

Prayer of the Month • December 2016 / January 2017

O Christ our Master,
Give us a new confidence and deepen and increase our faith.
May we walk with our fellows not as those who have heard of you,
but as those who are sure of you;
not as those who know about you,
but as those who know you.
Then, timid though we have been,
with many a glance behind us,
we shall walk bravely along the pathway of your will
and all our fears will vanish.
Grant this, for your name's sake.

Leslie Weatherhead, 1893–1976

This is a prayer aimed at deepening the reality of God in our lives. Knowing God for ourselves, rather than knowing about God, will give us confidence and a deeper faith. I remember doing a funeral of someone whose widow said that he was very interested in religion, and used to watch religious programmes on television. However, towards the end of his life he went off religion. He didn't, it seemed, have a deep enough faith to sustain him. Faith needs to be personal or it is not really faith at all.

Leslie Weatherhead, born on 14 October 1893. He trained for the Methodist ministry at Richmond Theological College, in south-west London, and became a Methodist minister in Farnham, Surrey, in 1915. Then he served in India, Manchester, and Leeds. From 1936 to his retirement in 1960 he was minister of the City Temple, a Congregational Church on Holborn Viaduct in London, where he was noted for his preaching ministry. From 1930 till 1939, Weatherhead was a member of Dr Frank Buchman's Oxford Group and wrote several books reflecting the group's values, including *Discipleship* and *The Will of God*, in a career that produced fifty-five books. He was president of the Methodist Conference 1955-56. He was a liberal theologian, who divided opinion. For example, he dismissed the Virgin Birth, and was inclined to believe that Zechariah was the father of Jesus. He was not comfortable with the doctrine of the Trinity. Being minister of a supra-denominational church he was more or less free to follow his own agenda. He retired in 1960, to live at Bexhill-on-Sea, and died in 1976.

Colin Lunt