

+WEEKLY REFLECTION

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A sacred space for all

Whether you step through the doors of a church every single week, haven't set foot in one for years, or are simply looking at faith from a distance, there is a fundamental truth about these special sacred spaces that belongs to all of us.

Thousands of years ago, a prophet named Isaiah wrote down a wonderful promise from God. He wrote about a future where all people including those who felt completely left out - outsiders, foreigners, and those who felt unworthy - would be welcomed with open arms.

This is what it says in Isaiah 56:7: *"I will bring them to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer... for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

Centuries later, Jesus stood in the temple and quoted those words of Isaiah, reiterating that the church, as we now call it, should be a place of welcome for all people.

The church was never meant to be a museum for the flawless or an exclusive fortress for the certain. It is meant to be the fulfilment of Isaiah's vision - a sanctuary of shared joy and radical inclusion. It is a house of prayer - and prayer is simply an honest conversation.

You do not need to know any special language, or religious vocabulary; you don't need to be leading the perfect life, in fact Jesus welcomes those who are not perfect. We all have our faults and failings, and all are welcome into the house of prayer.

You don't need to be special; you just need to be you, God welcomes you just as you are. You can bring your doubts and your hardest questions; you can bring your grief and your heaviest burdens; you can bring your joy and your unique stories.

Prayer can be a sigh of relief in a moment of pain; or a cry for help in a time of despair. It can also be a quiet moment of gratitude, a thank you for all that is good.

In a world that constantly divides us by what we earn, how we vote, or where we come from, the community of faith in our churches is built to be different.

It is a living promise that you are seen, you are valued, and you belong. There are no fences, everyone is welcome. If you would like to explore more you can find your local church at [A Church Near You](#). You are assured a warm welcome.

Rev Carole Garner, Parish of Oswaldtwistle