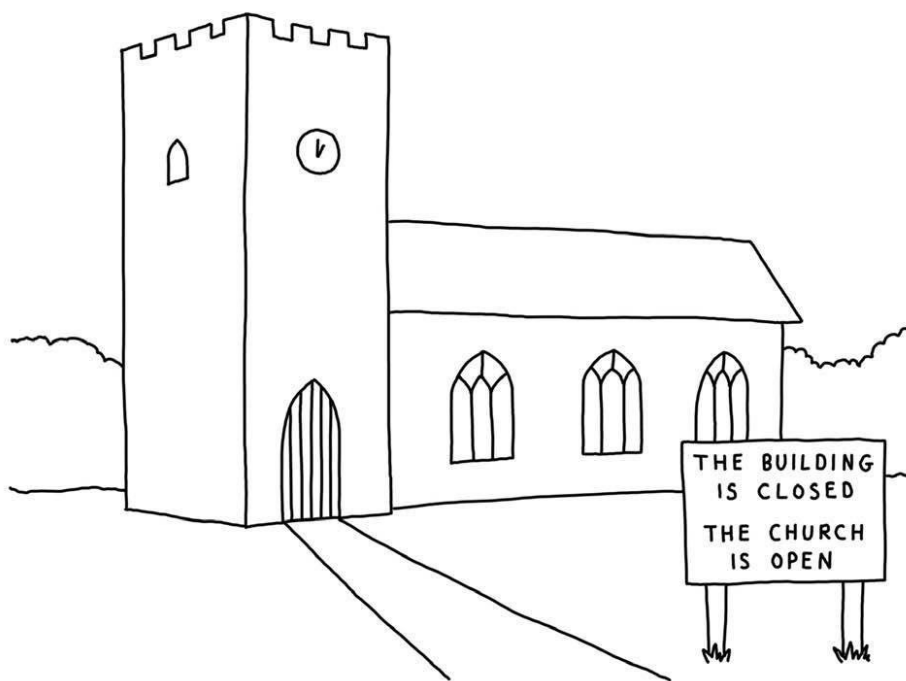


St Swithun's Church Family

Passion Sunday

Lent 5 - Sunday 29th March 2020

Sharing together in spirit



CartoonChurch.com

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 to give your a worship a focus. This week we are suggesting you also use a twig if you can get one easily. The children might like to use the Sunday school resources provided by Izzy.

This is a Service of The Word – The Eucharist will be celebrated at the vicarage on Sunday and we will do this on behalf of everyone.

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 are going to record this service again and add it 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 please consider putting 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...

Praise to the holiest

<https://youtu.be/kpHUYwHEstk>

Dem bones

<https://youtu.be/C1szphOU1E0>

Deep Peace of the running wave to you

<https://youtu.be/GAULvPUcQQI>

Blessed assurance

<https://youtu.be/Sli0N4THnmE>

Introduction

Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent and it is traditionally called Passion Sunday. It is the time in Lent when things really begin to heat up as we follow Jesus to the Cross and we call this time Passiontide.

This week our Prime Minister addressed the nation to tell us that the coronavirus situation now means that we must take urgent action and stay at home. A bit like the Season of Lent and Passiontide, things feel like they are heating up for us as well as we take urgent action to slow the virus down.

We are hearing about and experiencing scary things with serious measures and it is a time of fear and dread. We are living with isolation and fear of death and disease in our world.

Today's readings are about resurrection. They are about returning to life: Ezekiel in the valley of the bones, and Jesus with his friends in their distress. Our stories, from the Bible and from each other give us hope.

Today in our worship if you are able to place a stick or a twig (or something which feels rather detached or dead) in front of you it will help you follow with us – alternatively use the picture of a twig which is on the back of this booklet.

The Gathering

The Greeting

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

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you

Prayers of preparation

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.

Let us recognise God's presence with us.

As we join together in worship focus on the stick or twig you have in front of you and remember that although we are separated from the church in this difficult and painful time like the twig from the tree - we can still join together in worship. We are a family connected by our prayers.



As God's people we have gathered:
let us worship God together.

Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

Let us say sorry to God

*Talk to God about the things you are sorry about so that you can restore your relationship with God, with others and yourself...
Do you need to take action?*

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love:
fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy

We confess to you our fear and failure
in sharing our faith:

fill us with your Spirit.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

We confess to you our stubbornness
and inability to trust:

fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We are forgiven

God forgives me/you.

Forgive others.

Forgive yourself.

Be at peace. **Amen.**

The Collect

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world:
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion,
that we may know eternal peace
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Liturgy of the Word

Bible Reading *Ezekiel 37.1-14*

A Reading from the Book of Ezekiel

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.' So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They

say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

For the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Reading *John 11.32-45*

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

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.' Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon *Richard Evans*

One of the things I have always wanted to own is a human skeleton. I remember when I was growing up, there was a comedy on the television called Steptoe and Son. I didn't see it very often because my Mum thought it was a rude programme. However, when I did see it, I noticed that the father and son rag-and-bone merchants had a skeleton on a stand in their junk-filled home.



It may have been my interest in bones which led me eventually to become a radiographer. For over 20 years I used x-rays to make pictures of peoples' bones. I had to learn about them and all of the things that can go wrong with bones. The bones inside each of us are brilliant, living tissues which support all of our organs and allow us to move around. We know immediately when any of our bones are injured or diseased. Bones are a blessing.

But before the man who discovered x-rays in 1895 took the very first x-ray picture of his wife's hand, the only way people ever got to look at or study human bones was during a very serious operation or when bones were recovered from a corpse or a grave. Dead bones hang around long after the rest of the body parts have perished. No wonder bones to most people were and still are a symbol of death.

In our first reading, we join the prophet Ezekiel as he is given a vision of death and destruction. A valley filled with dry bones. It is one of the most vivid stories of the Bible as Ezekiel witnessed the power of God to restore bodies to the bones and breathe into the bodies so that they come to life.

The vision is part of a turning point in the book of Ezekiel, God is promising to restore new life to the shattered and desolate people of Israel that had been carried off into exile in a foreign land. Everything must have seemed hopeless to the people and there is much in the book about that desolation. It was desperate and all seemed lost.

The feeling is captured in these words from our reading 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely'...

This is the context for the message of new life. Restoration out of desperation. Ezekiel talks of it being God at work. God bringing the dead hopes of the people to life. God breathing life and bringing resurrection.

I think we can relate to feelings of desolation, fear and dislocation, can't we? In barely two weeks our normal patterns of life and society have been taken away by forces beyond our control.



Almost every aspect of life has changed, and the nation is fearful. Many are facing a battle with an unpredictable disease and we are told that many are going to die of the effects of the virus. It is an uncertain and scary time to be alive. Where is our God in all of this? In Ezekiel's time, the people very likely felt that God had abandoned them. Have you ever felt like that?

In our Gospel reading we see Jesus in the midst of a tragic scene. His friend Lazarus has died and the grieving family are perplexed, perhaps even angry, that Jesus had not been there when they needed him most. Mary says "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." The story, like in Ezekiel, has a miraculous ending. But notice how Jesus reacts in the midst of the weeping and suffering of the grieving family.

Jesus weeps. Jesus felt the grief and recognised the desolation of the dead man's family. And he cried with them.

Jesus is with us in suffering. He weeps with us.

Jesus promises life and love that is stronger than death itself. But he also is with us in the dark times, sharing the grief and the loneliness and the fear. Walking with us on the journey towards the future hope.



On Passion Sunday, our readings talk of resurrection hope just as we enter the darkest times remembering Jesus' journey to the cross. Our nation today really needs to hear this message of resurrection hope. We all need to know that there will be new life. That hope and new life is something we can already feel when we notice what we already have and that there is so much life-giving beauty around us.

Using your twig or the picture in this booklet – spend a moment looking at it - the trees in winter are all like this twig, bare and lifeless. But look outside if you can to see that spring is here and new life is bursting through.



We have been asking you about the things which have been bringing you hope in such a difficult time.

In our family we were very moved and encouraged by the clapping for the NHS – hearing everyone joining forces, seeing Phillip opposite and other neighbours and shouting our hellos and waving and clapping together in solidarity and thankfulness for those going above and beyond to help us.

Rossy and family said it is their faith which gives them hope – trusting in God despite the awfulness is what gives them strength. Rossy remembers Ella fighting for her breath before she died and remembers that throughout her short life her faith was strong.

Another lovely person mentioned the beautiful sunshine this week and that they felt the air was cleaner and the flowers looked vivid and the birdsong seemed more cheerful.

A friend on social media said they already can't imagine a time when they didn't have Zoom (a video linking app) – they have simply adapted to the resources they are able to use.

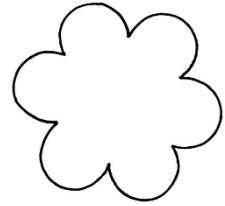
Diane said this: "I came into the kitchen the other morning and my amaryllis was in bloom. A beautiful sight amid the gloom this virus is causing."

Elaine has been entertaining herself (and me) through humorous film clips and memes. As we remembered last week, humour is important as we cope with the difficulties of staying inside. In Elaine's case it is listening to silly songs and watching funny you tube clips – thank you for sharing!

Frances has also found humour to be a source of positivity. She shared this funny thought her son had shared with her...
Me drinking home alone 2019: sad, disturbing, loser.
Me drinking home alone 2020: citizen, inspiration, hero.

What gives you hope?

When you see something to feel grateful for or gives you hope - write it down. You might like to cut out a flower shape and write your hopeful things on the flower and place it on your twig or write directly on the twig on the back of the booklet.



You might like to make flowers from your recycling or using craft items – be as creative as you want.

This can be your own prayer twig springing to life and blossoming with hopeful flowers. Keep this going through the week.

Prayerfully notice the wonderful and hopeful things we have right now – count your blessings and allow the dead twig like the dead bones and like Lazarus to come to life.

Use it as a reminder this week that Jesus is with us, and weeps with us, and gives us new life.

I'd like to share something that has been circulating on social media this week – it is a message from a teacher in China who is reflecting on their experience in China over the last few weeks, and as they are now emerging slowly into new life sharing some encouragement and advice for us as we are at the beginning of the process:

"We are just finishing our 7th week of E-Learning, seven weeks of being mainly housebound and seven weeks of uncertainty. We are healthy, we are happy, and we are humbled. We are allowed to move around freely now with a green QR code that we show when we get our temperature taken. You get your temperature taken everywhere, and it's just become part of the routine. Most restaurants and shopping centres are now open, and life is coming back to our city.

As we watch the rest of the world begin their time inside; here are some of my reflections on the last seven weeks:

- 1) Accept that you have no control over the situation. Let go of any thoughts of trying to plan too much for the next month or two. Things change so fast. Don't be angry and annoyed at the system. Anxiety goes down, and you make the best of the situation - whatever that might be for you. Accept that this is what it is and things will get easier.
- 2) Try not to listen to/read/watch too much media. It WILL drive you crazy. There is a thing as too much!
- 3) The sense of community I have felt during this time is incredible. I could choose who I wanted to spend my energy on - who I wanted to call, message and connect with and found the quality of my relationships has improved.
- 4) Appreciate this enforced downtime. When do you ever have time like this? I will miss it when we go back to the fast-paced speed of the 'real world'.
- 5) Time goes fast. I still haven't picked up the ukulele I planned to learn, and there are box set TV shows I haven't watched yet.
- 6) As a teacher, the relationships I have built with my students have only continued to grow. I have loved seeing how independent they are; filming themselves to respond to tasks while also learning essential life skills such as balance, risk-taking and problem-solving, that even we as adults are still learning.
- 7) You learn to appreciate the little things; sunshine through the window, flowers blossoming and being able to enjoy a coffee in a cafe.

To those just beginning this journey, you will get through it. Listen to what you are told, follow the rules and look out for each other. There is light at the end of the tunnel."

Today on Passion Sunday we have been hearing stories of resurrection whilst we are still in Lent and we are waiting to journey to the cross. When we hear from Ezekiel and the raising of Lazarus and each other in our church family, and this teacher in China - we can be encouraged that resurrection will and does happen in our lives despite the current crisis – we do have hope.

Amen



Profession of Faith

We remember that we are joined together as a family however physically distant we have to be at the moment...

**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

In our topsy turvy world at the moment we are praying our intercessions back to front...

Let us pray to God.

Look at the twig and notice how it is no longer alive - think about those who have died especially those who have died from coronavirus...

you might like to name people you know or you have heard of...

**In St Swithun's we especially
remember Daisy and Sidnetta
Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord
And let light perpetual shine upon
them**



Look at the twig and notice that it is disconnected from its tree - think about all those who are sick – those with coronavirus, those who are suffering, bereaved, depressed, extremely isolated... you might like to name people you know or you have heard of...

We remember Blanche, Sydney, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Sean, Ena, Stephen, Avril and Diane

Lord of compassion

In your mercy heal us

Look at the twig and remember that it should be connected to a big network of branches... Think about all those in our local community who are the branches of support for others those working hard to save lives and care for others especially for those who work for the NHS, care workers, volunteers helping those isolating, shop keepers, and all key workers keeping our community going...

you might like to name people you know or have heard of...

Lord of compassion

In your mercy heal us

Look at the twig and remember that it should be connected to branches connected to the trunk of a tree... Think about our wider world and all of our global neighbours who are struggling with coronavirus issues, the many countries in lockdowns ... you might like to name countries and people you know or have heard of...

Lord of compassion

In your mercy heal us

Look at the twig and remember that it should be connected to branches connected to the trunk of a tree which has roots... Remember that our church family is the place which roots us in God's love. Think about our church – our family at St Swithun's and our wider church family...

You might like to name people you know or have heard of...

Lord of compassion

In your mercy heal us

God of all consolation and compassion,
your Son comforted the grieving sisters, Martha and Mary;
your breath alone brings life to dry bones and weary souls.
Pour out your Spirit upon us, that we may face despair and death
with the hope of resurrection and faith in the One who called
Lazarus forth from the grave. **Amen.**

The Prayer Jesus taught us

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray
**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

God has called us to live in peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

*Spend some time wishing peace to our family our neighbours and
our church family – is there someone who you could make
contact with to share God's peace?*

Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

Great God, you are one God,
and you bring together what is scattered
and mend what is broken.
Unite us with the scattered peoples of the earth
that we may be one family of your children.
Bind up all our wounds and heal us in spirit,
that we may be renewed as disciples of Jesus Christ,
and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with us all in our time of separation and always.
Amen.

*As you prepare to leave your
worship remember the dry stick and that
this week we are looking for signs of
hope and new life – remember to notice
anything which feels good, positive,
hopeful and any blessings you feel and
write them down on the stick on the back
page of this booklet or decorate the stick
you found outside with homemade
flowers representing the signs of hope or
use the Sunday school resources
to decorate the tree image. If you would
like to take photos and share them we
would love to see how you have been
blessed.*



The Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
All: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Notices:

- 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:

- Taneisha (Tuesday this week)
- Karen Watson (Friday just gone)
- And all those who we don't know about...

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