

Church Alive

Worship

For Sunday 30th August



Welcome to our Church Alive service. Whilst we are not all together in church, we are together in spirit. We have tried to adapt our normal service from screen to paper and have provided links to music where possible if you would like to sing. *A big thank you to Debbie Thomson for recording the songs for us. These can be found on our YouTube channel with the links under the title – just hover and click on it*

Today's theme:

Today we look at a letter written by St Paul in which he reminded the early Christians to: *'Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good'*. [Romans 12:9-21]

We are reminded that when we are feeling wronged, rather than retaliating with evil for evil, we should always aspire to demonstrate care and love – not to place ourselves in danger – but rather to break the cycle of evil and hatred knowing that God will be the judge. For we are asked *'if it is possible' to 'live peaceably with all'*.

This links with the call of discipleship to take up the crosses that we are called to carry in our lives, for as the gospel passage from Matthew 16:21-28 reminds us, discipleship is not an 'easy option' and for Jesus as He set out towards Jerusalem He knew full well the suffering, hatred and yes even the evil that He would face. Jesus sets us the example of showing and sharing love rather than becoming embittered by evilness and hate.

Brenda has prepared reflective questions to consider based on that gospel reading.

Opening Song: Great is the Lord <https://youtu.be/ygh8G2Kb-u4>

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise
the city of our god, the holy place
the joy of the whole earth.

Great is the Lord with whom we have the victory
He aids us against the enemy
we bow down on our knees.

And Lord we want to lift Your name up high,
and Lord we want to thank you
for the work you've done in our lives
And Lord we trust in your unfailing love.
For You alone are God eternal
throughout earth and heaven above.

[Repeat All x 1]

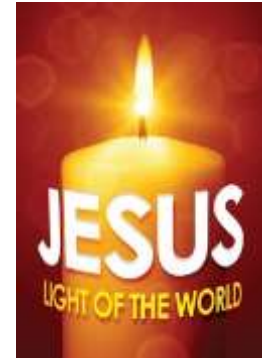
Thank YOU!

Thanksgiving

Think of an example of a kindness, a demonstration of care and love however large or small, expected or received as a surprise, that someone else has shown towards you recently and spend a moment offering a prayer of thanks.

Opening Prayer: *If you are able, and it is safe to do so, light a candle at this point*

Lord, we light this candle,
to remind us that you are the light of the world.
As we gather together in spirit,
make our voices ready to sing your praise;
our hearts open to receive your love
and our minds alive to your Spirit.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



We seek God's healing and forgiveness:

Sometimes, Lord, I fail to live in harmony with others, I hear Your word but go my own way.
Forgive me Lord, and set me on Your path.

Sometimes, Lord, there are times when I am selfish and ignore the needs of others.
Forgive me Lord, and help me to set 'self' aside, take up my cross and help bear other's burdens.

Sometimes, Lord, there are times when I am a stumbling block to others – and to myself
Times when I look for complications instead of just following you.
Forgive me Lord, and help me to follow your call.

We hear words assuring us of God's forgiveness

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All Amen.

Bible Reading - NEW TESTAMENT READING: Romans 12:9-21

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' ²⁰ No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Introducing the Theme & Learning Spaces

Not being able to break out into our learning spaces, here are a few thoughts about the theme for today. For young people you can use the Children's and Youth sheets that are being sent out separately.

Linda has prepared these thoughts:

Paul is outlining a new way of imagining what the community might look like. This is in contrast to the idea of community put forward by the empire. In the community of Christ, people are called to honour each other, whether they are the wealthiest, highest status members of the group or the lowly slaves and migrants. The love that we usually reserve for our family is to be extended to all.

There was to be no more sycophancy and toadying to those more prominent in society in order to get ahead – Uriah Heaps there were to be none! Paul says they are to look in completely the opposite direction - to the needs of the poor, offering hospitality, a meal, work if we have it, anything to make their lives better.

The streets of Rome could be pretty lawless in those days, so you would align yourself with the 'mafia' and vigilantes and gave as good as you got. Again, not so says Paul, instead you should offer a blessing to those who persecute you, don't repay evil for evil, live at peace and leave the wrath to God.

This way of imagining community is no different nowadays if we are to be part of Christ's community. It's a hard path to walk and can lead to personal suffering, hence Jesus' directive that we must take up our crosses and be prepared for suffering along the way. *(You can use the questions that are part of the Picture Reflection to think a bit more about this)*

All age creative Take up your Cross



Find some scraps of wood, nails, string and hammers. Make a simple cross using these materials – please do this with appropriate supervision at all times. As you hold your cross think about what Jesus means when he challenges us to 'take up our cross'. Is it just about carrying a piece of wood around? If not, what does it mean? Think about how it feels to be part of Jesus' story, and what kinds of joys and difficulties you might face being a disciple today, i.e. the way Jesus' story is as tough as it is good (examples might be: joys – having a best friend with you all the time, having hope in your heart; difficulties – getting teased for your beliefs). Finish by praying about these things holding your cross.

Picture Reflection – prepared by Brenda



Take up your cross: Matthew 16: 21-28

- Peter found it difficult to accept what Jesus said about the suffering that was ahead for him in Jerusalem... how do we respond to Jesus' suffering for us?
- What does losing your life for Jesus' sake mean to us?
- Take a few minutes to look carefully at this image....what do you see?
- How does this image speak to you of a Christian way of life?
- How do we respond when life is tough?
- How can we support each other when the going is tough?

Song: Brother Sister Let Me Serve You <https://youtu.be/yICyFdeN ME>

Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road;
We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow 'till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.

O Lord, Hear Our Prayers: *Here are a few suggested topics for you to pray about. If you have specific prayers you would like included in future weeks then do send them to Linda and she will add them in.*

We pray for....

God's world: We pray for places where uprising and violence have arisen from a lack of love for each other's needs, leading to increased incidences of injustice and inequality.

Our communities: We pray for this parish of West End, Townhill and Harefield.
For all activities that promote care for neighbour and stranger and for the schools and their staff as they prepare to safely welcome their pupils for the new school year.

God's church: We pray for the global Church, for all who witness and worship in Jesus' name: Bless us and prepare us to be ready to take up our crosses and step out in service and mission in the places where we live, work and find recreation.

All who are sick: We offer prayers for all who are struggling with frailty and illness. Lord of life, bless with peace of body and mind everyone who calls on Your name, and send Your mercy on all whose earthly life is drawing to a close.

For those who have died:

Comfort those who mourn and all unable to attend funerals to say their farewells because of the restrictions in place, not forgetting all whose world has changed immeasurably following the death of a loved one. Gather all who have died into Your eternal kingdom.

Thanksgiving: Lord, we give thanks that You are always there for us and help us to carry the crosses we have to bear. Strengthen our faith, teach us to love rather than hate, to strive to live in harmony with one another.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

We say the Lord's Prayer:

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.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. **Amen**

Song: This is Amazing Grace https://youtu.be/_OoB8c1ZrkY

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness,
whose love is mighty and so much stronger?
The King of Glory, the King above all kings
who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder
And leaves us breathless in awe and wonder
The King of Glory, the King above all kings.

*This is amazing grace this is unfailing love,
That You would take my place, that You would bear my cross
You lay down Your life that I would be set free,
Oh, Jesus, I sing for all that You've done for me.*

Who brings our chaos back into order
who makes the orphan a son and daughter?
The King of Glory, the King above all kings,
Who rules the nations with truth and justice
Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance,
The King of Glory, the King above all kings.

Chorus into bridge

Worthy is the lamb who was slain,
worthy is the King who conquered the grave! *Repeat twice*
Worthy is the lamb who was slain, Worthy, worthy, worthy!

Chorus

Final Prayer and Blessing

Lord God,
You knew what was going to happen to you.
You didn't flinch or back away,
You calmly told the disciples – and us – what to expect.
As we go out now, remind us constantly to look to you
To seek your guidance in the good and tough times
and to strive to show love to all who we meet.
Guide us as we go in your name and bless us
with strength to overcome evil with good.
In Jesus name we pray: **Amen**

The Peace:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ, Amen.

