

Seaside God

This prayer of praise was written for when the Baptist Assembly came to Blackpool and deliberately attempted to counter the somewhat negative image of Blackpool's faded glamour and attempts to regenerate itself. By walking around and gathering photographs, sound-bites and a scribbled journal of words and phrases I think it is fair to say we challenged our perceptions and began to fall in love with Blackpool and wanted to share this with delegates at early morning prayers. Much of what is written here could apply to almost any British seaside resort – feel free to exchange Blackpool and any of the details with your own seaside town's names and quirky characteristics.

Seaside God,

We praise you for Blackpool with its windswept beach and roaring sea...
for green and black speckled pebbles making drag marks across the sand
for the bracing, biting wind whipping hair across glowing faces
for gulls passing the time of day on rippling mud flats
for salty air stinging nostrils and steaming up glasses
for coloured broken glass rubbed smooth by the sea
for footprints of people, dogs and birds criss-crossing the sand.

We praise you for Blackpool in all its beauty and vibrancy...
for coloured glass balls on poles and thatched beach umbrellas
for the starlings swooping in formation down to roost
for the sun breaking through the clouds
for iron sculptures celebrating industrial heritage
for distant views of mountains and majestic wind farms
for the echoes of time gone by and traces of deck chairs on the pier.

We praise you for Blackpool in all its fun and excitement...
for Blackpool rock, pick n' mix and sticky candy floss
for the smell of deliciously fresh fish and steaming hot chips
for giant glitter balls whirling squares of light across the promenade
for the kaleidoscope of juxtaposing sounds of the amusement arcade
for pushchairs and babies in backpacks pulling parents hair
for the excited screams of teenagers plummeting on roller coasters and funfair rides.

We praise you for Blackpool as a diverse place to live and work...
for tramlines and bus stops with red and yellow timetables
for people with hoods up walking dogs along the promenade
for row upon row of hotels and café awnings eking out a seasonal living
for churches offering coffee shops and children's crèches
for teenagers sitting high up on walls by Homebase and Aldi
for the rows of ramshackled sheds and greenhouses on much loved allotment plots.

We pray for Blackpool as it reinvents itself for the 21st Century...
for cascading concrete steps and architectural planting
for the flotsam and jetsam of life caught on rusty iron chains
for the last chance saloon for hard working migrants
for new shopping centres and climbing wall public art
for labourers in fluorescent jackets and the buzz of regeneration
for amusement arcades and casinos that play roulette with peoples lives. AMEN

