

# St Swithun's Church Family

## Fifth Sunday of Easter

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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...*

**O praise ye the Lord** <https://youtu.be/zCTPYO4LS9c>

**All my hope on God is founded** <https://youtu.be/5l1HTkKI7A8>

**Be still for the presence of the Lord**

<https://youtu.be/ZugvUQ4m90U>

**Let us build a house where love can dwell (all are welcome)**

<https://youtu.be/gKJgcv8SdnQ>

**In the Mood** <https://youtu.be/utH6pbsQHsY>

**The UK blessing** <https://youtu.be/PUtl3mNj5U>

# Introduction

Today is the fifth Sunday of Easter (fourth Sunday after Easter).

Rev Frances will be reflecting on John 14:1-14 - helping us to make sense of this passage which speaks of our Father's home and what it means for us to live knowing God's love for us.

Today we also mark big anniversaries – on this Bank Holiday Weekend we are celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day which is a time to give thanks for peace and liberation.

In a couple of days it is also the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth – a very apt time to pray for nurses and all health care professionals around the world as we await expectantly for our own liberation from covid-19.

# 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

Sharing stories, sharing food

**This is our life**

Sharing wisdom, sharing hope

**This is our truth**

Sharing laughter, sharing pain

**This is our way**

We are living stones

**We are the household of God**

We are travelling the way of justice

**We are exploring the way of truth**

We are living the life of discoverers

**We are journeying home to God**

## **Saying sorry - prayers of penitence**

Loving God,  
we find a home in you;  
we find a family in you;  
we find a place to belong;  
we find a space to be known;  
to love and be loved.

We are sorry that in times of distance  
we too easily forget this gift and all that it brings;  
we have forgotten our place, and doubted your love;  
remind us, and all who feel neglected by you,  
that we can find life in abundance in you.

Lord, in your mercy

**Lord, in your mercy**

We are sorry that in these difficult and stressful times  
all too often we have forgotten who we are,  
and we have failed to care for ourselves;  
remind us, that our home is with you  
and that we are infinitely valuable.

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

We are sorry that in our times of isolation  
we can forget our connectedness  
and instead feel our division instead of our unity;  
remind us, and all who exclude, oppress and condemn others,  
that we are to bring justice and peace to our world.

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, as we remember the liberated mood of the nation on VE Day 75 years ago we will be listening and dancing to a burst of 'In the Mood' and remembering that God liberates us with God's perfect love. <https://youtu.be/utH6pbsQHSY>*



## The Collect

Risen Christ,  
your wounds declare your love for the world  
and the wonder of your risen life:  
give us compassion and courage  
to risk ourselves for those we serve,  
to the glory of God the Father.  
**Amen**

# The Liturgy of the Word

## The Gospel Reading *John 14: 1-14*

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

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon Rev Frances

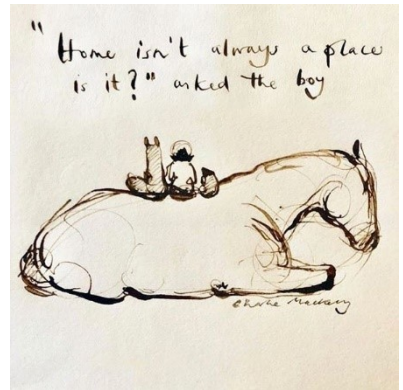
'Set your troubled hearts at rest', Jesus tells his disciples, trust in God, trust also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father's house...I am going to prepare a place for you.' This reading is much used at funerals, with its reassurance that, in the midst of grief, when nothing seems to make sense and our familiar world has been turned upside down, the presence of God is unchanging, his love steadfast and care for us eternal.

'My Father's House', particularly in the context of a funeral, is usually seen as a description of the afterlife and heaven. The Gospels, though, make constant reference to 'the Kingdom of God' and 'The Kingdom of Heaven' being near and real in the present, if we only we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Jesus' ministry has an urgency about it: seeking encounter with God in that many roomed mansion is to be looked for in this world, now. 'Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find: knock and the door will be opened to you' we are told in Matthew's Gospel.



References to houses and knocking on doors can hardly be lost on us at present. Our reading resonates with the longing that the ideal of home brings: that desire for a place where we can be truly ourselves, where we belong and flourish, and can love and be loved. The contrast with the circumstances we find ourselves in during the current lockdown could hardly be greater. For those who live with domestic abuse, home at present is likely to be hell, not heaven on earth. For many of us, home, far from being a place of peace and spiritual centring is now experienced as a place of restriction and confinement; a reminder of our curtailed liberty and powerlessness; perhaps with the additional burden of financial anxiety; or enforced separation from those who we love most.



Candidates being ordained are asked to commit to proclaim the faith of the church afresh in each generation. Different circumstances and times call for new ways of seeking to make known the eternal truth of the disclosure of God's love for the world in the person of Jesus.

What might that mean for us in the uncharted, largely unforeseen circumstances that we find ourselves in? How can we sense God with us, and witness to our faith amidst the tragedy of so many lives lost, and the particular challenges lockdown confronts each of us with? How might our Gospel reading help us here?



'There are many dwelling places in my Father's house', - or, in the poetic language of the King James Bible, 'In my Father's house are many mansions.'

Some of us may be finding this a time of spiritual consolation, of sensing God's presence more deeply through this 'desert' experience. In contrast, a lot of us perhaps feel abandoned, alone and desolate; or angry and frustrated; or anxious and depressed. Others are grieving, mourning the loss of loved ones.

Such emotions are often compounded by guilt: we 'should' have more faith, be more loving to others, and not allow despair to erode hope - especially as Christians we 'ought' not to be in such poor spiritual repair.

Trying to follow Christ, though, does not mean surrendering our individuality, our quirks, our distinctiveness - and our faults - for those are the very things that mark us out as uniquely ourselves.

Jesus tells his hearers that 'I have come to bring life: life in abundance' - we are not being asked to diminish our individuality; the way to God will mean something different for every single person. No individual's path can, or should be replicated, because we each face our own difficulties and bring different gifts.

'You have searched me out and known me... you keep close guard behind and before me, and place your hand before me'. The poetry of Psalm 139 speaks more powerfully than plain prose

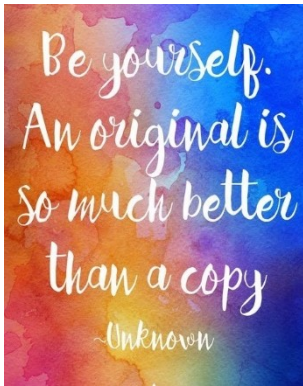
*"What's your best discovery?" asked the mole.*



*"That I'm enough as I am" said the boy.*

of the God who knows each of us through and through and who rejoices in that perfect understanding.

Genesis points to a God who saw that his creation was 'very good' - and it is a world full of difference in all its forms: in the appearance of the natural world, the abundance of life forms within the animal kingdom, and diversity among humans.



Following Christ is about becoming *more* myself in the path that God leads me on, in my own unique circumstances: all this forge my response to the eternal disclosure of love, all God wants from me is *me*. And so with our gifts and imperfections - which tend to be brought more sharply into focus at a time like this - can we accept that we are loved, however greatly we fail to love God and neighbour?

We are not required to attain a special standard of holiness; authentic, self-emptying love longs only to be known by the one loved, that we might be consoled. Our uniqueness presents us with our own difficulties in the lockdown. Some too may find consolation through this time.

Jesus knew what each individual needed who came to him for healing or consolation; and gave each uniquely what would mend and heal. Think of Zacchaeus the tax collector, who climbed a tree to see Jesus better; of the woman who washed his feet with her tears; the woman who had endured haemorrhages for many years; all in different ways bestowed with the same unconditional acceptance and love. Think of the disciples Peter and Thomas, one of whom betrayed his master, the other needing proof that Jesus had risen from the dead. 'Feed my sheep...' Jesus entrusts Peter with the founding of the Church; Thomas is shown the physical evidence that allows him, to declare, first among the disciples: 'My Lord and My God' - love fully expended on each.

'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me', Jesus tells Thomas in our Gospel reading - and so this passage has frequently been, and still is, used as 'proof' that only Christians can be 'saved' - that it isn't enough to be a 'good' person without the correct beliefs. But the context of the setting is surely crucial: the disciples weren't asking an abstract question about the truth of Christianity compared with other faiths - but rather about how to navigate their lives in the absence of their Master - an absence whose reality they could neither accept nor comprehend. 'I am the Way', Jesus tells them - root yourselves in me: live in the context of all I have taught you. Love one another, be merciful; forgive others; trust in God; return evil with good; do not be anxious.

Centuries before the formulation of doctrines and the 'discovery' of heresies, the earliest Christians were simply known as followers of 'The Way' - seeking to imitate Christ; and make known the reality of God's love so that the Kingdom of Heaven might break through. 'Wherever love is, God is', the first letter of John states simply. Such love is entirely offered for the flourishing of another; there is no self-interest or underlying agenda, only the true well-being of the other - and it is given freely with no requirement of reciprocation or recognition.

We too are trying to navigate ourselves at a time of turmoil of mind, body and spirit that seems to leave nothing untouched. Thomas's words to Jesus resonate with our own circumstances: 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' How are we to discern whether our thoughts and actions at this time bring us closer to the Kingdom of God? 'The fruits of the spirit,' Paul's letter to the Galatians tells us, 'are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'. What of ourselves, what particular gifts can we offer in this time of great hardship to bring the Kingdom of God closer and make better known the infinite love of God? Amen.

# Profession of Faith

*As we remember that we make our home with God,  
we also know that 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 that we may walk in your way, rejoice in your truth, and be kept for ever in the life which you give, which is eternal.

Loving God, your way is the path of peace.

At this time we remember the peace of our nation:

we pray for all those who are living in places of conflict, those who do not have safe homes, and those places and people most affected by coronavirus. We pray especially for our world leaders and those who make decisions that affect the life of our planet.

We pray that those in authority and those with influence will have peaceful and loving hearts. In a moment of quiet we remember the places which need our prayers and our generosity...

God of peace

### **Guide us in the path of life**

Loving God, your way is the path of truth.

We thank you for the church and that together we are the family of Christ. As you call us to follow you, may we learn to love ourselves and our uniqueness more fully, so that we can reveal your truth and lead others to the fullness of life. We especially remember our Saint Swithun's Church family and hold in our hearts those who particularly need our prayers and our generosity...

God of peace

### **Guide us in the path of life**

Loving God, your way is the path of justice.

We give thanks that you are present with us in our homes and our community. As we remember Florence Nightingale's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary we especially pray for all nurses and all who work in healthcare. As we remember VE Day we also remember all those who are working hard to bring peace to our nation – key workers and volunteers who battle on despite the many challenges they face. In a moment of quiet we remember any people who need our prayers and our generosity...

God of peace

### **Guide us in the path of life**

Loving God, your way is the path of compassion.

We pray for 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 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 generosity...

God of peace

**Guide us in the path of life**

Loving God, your way is the path of eternal love.

You have prepared a place for us and you lead us home.

We especially remember all those who have gone before us and are at home in your presence – 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.**

# The Prayer Jesus taught us

*We remember that our home with you is on earth  
as it is in heaven:*

Let us 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

*As we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day remembering the dawning of peace after the Second World*

*War, may we now reflect on the importance of building and sharing peace today - in our homes and in our lives.*



**Risen Jesus, we thank you for your greeting, 'peace be with you'. The shalom of God, deep lasting peace; peace that brings inner calm; that keeps a person steady in the storm; that faces the persecutor without fear and proclaims the good news with courage and with joy. This is the peace that reconciles: sister to brother, black to white, rich and poor, young and old; but not a peace that is quiet in the face of oppression and injustice.**

*What positive and peaceful words or loving actions can you share with someone today? Choose who to contact today: make an intention about what you are going to say or do for that person or group. You could choose a family member, a friend or a neighbour or someone from church – you might like to choose your GP, teachers at your child's school, a care home, those who pass by your house ...*

*You could contact by phone, text, email, write a letter, send a card, make some bunting with a message, put a sign in your window – be as ordinary or creative as you want to be...*

*The aim is to build God's peace on earth – remembering that peace begins at home – and that peace is God's home.*

*Write down or set a reminder on your phone to encourage you to act on your intention to build peace today.*

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

*Let us offer one another the peace...*



# Dismissal and Blessing

*Those who are listening to the audio recording will listen to some of the UK blessing <https://youtu.be/PUtlI3mNj5U> . Here is a description of what the UK Blessing is about: "At this unique and challenging time in the United Kingdom over 65 churches and movements, representing hundreds of others, have come together online to sing a blessing over our land. Standing together as one, our desire is that this song will fill you with hope and encourage you. But the church is not simply singing a blessing, each day we're looking to practically be a blessing. Many of the churches included in this song have assisted with supplying over 400,000 meals to the most vulnerable and isolated in our nation since COVID-19 lockdown began. This alongside phone calls to the isolated, pharmacy delivery drops and hot meals to the NHS frontline hospital staff. Our buildings may be closed but the church is very much alive!"*



## **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 God, Creator,  
bless us with strength  
to walk the way of justice and peace.

May God, Redeemer,  
bless us with wisdom  
to speak your truth.

May God, Spirit,  
Bless us with love  
to bring forth new life.

**Amen.**

## **The Dismissal**

We are raised to new life with Christ.

Go in peace.

Alleluia, alleluia.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

## 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 Zara who was 10 on 8<sup>th</sup> May and all those who have a birthday at this time – Happy Birthday!



# Contacts:

## **Priest in Charge: Rev Juliet Evans**

191 Hither Green Lane, Hither Green, London SE13 6QE  
[juliettaevans@icloud.com](mailto:juliettaevans@icloud.com); 07955229351

## **Churchwarden: Diane Keen**

[saintswithunchurch@gmail.com](mailto:saintswithunchurch@gmail.com) ; 07805619142

## **Safeguarding Officers:**

**Olivia Daley**                      07956618629

**Patricia Francis**                020 8690 6026

## **Hall bookings: Sean Hopkins**

[saintswithunshall@gmail.com](mailto:saintswithunshall@gmail.com) ; 07895637471



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

[www.saintswithuns.org.uk](http://www.saintswithuns.org.uk)