

St Swithun's Church Family

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Sunday 24th 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...

Come Holy Spirit our souls inspire <https://youtu.be/ljdMWFrd4Vo>
The Lord bless you and keep you <https://youtu.be/akT32E83zjI>
Mine eyes have seen the glory https://youtu.be/maty13s_db4
Christ be our light <https://youtu.be/ZJq3bhdgQoc>
Be still my soul <https://youtu.be/hqgC1tqifV8>

Introduction

Today is the seventh Sunday of Easter (sixth Sunday after Easter) and the last Sunday of Easter time.

This Sunday falls between Ascension and Pentecost. It is a time of waiting. The disciples witnessed Jesus ascend to heaven and are now bewildered by their current circumstances and are waiting for the Spirit to arrive. Today we wait in hope and faith with the disciples.

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

After the Ascension of Jesus,
the Apostles went back to Jerusalem
joining in continuous prayer
and awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit.

As we come to worship today
we join together in prayer with each other
and the Apostles

Today we ask the Holy Spirit to come to us
wherever we are,
in our lives,
in our homes,
in our community,
in our church

Come Holy Spirit



Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

Let us say sorry to God:

When we feel the absence of your presence,
giving up the hope you promise us of the Holy Spirit with us.
Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

When we are absent to those who need our presence
withholding our love and our kindness
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

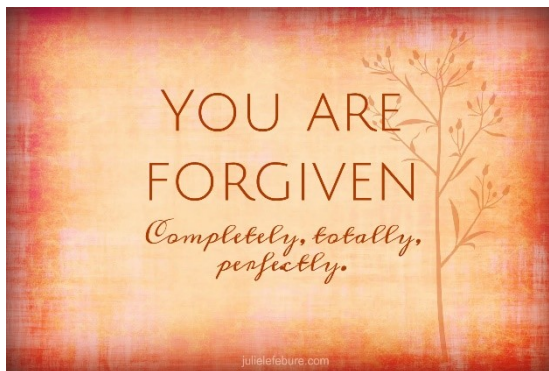
When we forget to share the gifts we are given
and we are selfish instead of generous
Lord, have mercy.

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.

As we have had a lovely sunny week, we will spend our time glorifying God today by basking in the light and love of God.



You don't have to say the right words or even any words,
just take a moment, be still, right here, right now,
and know that you are in God's glorious presence.

The Collect

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen

The Liturgy of the Word

Bible Reading

Acts 1.6-14

So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

The Gospel Reading *John 17.1-11*

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

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.



Sermon Mother Ann

The weeks and months ahead seem very unclear at the moment - one day we feel full of hope, enthused by news of a declining infection rate, but the next day, disheartened, by the devastating impact of coronavirus and the uncertainty it still carries. As much as we long for it to be over, the reality is; we just don't know how long it will last....

Randomly over the bank holiday weekend, I found myself going through our camping equipment. A Pandemic reaction you may be thinking, better outside than in! I love camping. Something about living outside, helps me get life back in perspective - although I prefer campsites with showers!

And if you are missing festivals this year, one camping website recommends putting up a tent in the garden, with fairy lights, cushions and joining an online festival! Just one of many creative *outward* adaptations, we are making to the limited freedom of our present situation, but how are our *inner* lives adapting? Our faith in the present?



Cancelled holidays are small potatoes in the scheme of things, but I live in hope of at least a British camping trip this summer. Even if it is only our back garden.

What are you most looking forward to opening up again? Or who are we most looking forward to seeing/ hugging again?

Many of us feel frustrated about the challenges in our present situation and naturally look to the future, beyond COVID-19.

What dreams keep you going? Noticing our dreams and acknowledging the frustrations are natural responses, but how can our Christian faith sustain us? What shape does faith take when it is hard to plan ahead? How are our inner lives adjusting, with so much change or so little change on the outside?



Perhaps because we are in lockdown, I was drawn to the significance of the Upper Room, which the disciples return to in our first reading from Acts. They seem to spend a lot of time there in our Easter readings. Perhaps like us facing so much time at home.

How do we imagine the Upper room? Was it a place of inner safety for the disciples, away from the risks of the outside world? Did they feel frustrated being stuck there, rather like ourselves in lockdown? They ask Jesus, 'Lord, is this the time?' As we also ask, when we can visit friends and family again, welcome someone into our home, return to work, Church, feel safe to go outside?

This Sunday falls between Ascension and Pentecost. It is a time of waiting. The disciples witnessed Jesus ascend to heaven, but what now? Are the disciples bewildered by their current circumstances. What will their future be like? How long will they have to wait, stuck in the Upper room, for the Holy Spirit to arrive?

It is hard living in a constant state of flux as we are just now, but is our *faith* based on certain things about the future or the faithfulness of God at all times?

The contemporary Lutheran priest and writer; Nadia Bolz-Weber spoke some realistic words in her recent sermon:

Worry isn't helping me. But neither is setting my hopes on the future. You can find it on YouTube. But to quote some of her own words here:

At the beginning of the pandemic, I think I was trying to be as optimistic as possible, believing it the best way to get through.

I had hooked my hope on something in the future and as each hope dissolved, I'd find another hook. Until finally reality sunk in.

Nadia found herself worrying about the future and binge watching TV whilst waiting for her 'faith' to root again.... when it comes to faith we often need constant reminders and reassurances. We don't feel full of faith all of the time. Nadia also writes:



Optimism isn't enough on its own. It's the combination of our faith in the reality of our situation. I believe God to be the source of our love and creativity and resilience and kindness and humour, which means there is an eternal supply on which to draw on when we just don't have what it takes. Also I have faith that God is already present in the future, we keep pinning our hopes and fears on, so maybe it's safe to let them go.

Her words prompted me to read a slice of my favourite theologian, Daniel Migliore.

He also picks up on this theme of distinguishing Christian hope from simple optimism. Apologies for quoting someone else again, but he writes so hopefully and realistically to help our own reflection.

Christian hope is in the triumph of the love of God over all hate, of the justice of God over all injustice, of God's freedom over all bondage, of community over all separation, of life with God, over the power of death. Yet this hope becomes indistinguishable from cheap optimism if it fails to share the present agony of the world.



Migliore also writes: *Christians do not hope for the coming of a Lord who is now simply absent and altogether unknown. We hope in Jesus whose humble and hidden comings have awakened and continue to sustain our hope.*

Faith in the present is more than simple optimism about the future. Today's gospel reading from John also reflects God's existence in our past, present and future... they are words steeped in the mystery of an eternal loving God through Jesus who prays for his beloved friends and frustrated community...and that's another sermon....

Locked in the Upper room, the disciples couldn't predict how their small movement would snowball into the Global Church of today and the future? And that's next week's story....

Aware of the real challenges we face each day this week, in our own lives and in the wider world, may God's unwavering love and blessing protect and sustain you and all those you love and long to be with in the here and now.

Amen



Come, Holy Spirit

Profession of Faith

Whether today is a day where faith is a struggle, or today you are full of belief. Be reassured that together we remember the faith of our church that God is present with us:

**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.**

HAVE *faith*

Prayers

Let us pray for the coming of the Holy spirit as we wait for change in our world, in our community, in our homes, in our lives:

At this time of pandemic, we especially pray for our world leaders. For our global neighbours who live in places without adequate food, healthcare and sanitation. This weekend we particularly remember our Muslim sisters and brothers and all those who are celebrating Eid.

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

At this time of pandemic, we especially pray for the church that it can inspire us to find faith, hope and love. We remember all those in our wider church family who feel lost and hopeless. We pray for our Saint Swithun's Church family and those who are working to consider our finances and our future. May we hold in our hearts those who particularly need our prayers and our action...

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

At this time of pandemic, we especially remember our community, our neighbours. Today we pray for our local schools and all teachers in our community who continue to work so hard to educate online and in school the children of keyworkers. We ask for guidance and courage for those in our church who work in education and for families making decisions about educating their children. We pray for all those who are fearful in relation to schools changing their provision.

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

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

At this time of pandemic, we especially pray for those who are suffering in isolation, those who are unwell, those who are grieving and lost, those who are stuck in complicated home lives without their usual support networks. We especially remember today Elisabeth and family, Olivia and family, Louise, Joshua, David, Carmel, Cynthia and family, Ivy, John, Shonette, Susan, Sydney, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Ena and Stephen. In a moment of quiet we remember anyone who needs our prayers and our action...

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

In this time of pandemic, we remember your presence in the absence of so much. We also remember the many who have died recently and all those who have gone before us – we remember today Griham, Roy, William, Peter, Lorraine, Nell, Alfie, Eustace, Vivian, Olive. 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.



The Prayer Jesus taught us

As we continue to pray thy kingdom come,
may we 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



That They May Be One

John 17:20-26

Jesus desires that 'they may be one, as we are one'.

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.



Notices:

- If you would like to join our virtual choir for our Pentecost service singing Shine Jesus Shine you will need to submit your film clip before the end of Tuesday so they can be edited – if you're not sure – have a go – we have clever technology and want you all to feel included.
- 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/>
- 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:

- Happy Birthday Dorothy whose birthday was last week and Jonathan whose birthday is this week and Edith who is 90 today and all others who have their birthday this week – Happy Birthday!



- Also congratulations to Mary-Jane and Geoff who celebrated their 21st wedding anniversary on Friday.

Contacts:

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in Hither Green**

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