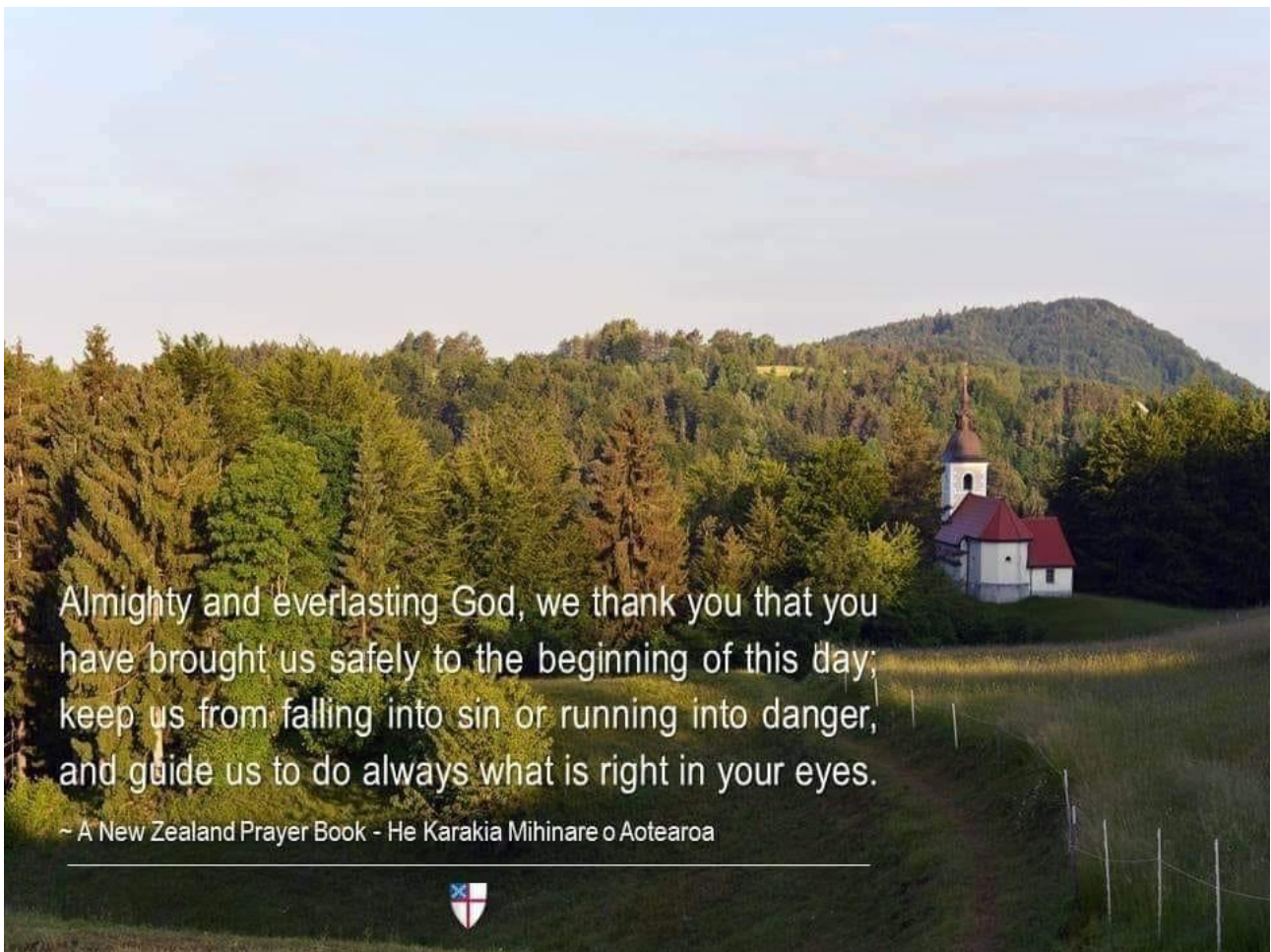


Speaking to the soul



Citizen of heaven

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Philippians 1:27

The residents of Philippi were very proud of their city. They had been rewarded by the Emperor Octavian after his defeat of Antony and Cleopatra and were designated a Roman Colony. The city was in Macedonia (now part of northern Greece), but the Philippians enjoyed the same privileges as if they were living in Italy. Citizenship was a big

issue for them, and they were delighted to enjoy the legal and tax advantages that came with their status. But Paul indicated that far more significant than this was the fact that they were citizens of heaven. Being a Philippian was a temporary arrangement – unlike their eternal citizenship of heaven.

Paul was not saying that it was unimportant that they were Roman citizens. He had much to say about the importance of Christians living as responsible members of their community. In his letter to the church in Rome, at the heart of the empire, he wrote that those who followed Christ had a responsibility to submit to the governing authorities because they had been established by God (Romans 13:1). Christians should do everything in their power to support their communities and to live as responsible citizens, but they should do so with the knowledge that their principal identity is their heavenly one.

There were many pressures upon the church in Philippi. Although Paul's letter is particularly positive it is clear that there were plenty of challenges, both from people outside and inside the church who were squabbling with one another. Paul knew that the church must live by the highest standards, so he urged them to live lives worthy of the good news. The church wasn't their little private club, but a group of people drawn together by the Spirit to proclaim the amazing news of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever our churches might be facing at present we all need to hear the same challenge to live a life that is worthy of Christ.

QUESTION

What does it mean to you to be a citizen of heaven?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for the eternal security that I have in knowing you. Help me to contribute positively to my temporary home here on earth. Amen