



**UNITED BENEFICE OF CORLEY
PARISH CHURCH & ST MARY & ALL
SAINTS CHURCH, FILLONGLEY WITH
FILLONGLEY METHODIST CHURCH**



Anglicans and Methodists in Unity.



Dear Friends,

I have been reflecting on silence this week. Bishop John offered a 'retreat at home' this week for clergy, readers and lay leaders. It was an opportunity to intentionally take some time out to be with God. The retreat had 3 sessions. Each session was guided by a recorded message from Bishop John, then an invitation to enter into silence with God. Bishop John is going to be offering the same type of retreat to everyone in a couple of weeks' time, and I will let you know when and how you can access the retreat.

One of the things that came up for me during the silence was to think about intimacy with God, and how that is something that God longs for – for us to take the time and still our busy minds just to be still, be still and know, be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).

During the lockdown, silence may have been something that you have had too much of. Many of the offerings from both social and traditional media have been aimed at filling the silence. Whether that has been by catching up with box sets of classic drama on the BBC or by joining in with virtual classes online. There has been something around filling the space that has been created by the loss of our usual busyness.

But I wonder, I wonder if there is something that we ought to take notice of in our desire to avoid the silence? Our pre-pandemic lives may have been fraught with deadlines, competitive busyness, not having enough time in the day to answer all the emails, living in a society where more and better is to be striven for - being available 24 hours a day on our devices. Whilst technology and connectivity can be really helpful it can also be a very stern taskmaster. I wonder, I wonder whether this time of enforced silence can help us to re-imagine a post-pandemic world where we can control our desire to be always available and to preserve and treasure some silence every day?

One of the most difficult effects of the pandemic has been the regulations around funerals. I have officiated at several graveside and crematorium funerals under the new rules. At first I was really worried that offering funerals where only the immediate family were allowed to be present was offering something suboptimal. Whether the silence of a nearly empty building or graveyard would be traumatic. In my experience, particularly in officiating at my Mother's funeral with only my siblings and a couple of their partners present, I have found that there is something deeply intimate and profound in the pared back liturgy, of the few people present carrying the grief of

many, of the silence held before God. Of course, I do look forward to the time when we can gather in church and offer full thanksgiving services for those we have loved and lost, but there has been real beauty in the simplicity.

So, I wonder, I wonder if we can learn to embrace some of the silence the pandemic has brought? I know that many people have expressed joy in the 'noise' of creation that has been more noticeable with less traffic and more time to, as the poet William Henry Davies puts it 'stand and stare'*. Perhaps carving out some time daily to intentionally be still might be helpful to us all? Maybe that time could be a time to just be with God? Maybe just taking some time out every day to recognise God's presence with us and to offer ourselves fully to God for whatever time we can manage will have an impact on our wellbeing and our relationship with God? A less poor life, one lived with God in intimacy and silence.

So, my prayer for us all this week, is that we can appreciate the silence and practice taking time just to be with God so that our lives may be enriched with God's presence and peace.

With love in Christ Ali

***Leisure by W H Davies**

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can
dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

*Published in Songs of Joy and Others, published in
1911 by A. C. Fifield*

LECTIONARY Readings and Prayers for Sunday 17th May 2020 – Easter 6 Rogation Sunday

Collects

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, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Risen Christ, by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples: help your Church to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love, to the glory of God the Father.

Readings

Genesis 8: vs 20 – 9: vs 17 Psalm 66 Acts 17: vs 22-31 1 Peter 3: vs 13-22 John 14: vs 15-21

A Reflection on the Gospel Reading ~ from Revd Ali Massey

This week's Gospel reading follows on from last week, when Jesus was reassuring the disciples what was going to happen next. Jesus has just told the disciples that he is going back to his heavenly Father. He is facing his own death and comforts the disciples, telling them and us that there is a place for all of us in our heavenly Father's house. That if we know Jesus then we know the way through Jesus' life death and resurrection. The disciples must still have been reeling from the revelation that Jesus has just shared, when Jesus promises that they won't be alone when he has gone back to heaven. Jesus will send another, the Holy Spirit, Jesus then describes how they are to recognize the Spirit.

We can understand what Jesus might have looked like because although he is the Son of God, he is also human and we understand what human beings look like.

If you have ever watched any science fiction films, the alien life forms that the protagonists encounter are usually humanoid. There are many good reasons for this, putting an actor into an elaborate mask is much easier and much cheaper than producing an example of a new species that isn't vaguely shaped like us. We understand the dynamics of the human body because we have one ourselves.

Great religious art often portrays episodes from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we can understand the imagery because we understand what being human is like.

The Holy Spirit is much more challenging to portray. The Spirit's dove may hover above Jesus on stained glass windows, or as flames or a combination of both, but because the Spirit is more experiential, we find it difficult to portray. It is the experience of the work of the Holy Spirit that the disciples will recognize as being the gift of God.

In some of the work I have done with baptism families and children, I talk about God the Trinity in terms of God the Creator, sometimes in terms of the water that makes us and many things of earth up – God the Redeemer, Christ portrayed as the light of the world in the form of a candle, then God the Holy Spirit in terms of the dove – the Holy Spirit comes to us like a dove on the wind, unseen but the presence is felt, like the smell of scented oil, we cannot see it but we know that it is there.....sometimes the Holy Spirit can feel so ephemeral that it is out of our reach. We might recognize the work of the Spirit in excitement in worship or in speaking in tongues. We might feel the presence of the Spirit as comfort and peace. For others it may be the sense that there is just something there, we are not alone.

Our Gospel reading tells us something of what to expect. At the last supper Jesus has been telling the disciples about his coming departure, which raised the disturbing prospect of separation. In years to come Jesus knows that the disciples will feel like "orphans." The resurrection will be a joyous reunion, but the resurrection appearances will not continue indefinitely. As the years pass, people will be called to believe in a Jesus they have never personally seen or heard. Jesus' words and actions will be conveyed to them through the tradition of the church in a world that may seem indifferent at best and hostile at worst to the message about a crucified Messiah. Jesus anticipates that time when he says, "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you" and "because I live, you also will live". The Easter message is that life. Death does not have the final word. This is the faith that we believe in and affirm with our creeds. Faith is a relationship with a living being. The risen Christ not just a memory of a Jesus who died long ago. And this is where the gift of the Holy Spirit comes in, the Spirit who makes the presence of the living Jesus and his heavenly Father known.

Receiving the gift of faith is a bit like falling in love. You can't fall in love in the abstract. Love comes through an encounter with another person. The same is true of faith. If faith is a relationship with the living Christ and the living God who sent him, then faith can only come through an encounter with them. And the Spirit is the one facilitates this encounter.

John's gospel calls the Spirit the Advocate, a term we understand as someone who is called to a person's side as a source of help. In modern contexts that might be an advocate in the court system, in hospital or school. Other advocates may lobby parliament to act on behalf of a certain cause. Sometimes this is the impression of the Spirit that we have in our heads, that the Spirit is the Advocate who brings our case up before God in the hope that God will do something merciful for us. Perhaps the emphasis should be very different. God has already given, through God's grace, the gift of love unstintingly through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and it is that love, so freely given that gives us life. The Spirit is the Advocate who brings the truth of that love and life *to us* in the time after Easter, the Spirit is the Advocate who takes faith from the abstract and encourages an encounter with the living risen Christ which makes faith possible.

Jesus calls the Spirit "another" Advocate, alongside Jesus himself. They both have come from the Father and were with the Father before the beginning of creation. They have both broken through human history and into our world. Jesus communicates what he has received from his Father and the Spirit affirms what we have received from Jesus. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit teach us, bear witness to the truth of God in the Trinity. The Spirit helps to facilitate the continuation of Jesus' work without taking Jesus' place. As the Word made flesh, Jesus reveals God through his life, death and resurrection, the Spirit does not become incarnate and is not crucified for the sin of the world. The Spirit affirms the truth about Jesus, reveals the presence of the risen Jesus and God the Father to those that seek the Triune God.

Jesus also says that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it neither sees nor recognizes it. The world is the place where people are a long way from God, the world is the place where our value is measured by what we do or have, the world is the place that refuses to hear the truth about the risen Christ. The world is where the rhetoric of hate and division rules. And that is our challenge today. Do we remain in the world, following the world's wisdom, striving for acceptance and our place by what we do or where we live or how much money we have, or do we take a risk?

Jesus understood that the world couldn't receive the Spirit without being changed, so are we prepared to receive the Spirit and be changed? Are we prepared to be counter cultural, to care for our brothers and sisters, to come alongside the poor, the sick and the imprisoned? The world rarely rewards that kind of life, but the reward the Spirit brings is inestimable, it is the Spirit that gives us the strength to do the things that we thought we never could do, it gives us the courage to go to places that we never thought we could be, and it gives us life, the life to live the life the lives that God intends us to live, ones where we do our part in transforming the world to become more like the kingdom of heaven?

The Spirit is moving in the world, we have seen the work of the Spirit in so many acts of compassion and bravery during the current pandemic. So, is today, the day we too recognize and accept and rejoice in the Spirit and allow ourselves to be transformed?

Come Holy Spirit, your people empower
light up our lives with your ephemeral God given fire
transform our lives and change our hearts
so, we can live faithfully with you and for you
in Jesus' name

Amen

HYMNS & WORSHIP SONGS

Here are the Hymns that we would have been singing in Church on Sunday ~

We have a gospel to proclaim (StF 418)

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship (StF 350) *Sung to the tune, Londonderry Air*

One more step along the world I go (StF 476)

This is an interesting worship song to ponder on as you look at the video and sing along....

https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-avg-fh_lsonsw&hsimp=yhs-fh_lsonsw&hspart=avg&p=One+more+step+along+the+world+I+go#id=4&vid=0aef4591c6f46c94e7be45bed9f36fe4&action=view

To God be the glory, great things he has done! (StF 94)

PRAYERS



Sundays @ 7pm.

A reminder that we are lighting a Candle every Sunday at 7pm during this crisis and putting it in our windows to be a sign of our solidarity and hope in the light of Jesus Christ that can never be extinguished.

This coming Sunday our prayers will be directed towards all those returning to work this week, asking God to keep them safe as they travel, as they carry out their working role and as they strive to do all they can to protect everyone with whom they are in contact.

The Collect for the Feast of St Matthias the Apostle (14th May)

Almighty God, who in the place of the traitor Judas chose your faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the twelve: preserve your church from false apostles and, by the ministry of faithful pastors and teachers, keep us steadfast in your truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Collects for Ascension Day (Thursday 21st May 2020)

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we in heart and mind may also ascend and with him

continually dwell; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Risen Christ, you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven: help us to seek and serve you, that we may join you at the Father's side, where you reign with the Spirit in glory, now and for ever. Amen

Reflection on The Lord's Prayer - Easter to Trinity

Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and FORGIVE US OUR SINS as we forgive those who sin against us.....

We learn a great deal about ourselves when we are under stress and pressure. We learn that we ourselves are flawed, imperfect and in great need of God's forgiveness. This is a key part of being human. Jesus has given us, each day, the words to seek that greatest gift, offered through his death on the cross. Jesus also gives us each day the strength to forgive others, especially those we share our lives and our confinement with, to enable us to live well together. All of our debts have been redeemed.

God is generous in mercy and in offering forgiveness. We live in a world which increasingly expects perfection. We measure ourselves against the images we see around us and put ourselves down. We can feel pressure to be perfect and project a mask through social media and in other ways. We can invest a huge amount of energy in maintaining this glittering image and become hollow on the inside. This is an exhausting and dangerous way to live but it has somehow become normal for our culture. Jesus' way is much better. This fifth line of the Lord's Prayer gives us permission to be imperfect and to fail and to fall short – often. If Jesus hopes that his disciples will use the Lord's Prayer every day, then Jesus clearly believes that we will all need to seek forgiveness every day. Our lives can begin from a place of honesty: **we are imperfect.**

READ Luke 24: vs 28 – 35 Jesus appears to those he met on the road to Emmaus

Not everyone likes the English word 'trespasses' in this line of the Lord's Prayer. It's not the best translation of the original and suggests that we only sin by 'crossing a line'. Our imperfections run much deeper.

Matthew 6.12 has the Greek word 'debts' in both parts of the line. Luke 11.4 has 'debts' in the second part and a different word which means 'missing the mark' in the first. Our life before God is lacking something – incomplete. We simply can't get there by ourselves, however much we concentrate on keeping rules. Paul uses the same ideas in Romans when he writes that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'. We are so very far away from God – all of us. We cannot put ourselves right by ourselves or earn our forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift offered in Jesus Christ – every day – because we fall short.

A Prayer

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence praise.* John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–92)

READ Romans 3: vs 21-31 Christ took our punishment

Honesty is very difficult. This is part of our human condition and one of the ways in which we fall short of the glory of God. It is hard to be honest with other people, but especially difficult to be honest with ourselves and before God.

For that reason, it is helpful to pray using words crafted by others and refined and tested through years of experience. Psalm 51 is a searingly honest prayer of confession. It would have been one of the texts in

Jesus' own mind as he formed this part of the Lord's Prayer.

It is a psalm which lays bare the heart and mind before God. It is a psalm which seeks forgiveness and a new heart as well as a new beginning. To pray the Psalm slowly and carefully is to seek change and to invite God to draw near.

READ Psalm 51 A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Every line of the Lord's Prayer leads us to the Lord. Forgiveness is possible only by the grace of God and through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The power of that forgiveness is immense and transforms lives and communities. Simon the Pharisee sees the woman as she was and as the world has seen her – a sinner. Jesus sees her as she is now – forgiven. All her debts have been paid. All the ways in which her life fell short have been made good. Her response is a powerful outpouring of love. The heart of the gospel is here. As in the story of the elder brother, God is not seeking our obedience to his commands so much as our love, freely given. God invites us to be his friends. God invites us to be reconciled, one to another, and to love and support each other.

READ Luke 7: vs 36-50 Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman.

A key part of the Old Testament in the Book of Leviticus has a well-known refrain: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy' (19.2).

Jesus goes further and deeper. The refrain for the Church, the new community, is forgiveness: 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.' Life together in families, communities and nations is only possible with the oil of forgiveness. When we hold on to slights and grudges and allow them to build up, whole lives are wasted by hate. Bitterness can ruin more lives than bombs and bullets. Forgiving others is always hard. But it is more possible when we remind ourselves each day of how much we have been forgiven. Only then can we let go of others' debts to us. Jesus teaches us to pray each day: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.'

READ Luke 6: vs 31-38 Love for Enemies

*Give us true repentance;
forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance
and our deliberate sins;
and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit
to amend our lives according to your holy word. Amen*

RESOURCES

With the slight easing of lockdown there have been some changes to the access to Church Buildings which is permitted. Access to church buildings for the purpose of **private prayer by clergy or streaming/recording a service can now take place**. This is limited to **one person** (plus another member of their household).

This one person will usually be the incumbent, or someone designated by the incumbent or area dean (such as a clergy colleague or reader). If someone else is required (e.g. to hold a camera), it must be a member of this person's household.

This will mean that when you watch a recorded Service either on TV or Online, the Church Building may well be being used.



Attached to this Bulletin are four items ~

- ✚ A Sermon from Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury for VEDay 75.
- ✚ A Reflection from the Revd Andrew Haines for Ascension Day
- ✚ The Power of Love – from Bishop Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the United States.
- ✚ This week's message from Revd Jane Braund

AND FINALLY DON'T FORGET

If there is anything that you need or know of someone who would appreciate being contacted or added to the mailing list for this weekly e-bulletin, please do not hesitate to contact Revd Ali, Revd Jane or any of the Churchwardens and Church Stewards listed below. ⁱ

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