a deep healing, within yourself, that holds and binds you with love, a love that passes all comprehension or logical possibility.

May you know the Christ, this and every day.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 7th September

- At the start of this new church and school year,
Lord we give to you the year that is passed, and the year that is to come, and offer it to you.
In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Tuesday 8th September

- The next time you open your fridge, why not pray this little prayer:
- Gracious God,
Thank you for the blessings you have given me, and the food for this day.
Thank you for all the work of creation, all the work of farmers and supermarket-workers and delivery drivers that means this food can be here, in my house.
Thank you for all that I have received.
Thank you. Amen.

Wednesday 9th September

- Gracious God, I know you have plans for me- plans for me to be a part of your kingdom and an agent of love in the world.
- Today, show me how to respond to the invitations I might receive. Help me to be open to the opportunities to share your love.
In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Thursday 10th September

- God of peace, help me today to speak with kindness, to listen with patience, and to seek understanding where there is disagreement.
Make me an instrument of your healing and reconciliation.
In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Friday 11th September

- Today is one of the most infamous dates in the modern calendar, and a day on which we are reminded of the dreadful terrorist attack on New York in 2001.
- Today, you might like to pray for all who still grieve the loss of those who have died because of violence, bombing, war or terror attack.
- Let us pray for peace in God's world.

Saturday 12th September

- Gracious God, as this week draws to a close, bring peace to the places in my life where there is hurt or misunderstanding.
- Give me courage to speak with kindness, humility to listen well, and grace to forgive as I have been forgiven.
In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.