

Service: 28th June 2020

Call to worship

God of welcome, we gather today in your presence. We receive your love, your grace and your forgiveness. We seek to live more holy and hopeful lives, In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn: [The Splendour of the King](#) - StF 15

Prayer:

Loving God, we come, each of us just as we are,
with hopes and fears, joys and sorrows,
and lay them all before you. Help me to know that you are with me now.

Grant me the assurance that, in your love, you receive me, accept me and forgive me.
Give me a thankful heart for all that you have done for me through your Son, Jesus Christ,
and let your Holy Spirit guide me as I worship you.
Amen

Welcome:

Video Clip: [Be Our Guest](#)

I am sure we all agree that when we are made welcome, we like it.

It is much better than the opposite, feeling unwelcome is a horrible situation and for those that have seen Beauty and the Beast can see this earlier in the film.

In the current climate this is especially difficult when there are so many rules and requirements that can make us feel unwelcome. So how can we adapt and make people feel welcome?

Jesus was always working to make sure we understand that everyone is welcome, no matter where they are from, what they have done or what their backgrounds is.

Jesus tests and challenges us to be more welcoming, is that challenge something we can take up this week?

Bible Readings:

[Genesis 22: 1-14](#)

[Romans 6: 12-23](#)

[Matthew 10: 40-42](#)

Reflection:

I wonder, what has made you feel most alive this week?

Well for us it was a special day, earlier in the week, we had a birthday in the house, a cause for celebration. But wait, there's more, the shielding period for both the birthday girl and her Mum has come to an end and both now, have the opportunity, to enjoy a bit more freedom. But wait there's more, the easing of the lock down rules and the introduction of "bubbles" for single people meant that a wonderful thing happened; they were able to finally meet up and have that first bit of real-world contact for over 3 months.

So, that was us, what made you feel most alive this week?

Maybe this is the same question as "Where have you seen God this week?"

We learn that life is a gift from God and there is no life without God. So, we need to pay attention to these moments where we feel life most richly, for these moments are blessings from God.

In these current times, it can seem as if life is quite bleak and there are barriers at every turn, and we continue to wonder what life looks like under social distancing, how much of life can we live, life is not lived as an individual in isolation we are inextricably bound with our neighbours, whoever they are. Our happiness and wellbeing depend on others. We see this every day, the sacrifice made by key workers, risking themselves to care for their neighbours, others isolating themselves for the greater good.

There is a quote that “No man is an island” and this is the stuff of the gospel. God choosing to become one of us, to walk amongst us, bind his life, and his death, with us. Making that sacrifice for us. The crucifixion and resurrection that is the lynchpin of our faith and way to our own everlasting life.

In parallels to Abraham’s story in the old testament reading today, a path that starts off with overtones of death can lead to an abundance of life, be that through Abraham and his family or through Jesus and us.

We know that God can work in the darkness and the desolation, when suffering seems insurmountable, but in these times can we trust God, in his unfailing love, can we allow ourselves to believe that God will always be there. Can we trust God enough?

If we allow ourselves to truly see the moments where God has been present this week, can we see this in the little acts of kindness, the support from a friend to help with shopping, key workers, the people working towards a vaccine, the willingness of someone to get this service to you and many others. Maybe God is at work in all these acts.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, this is very clear “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ our Lord”. When we accept the call to join in with God’s work, we are walking paths of life – paths of eternal life. If we can turn to God in the darkness this is our way of choosing life, of saying death does not have the final word. That we live in the reality that the God of life is at work and we want to be co-creators in the good news.

When we do this, it transforms us and also our whole communities, we can experience real life, eternal life and we extend this to our neighbours. If we can turn to God, then the Kingdom of God can break through even on the darkest paths.

Hymn: [When we were in the darkest night](#) - StF 241

Prayers of intercession

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?”

Sometimes we feel like that – for ourselves and for others around the world whose suffering seems endless. In our prayers for others today we express something of that longing for things to change, using silence in which to lament all that is wrong.

We hold in our thoughts the groaning of this world, the sense of hopelessness at the effects of pollution and climate change, of plastic waste and rising sea levels. ‘How long, O Lord?’

We hold in our thoughts the grief of so many around the world, mourning the loss of family and friends, to illness, to starvation and to war. ‘How long, O Lord?’

We hold in our thoughts the great needs of our own society, this country, this village, this street, those who live around the church where we worship. ‘How long, O Lord?’

We hold in our thoughts our own families, knowing there are hurts we cannot heal, grievances we cannot solve, challenges we cannot answer, hugs we cannot give. 'How long, O Lord?'

We hold in our thoughts our personal needs, our fears and anxieties, our sins and selfishness, our desire to change and our failure to do so. 'How long, O Lord?'

'But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me'

We offer our prayers in the name of the Creator God who brought light out of darkness, in the name of Jesus Christ who brought life out of death and in the name of the Holy Spirit who brought order out of chaos. Lord, hear our prayer. Amen

Lord's prayer:

Hymn: [You never let go](#)- StF 626

Blessing:

Everything we have is a gift, all that we have received we know comes from your grace. May through the power of your spirit and through our actions and decisions may we see your kingdom come.

Creator of the universe, Lord of all time and space, you are present in this place, in this moment. We go out into the days ahead, seeking to encounter more of you, our God. Amen.