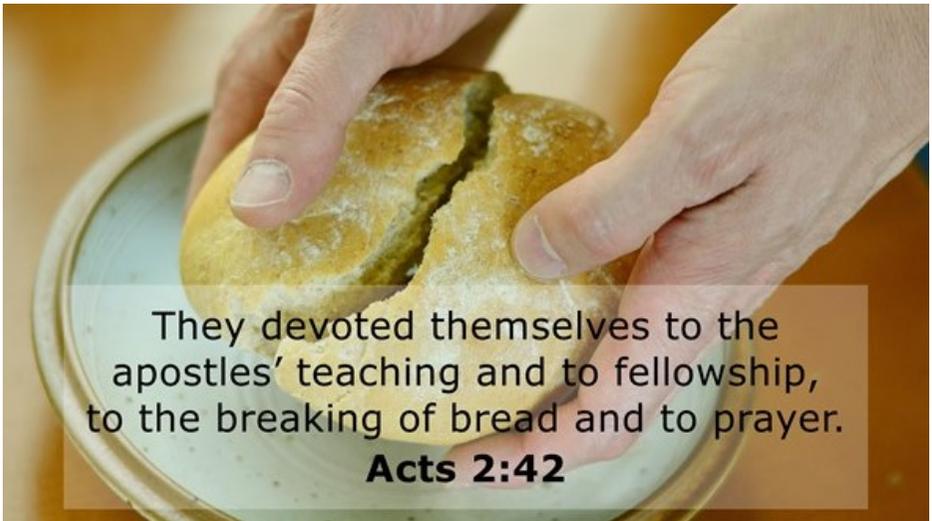


St Swithun's Church Family

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Sunday 3rd 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 and today have some bread ready as we break bread together in our home liturgy.*

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 are live streaming <https://youtu.be/1eQApMqAICM> 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...

How great thou art	https://youtu.be/48i4l1715uc
Blessed assurance	https://youtu.be/bZDqmW49uZk
Great is thy faithfulness	https://youtu.be/0k1WhFtVp0o
To God be the glory	https://youtu.be/idSkp6FAkHI
Let us break bread together	https://youtu.be/413cT_TQraY

Introduction

Today is the fourth Sunday of Easter (third Sunday after Easter) and our focus is on the reading from the adventures of the earliest Christians in Acts. It is also the Sunday we remember that Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

Today in our worship we are thinking about those things we miss at church as well as how we can develop our faith at home.

We will all need some bread for our worship today.

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

Once again we gather for worship:
with our different dreams and ideas,
with our different values and tastes,
with our different languages and cultures,
with our different abilities and skills,
with our different genders and ages,

We gather to worship together from different homes
and circumstances,

We gather from our isolation into our prayerful community,

We gather knowing we join as one family, children of God.

Let us join our hearts in worship,

let us join our voices in praise,

Let us join our lives as the Body of Christ.

Amen.

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, and all who feel worthless,
that you call us by name.

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 all made in your image, we are all one body.

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 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, we will sing How great Thou art...

**O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.**

Refrain

***Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!***

**When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.**

Refrain

**When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation,
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration,
And then proclaim: "My God, how great Thou art!"**

Refrain

The Collect

Risen Christ,
faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep:
teach us to hear your voice
and to follow your command,
that all your people may be gathered into one flock,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen

The Liturgy of the Word

Bible Reading *Acts 2.42-end*

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

For the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God



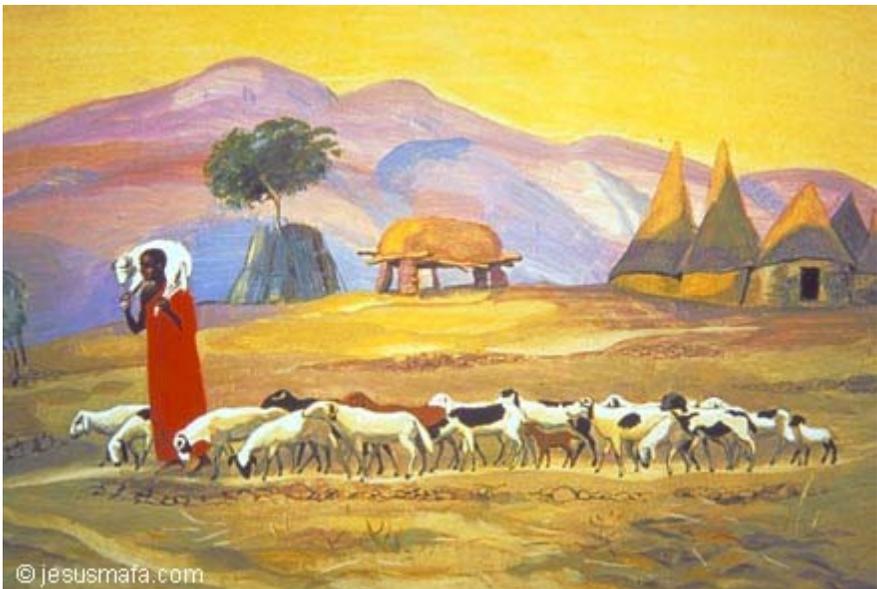
The Gospel Reading *John 10: 1-10*

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

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.



Sermon Mother Juliet

I'm getting very fed up – I miss so many things at the moment and one of the biggest yearnings I have is to be with everyone at church. Not having the option to meet in person is painful. It feels that a fundamental part of who we are is lost.

Like me Elaine is also missing Church a lot. These are the things she is missing: the building, not being able to share the service as a church family, missing the ministry team, not being present at the sermon, not being able to share the peace or take bread and wine with our church family. She says she will never take Church for granted again.



Stephen is missing the atmosphere inside St Swithun's, the loftiness with huge windows, vast empty walls filled with God and love and he is especially missing the church as it is a very personal, special space where he said goodbye to his dear Peter. Stephen says that translating all of these church feelings into his home is ongoing and he is learning through the services in this time, but that he finds he can talk to God at home.

Diane is missing everyone; seeing their faces, having a chat, etc. It isn't changing her relationship with God – she asks daily for God to watch over and protect all those she knows and love.

Enita misses everyone, especially the smiles of the children as they walk down the aisle. Enita knows that life is a gift from God and she gives thanks for it.

Susan is missing everyone in church and feels that the difference between Sunday services at home and in the church is no holy communion and that everyone can't stand and sing together to praise God at home.



Olivia is missing the warmth and smiling faces of everyone. The joyful singing of hymns with the amazing sound of the organ and the social time after church - chatting and keeping up with everyone, and of course the Peace - passing God's Peace to others! However, Olivia doesn't think missing church is affecting her relationship with God – she says, 'the lockdown helps me to have a closer relationship with God...praying more, giving thanks and asking for his mercy in these difficult times. The online service is wonderful and I enjoy worshipping at 10am, thinking that others are tuned in at the same time, therefore we're worshipping together.'

All of these responses resonate as I miss the church hugely, but yet I am noticing the opportunity to focus on faith and fellowship in a different way and that being stuck at home has been full of opportunities too.

We hear about the Christian community in its very earliest days in our Acts reading today. It is brilliant - they are learning and teaching, they are living and eating and praying together. They are literally giving everything away so that no one will be hungry or homeless. There are signs and wonders and growth – they are meeting in the Temple and praying day by day at home. The story of the beginning of the Church is fabulous. This is the Church alive.

After this fantastic beginning, we know that the early Christians were persecuted and would have been meeting in small groups, in their homes, praying for strength to withstand popular opposition to their faith. Despite the huge challenges and restrictions the early Christians faced, the Christian faith spread and flourished. Perhaps this flourishing and growth was possible because of their devotion described in Acts – both collectively together and day by day at home.

Our church building is important – it is our place to meet, to be built up and to be taught, to share communion and to say our prayers together. BUT - as the Archbishop of York said on Easter Day this year, "The church has got to remember it never began in a building. It actually began in a garden, on the road and in a house."



As sad and lost as we feel without our large gatherings together, we do have an important opportunity to grow our faith and to develop our prayers at home. The church building is shut but the church – that is all of us – is very much open. Day by day we can say our prayers and keep our faith alive – keep the church alive.

In our Gospel reading, we hear about Jesus as the Good Shepherd – calling us by name to follow him. We also hear that Jesus is the Gate and it is through Jesus, through radical love, that we find our home in God.

Jesus as a shepherd and a gate is an image of Jesus on the edge, he is not stuck in a building. A shepherd was outside the city and out in the fields – a gate is at the perimeter of a space. In these very difficult wilderness times, Jesus is with us at the edges, where we are, in our homes, in the places we work, wherever we are Jesus is with us and he calls us by name to follow him.

One of the things that has struck me about those called to follow Jesus in our reading from Acts is that in the midst of all their signs and wonders and their amazing ability to share so profoundly, they do something very ordinary – they break bread in their homes – day by day.

Last week we learnt that breaking bread together is a Jewish symbol of hospitality and peace; traditionally before every meal – a bit like saying grace. In our story last week we remembered that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus recognised Jesus when he broke bread at an ordinary meal and Leon encouraged us to reflect on the ordinariness of the bread we eat every day – our daily bread.

This week, in the absence of the sacrament of communion and the absence of our meeting in our church building, I am hoping that we can break bread together at home – whether our bread has been homemade, is uncut wholemeal or sliced white bread, whether we are being fancy with crumpets or pittas, I hope that we can follow the apostles in our reading in Acts and break bread at our tables, in our places of shelter.

It isn't communion but it is a way of saying grace. A way to recognise our need for God and be thankful that God knows us. It is ancient tradition but what a great way to connect with God in our homes today.

The tradition of breaking bread is to say thank you for the food which has come from the earth. It reminds us to be grateful for what we do have despite so many things we don't have.

The tradition of breaking bread, whenever we can share with others, is about welcome and fellowship – so for us it is a reminder of our intention to include others radically in our church family and our ordinary lives. Even when we are alone, we can renew our intention as we break bread. It is an offering of peace and welcome.

The tradition of breaking bread is about sharing of possessions – dividing what we have and giving as the apostles did to those in need.



It seems to me that, in light of COVID-19, Jesus has opened the gate to his beloved sheep and asked us all to be good shepherds. Sharing what we have is a hugely challenging aspect of living with faith – but we are called to do this. Breaking bread and giving thanks may help us to act on this.

So, today when we would ordinarily be meeting at church and celebrating communion together physically – instead, we are reading or tuning into the live stream of this service.

In a few moments, instead of coming to the altar in church, we will be breaking ordinary bread at our ordinary tables in our ordinary homes before our ordinary meals knowing that this is also where we meet the living God today.

And perhaps in our ordinary life at home we will feel God's signs and wonders as those devoted apostles experienced in those earliest days.

In our ordinary life at home we can experience the 'abundant life' that Jesus offers in John 10:10.

Amen



The Gift of ABUNDANT LIFE

Seeing the Gifts of God in Every Day Life

Profession of Faith

We remember that we are called by name to be in God's family – all children of the living God:

**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

Jesus, Good Shepherd, guide us and keep us safe.
We remember all those places in our world who are most affected by coronavirus, for those who are particularly vulnerable, refugees, those in poverty, those without adequate healthcare, those living in crowded conditions. In a moment of quiet we remember the places which need our prayers and our generosity...

Good Shepherd

Guide us and heal us

Jesus, Good Shepherd, guide us and keep us safe.
We thank you for the church and its teaching and fellowship, for the breaking of bread and for the prayers. We especially remember our neighbours, the Church of the Good Shepherd, Rev Bridget and Rev Sarah and all who worship with them. In a moment of quiet we remember our Saint Swithun's family especially those who need our prayers and our generosity...

Good Shepherd

Guide us and heal us

Jesus, Good Shepherd, guide us and keep us safe.

We give thanks that you are present with us in our homes and our community. Help us to be aware of your presence in our ordinary lives and to practice new ways of fellowship and faithfulness in these extraordinary times. We remember all those who are working hard to save lives and help others: key workers and volunteers. In a moment of quiet we remember any people who need our prayers and our generosity...

Good Shepherd

Guide us and heal us

Jesus, Good Shepherd, guide us and keep us safe.

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, 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...

Good Shepherd

Guide us and heal us

Jesus, Good Shepherd, guide us and keep us safe.

You have opened up the gate of everlasting life for us. We especially remember all those who are in your presence who have died recently – 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

Today we have been encouraged in our faith at home – you taught us this prayer and we say it now to remember that we do so in fellowship with each other and all the saints.

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 Breaking of Bread and the Peace

It is very painful for us not to meet physically as a church family, we cannot share the peace or communion as we usually do. However, today we have been encouraged to develop our faith as the early Christians did - in their homes and in fellowship with the church community. As well as sharing communion together in the temple, one of the practices in homes was to break bread. This would have been the Jewish practice of the day and was very simply a prayer of gratitude for our food and our blessings; and an intention to share with others. The breaking of bread was always done at the beginning of a meal – you may want to eat your broken bread with brunch straight after this worship or continue your meal with this broken bread when you eat your Sunday lunch, whether that is on your own or in a family group.

As we share our peace today – we will break bread together.



In the absence of being physically present together in church, we acknowledge our pain that we are unable to receive Jesus' body and blood in bread and wine in the sacrament of communion together.

You search us and know us even when we are lost.

In silence offer to God the sadness of separation and loss in these times.

In our worship, physically separate but together in spirit, we remember that Jesus is with us:
in our homes, in our daily lives, in our daily bread.

You call us by name and we follow you.

In silence remember that Jesus is with us all.

We have asked for our daily bread in the prayer Jesus has taught us.

We are grateful that we are nurtured and nourished in our whole selves.

We remember that whenever we break bread we desire to welcome and share with others.

Give us this day our daily bread.

In silence remember those who you could be generous with... maybe to donate money to the foodbank or to take a neighbour some food.

In our faith stories, in our tradition, Jesus was known in the breaking of bread at the meal before he died during the Passover as well as on the road to Emmaus at an ordinary meal.

You invite us all into fulness of life with you.

In silence remember any of our faith stories which centre around food... we are invited to share our daily lives with Jesus.

This is the prayer which was used at the time of Jesus in Jewish homes, and continues to be used by Jewish people now, at mealtimes when bread is broken at the beginning of the meal...

Hold your bread and then break it as you say these ancient words...

We give thanks to Thee, Lord God, King of the Universe,
who makest bread to come out of the earth.

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

Let us offer one another the peace...

*Continue to share the peace this week by breaking bread
at home and / or saying grace at mealtimes.*

Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

Jesus said, 'I am with you always.'
May God the creator bless you.
May God the Son walk with you.
May God the Spirit lead your lives with love.
Amen.

The Dismissal

We are raised to new life with Christ.
Go in his peace.
Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God.
Alleluia, alleluia.

Notices:

- 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:

- To Susan whose birthday is today and Robert and Sophia who became teenagers last week and all those who have a birthday at this time – Happy Birthday!

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