

St Swithun's Church Family

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Sunday 17th May 2020



Faith, hope and love

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** – ideally at 10am on Sunday so that we know we are joining our prayers together but any time is good. Use a candle and a cross if you can find them.*

The children might like to use the Sunday school resources and audio provided by Izzy.

This is a Service of The Word. It doesn't matter if you are one person or a family together – use the booklet and go through the words – stop and reflect as you need to. We will be audio recording today's service if you would like to join in with us, and it will be uploaded to the website

www.saintswithuns.org.uk

There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.

Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.

You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...

Great is thy faithfulness <https://youtu.be/dTKlqmdfH5Sk>
My Jesus my saviour <https://youtu.be/8FKMLmdOsNw>
At the name of Jesus <https://youtu.be/OI2rKRCWmOU>
Angel Voices <https://youtu.be/nig-VqlyGzA>
I, the Lord of sea and sky <https://youtu.be/mgLwH5RdtPk>

Introduction

Today is the sixth Sunday of Easter (fifth Sunday after Easter). As we draw close to Ascension Day which is this week (Thursday) we hear Jesus in our Gospel reading preparing his disciples for him leaving the earth physically in a goodbye speech to them. As we hear this pep talk we can find support and encouragement in our own physical separation.

The Gathering

The Greeting

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Prayers of preparation

Come and hear

The Good news of God

Come and see

What Jesus has done

We will tell the story of God in our world

We will share the secret of hope in our lives

Come and explore the truth of the gospel

Come and receive the Holy Spirit of God

We are loved, cherished, befriended, accepted

This is the truth

We are not alone: God's love is in us

This is the truth

God knows our hopes, our fears, our questions

This is the truth

God is leading us deep into justice and wonder

God is joyfully walking us home.

Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

Jesus says

'If you love me, keep my commandments'.

We are sorry when we don't share your words of love
and we speak unkindness

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

We are sorry when we don't act with your love
and we are selfish in our attitude

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We are sorry when we don't spend time in your perfect love
And we rely only on ourselves

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We are forgiven

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by the Spirit,
and raise us to new life in the risen Christ.

Amen.



Glory to God

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to all people on earth.

Find a way to rejoice knowing that God loves us, liberates us and makes us whole.

Maybe you could have a quick dance to your favourite tune, tell a funny joke, shut your eyes and feel God's loving embrace warming you, picture a place where you feel one with God.

Today our joy will be helped by sharing a joke...

For those who need some context for this joke – read chapter 16 of the book of Exodus <https://www.bible.com/bible/2016/EXO.16.NRSV>



Activity

This week share some 'joy' with family, friends or neighbours. You could tell them a joke, say something lovely, give some encouraging words...

Our Collect prayer which we pray next asks that Jesus's continual presence in us may raise us to eternal joy...

The Collect

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

Amen

The Liturgy of the Word

Bible Reading

Acts 17.22-31

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.” Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

The Gospel Reading *John 14.15-21*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory to you, O Lord.

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever.

This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me;

and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.



Sermon Mother Juliet

Love.

It is who we are:

faith, hope and love.

God is love.

But what is love?

What does love mean?

The Queen said on VE Day that

our empty streets are filled with

love. Our sacrifice of staying indoors was described as an act of

love. Love is sacrifice.

What else is love?

What does love mean to you?

How would you feel it?

Describe it?

Envision it?

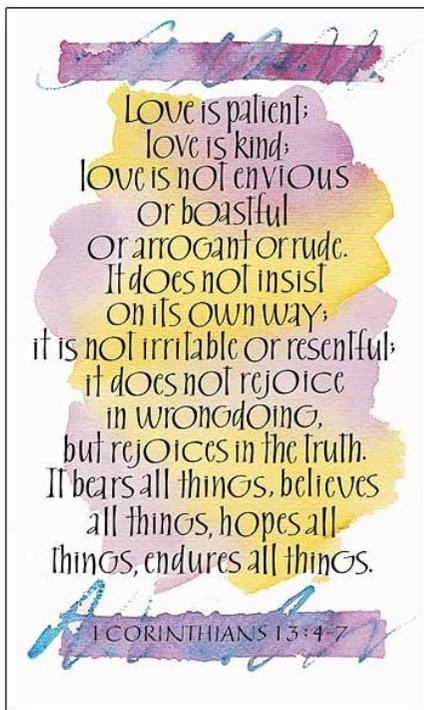
Experience it?

We hear in our Bible from 1

Corinthians 13 that love is many things – patient and kind amongst other qualities in a long list.

Today in our Gospel reading we hear Jesus telling the disciples, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments'.

His commandments were part of what he was leaving behind for the disciples. They were part of his saying goodbye to the disciples.



We are approaching Ascension Day (Thursday this week) which is when we remember that Jesus leaves the earth. What Jesus says in his goodbye speech is therefore of huge importance for all of us who follow Jesus. At the moment it seems more important than ever as Jesus was preparing his followers for the physical separation which happened as he goes to heaven.

Physical separation is our church life right now.

As we continue to be church together - but at a physical distance – what can we learn from Jesus’s message to the disciples, about living with physical separation?

Jesus asked the disciples to continue the legacy he was leaving - through living a life that he modelled for them and obeying his commandments.

But what were the commandments Jesus was referring to? We know that in John 13 Jesus tells his disciples that he is giving them a new commandment: to love one another as he has loved them. He goes on to say that this is how everyone will know that they are his followers, by their love.

We also know from the Gospel of Matthew that we should love our neighbours as ourselves – claiming it as the second greatest commandment, with our love of God as the first

I think we can learn more about what love means to Jesus in the Gospel reading through another aspect of the legacy he left us. He said to them, ‘I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever’.



It is important to note that Jesus said ‘another Advocate’. Jesus is the first Advocate sent by God to the world, to reconcile it, to love it, and to draw humanity closer to God through his life, death, and resurrection.

After Jesus is no longer physically with his followers, with us, the Spirit is sent to help us, to be our Advocate, to walk with us and guide us in the way of Jesus’ love. To love is to be an advocate, to be a helper, to give oneself for others as we are given Jesus and the Spirit.



This definition of love is illuminated throughout the Gospels as we see Jesus helping those in need; and so we are to follow this by continuing to love our neighbour by being advocates and seeing others as God sees us all. We are to help those in need, to love those who are on the edge and to be a support to those who are not easy to love.

The Spirit was sent that first Pentecost and is still moving among and within us today as we continue Jesus' work of love in these strangely distant times. Perhaps now more than ever is when we need to feel that rushing wind of God's Advocate so that we can live in love as God's advocates and helpers. We are not alone in this task, despite the isolation and physical aloneness many of us feel, God's help is moving among us and within us.

As individuals, we can be advocates within our personal relationships: making sacrifices because of love for others; understanding and learning from those who challenge our perception of how we should live and behave; forgiving, being forgiven; and working towards reconciliation in our relationships. We can also show loving advocacy as a community of faith. We can advocate as a church by supporting those in need, giving the voiceless a space to be heard, seeking justice and peace.

I don't know about you – but at the moment I am wondering what is the best way to show love in the world we find ourselves living in.

It seems that the church has to get used to being in this separation for a long while to come. How do we love as the body of Christ in this time of separation is a difficult question.

Let us now look at our reading from the Acts of the Apostles to guide us... It describes Paul beginning a sermon at the Areopagus, he says, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way'. He then relates how he walked the city and looked carefully at the objects of their worship. Paul engages with the culture of the day to understand the context so that he can communicate more effectively something of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

As a church we are having to learn a new culture and find ways to gather in Spirit, to bring hope into the despair and to love as the body of Christ, despite not being able to meet in person. We are experimenting with different ways to gather as church, we are learning afresh and experiencing church differently and all of this is important for our faith however hard it is or uncomfortable it feels. Understanding the contexts we all find ourselves in – is key for communication... that is both church online and church through booklet deliveries.

Yes - we ache for that time we can gather in our lovely church building – but although the church building is a focus for our gatherings, it is the Spirit which unites us and helps us – this is our focus.

This week many of us have felt a little dispirited and so I sent some words of encouragement to you – to unite us in the Spirit... My encouragement for you all was a thank you – I wanted to tell you that I am so proud of the love you share, the care you constantly bestow, the checking up on each other, the generosity – for me personally it is brilliant to have your support and to know

that we are staying in touch and praying together in the best ways that we can. Thank you so very much to you all for your ongoing prayers and support, I know that I really am a very blessed priest in charge – I couldn't honestly imagine a better church community to be with at this time.



I asked for some encouragements from you and I was thinking of sharing them with all of us – but what I received truly overwhelmed me: personal and beautiful messages of kindness – thank you! A few of those lovely messages (which I will treasure) mentioned huge appreciation for our church and our loving and caring community.

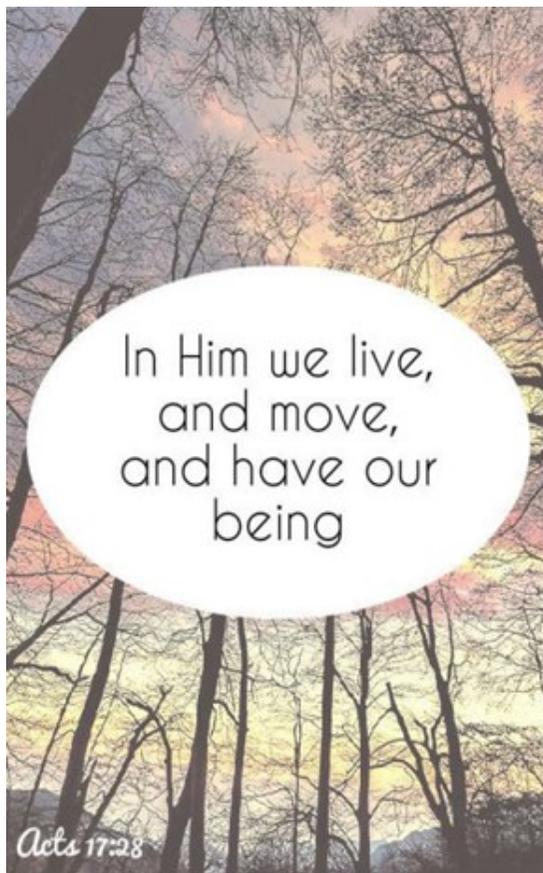
Together we are an amazing encouragement – times are difficult and we are showing God's love, we are helping each other.

Please be encouraged, with me, that despite these challenging times we can continue to pray for and love each other at a physical distance.

Be encouraged also that in the reading from Acts we are reminded that God is not far from each one of us - for in God we live and move and have our being.

Gathered in our homes, in exile from our building, may we continue to remember that God, the Spirit is with us, moving and uniting us despite our physical separation; helping us and guiding us to be advocates and helpers and loving us as we strive to love others.

Amen



Profession of Faith

The Spirit unites us in love – together we are God's family:

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**



Prayers

Let us pray:

Loving God, in you we live and move and have our being - we pray for all those who are living in places which feel dangerous, those places which have inadequate healthcare resources, places where people are trapped in poverty. We give thanks for Christian Aid and pray for ongoing charitable support for them as they continue to help many in need in our world. At this time of pandemic, we especially pray for our world leaders. In a moment of quiet we remember the places and people that need our prayers and our action...

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

Loving God, in you we live and move and have our being - As we remember that we are all your children, may we be united in prayer. We pray for especially remember our Saint Swithun's Church family and hold in our hearts those who particularly need our prayers and our action...

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

Loving God, in you we live and move and have our being – by your indwelling presence make our hearts and our homes places of peace. We pray for those in our community who are working in key jobs at this time, especially remembering the care homes and sheltered accommodation in our parish and all those who work reside and work in these places.

In a moment of quiet we remember any people who need our prayers and our action...

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

Loving God, in you we live and move and have our being – we pray for all those who are affected by pain and sickness, those who are anxious and depressed, those who are grieving and lost, those who are suffering in isolation: especially we remember Joshua, Carmel, Cynthia and family, Ivy, John, Shonette, Susan, Griham and family, Sydney, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Alfrina, Sean, Ena, Stephen, Evelyn, Lily, Margaret, Taneisha, Deborah, Loren, Heather, Andrew and Dorson and families, and Karen, Maureen, Paulette, Adrian, Lemar and families. In a moment of quiet we remember anyone who needs our prayers and our action...

Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done

Loving God, in you we live and move and have our being – if we abide in you and you in us, we are already in the fulness of that life which is eternal. We rejoice in your presence, and pray for those who have gone before us – William, Peter, Lorraine, Nell, Alfie, Eustace, Vivian, Olive, Blanche and Avril. In a moment of quiet we remember those we have loved and see no more on earth...

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord
And let light perpetual shine upon them

Merciful Father
**Accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Q in
Him
we
live
and
move
and
have
our
BEING
Acts 17:28

The Prayer Jesus taught us

This week we will particularly remember to pray for your kingdom to come on earth as it is heaven, so let us now pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Peace

Jesus says,
'abide in me and I will abide in you'

The Peace of the Lord
be always with you.
And also with you.

*Let us offer one another the peace...
Who needs your peaceful words or
actions this week?*



Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

As we prepare to leave our worship
and embrace the challenges of our lives and our world,
let us remember that as God blesses us
we are to be a blessing to others....

May the love of God our Creator enfold us,
May the wisdom of Jesus our Friend enlighten us,
May the fire of the Spirit our Helper inflame us;
may the blessing of God the trinity
Creator, Friend and Helper
be with us and abide with us
now and always
Amen.

The Dismissal

We are raised to new life with Christ.
Go in peace.
Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God.
Alleluia, alleluia.



BLESSINGS

Notices:

- The 9 days between Ascension Day and Pentecost is when we are encouraged to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as part of a global prayer movement. Resources for 'Thy Kingdom Come' produced by the Diocese have been updated for our current times <https://southwark.anglican.org/tkc> . These will be printed and delivered to those who already have the Sunday booklets delivered.
- If anyone would like to join in a virtual St Swithun's Choir for our Pentecost service please let Mother Juliet know...
- I have a few prayer booklets left if anyone would like one – please let Mother Juliet know.
- Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. The line – which is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.
- In the absence of foodbank collections Olivia invites us to donate online <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/make-a-one-off-donation/>
- The C of E are setting out rules for how we can get back to our churches safely once restrictions relax – we will keep you informed of any changes but our priority for you all is safety as we pray together.
- If you know of anyone in any need – please let Mother Juliet know as we are working with others who can help.
- Stay safe – and keep others safe.

Birthdays:

- To any who have a birthday at this time – Happy Birthday!



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**Faith, hope and love
in Hither Green**

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