

+ Crowe Hill + Fordingbridge + Horton Heath + Ringwood +

Sunday Service 28th June 2020

Welcome to this Sunday's Service

Lectionary Texts:

Jeremiah 28:5–9 Psalm 89:1–4, 15–18 Romans 6:12–23 Matthew 10:40–42

Theme: 'Welcoming others'

Keeping in Touch

We are very aware that government guidance on re-opening places of worship has recently changed. Please continue to pray for those making practical preparations and taking careful decisions for the future re-opening of each church. At Crowe Hill and Horton Heath – the members of the Church Council; at Trinity United Church - the members of Executive Council, and at Fordingbridge United Reformed Church - the Elders Meeting.

It is not our usual tradition to open our buildings for private prayer, (Jesus said: 'go into your room and shut the door and pray' Matthew 6:6) but the Ringwood parish church and Fordingbridge parish church are open for private prayer from 10.00-4.00 each day. All welcome. Other churches may also be open, but many remain closed.

Remember our church friends in care homes and residential homes, and all the staff, reassured that they are well supported and cared for: from Ringwood – Margaret VJ, Rosemary G, June M, Christine W; from Fordingbridge – Freda M, Mavis H, Barbara B, Margaret B. Pray for yourselves and those known personally to you from whom you have been socially distanced for so long. Remember those restricted to home due to frailty, or shielding, and those who care for them.

Our congratulations go to Ian and Judith Barford at Ringwood who celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 27th June, unfortunately unable to gather in the way they originally hoped.

Please pray for Pat and David Daniels at Ringwood and their family as they mourn the death of Pat's son David. We are thankful that David has had a valuable week of respite rest with his daughter Felicity, and Pat has enjoyed the company of her daughter Heather. Please continue to pray for the family.

Call to Worship:

“Come near to God and he will come near to you.” (James 4:8)

Lord God, we come to worship you this morning with your command to draw near to you ringing in our ears. It sounds so obvious Lord, so simple, but we find it so difficult. A thousand trivial things get in the way such as our appetites, the television, our hobbies, or even the tickle we have in the small of our back. Help us this morning Lord to forget all these and to bring you our whole attention so that we can hear you speaking to us. And when we have heard, help us to obey. Amen

Words: Jennifer Martin

Song: Lord I come before your throne of grace

<https://youtu.be/4fo1UV9pfrs>

1. Lord, I come before Your throne of grace,
I find rest in Your presence
And fullness of joy,
In worship and wonder
I behold Your face,
Singing what a faithful God have I,

Chorus

*What a faithful God have I,
What a faithful God,
What a faithful God have I,
Faithful in every way.*

2. Lord of mercy, You have heard my cry;
Through the storm You're the beacon,
My song in the night,
In the shelter of Your wings,
Hear my heart's reply,
Singing what a faithful God have I,

3. Lord all sovereign, granting peace from heaven,
Let me comfort those who suffer
With the comfort You have given,
I will tell of Your great love for as long as I live,
Singing what a faithful God have I.

Words: Robert Critchley and Dawn Critchley

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Prayer Poem:

Love bade me welcome

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here";
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

Words: George Herbert (1593-1633)

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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen

Song: We Will Meet When the Danger Is Over

A new song for these pandemic times by John Bell, sung by Alison Adam and accompanied by Ian McLarty.

<https://vimeo.com/429204412>

We will meet when the danger is over,
we will meet when the sad days are over;
we will meet sitting closely together
and be glad our tomorrow has come.

We will join to give thanks and sing gladly,
we will join to break bread and share wine;
and the peace that we pass to each other
will more than a casual sign.

So let's make with each other a promise
that when we've all come through is behind,
we will share what we missed and find meaning
in the things that once troubled our mind.

Until then may we always discover
faith and love to determine our way.
That's our hope and God's will and our calling
for our lives and for every new day.

Words: John L Bell

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Prayer for Understanding

Lord, we turn to the Bible with many voices in our ears: the voice of an old Sunday School teacher, or a favourite commentary, or an influential website, or an educated friend. Help us to hear through all these voices your Living Word speaking clearly for us today. Amen

Bible Reading: Jeremiah 28:5-9 (ESV)

⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Hananiah the prophet in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD, ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD make the words that you have prophesied come true, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. ⁷Yet hear now this word that I

speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. ⁸The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. ⁹As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet.”

Bible Reading: Matthew 10:40-42 (ESV)

⁴⁰ “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Sermon:

Introduction

Some people are hoping that whenever church worship restarts the ‘new normal’ definitely won’t include ‘sharing the peace’, or air kissing on both cheeks (mwa-mwa!), or whatever else you seem to be expected to do in church! Others are eager to get back to a bit of permitted human contact. We humans have lots of ways of greeting on another: hand shakes, high fives, namaste, nose rubs, hugs and back pats, and increasingly seen today: fist pumps or elbow bumps. Some options seem more hygienic than others! These are all ways of making someone know that they have been recognized, welcomed and included. Most human greetings are designed to recognize one another as two equal beings.

An unverified story: when the Quaker, William Penn was granted an audience with King Charles II, he refused to doff his hat according to custom. For Quakers believed that the practice of doffing hats to your superior was an un-Christian mark of inequality. When King Charles realized how William Penn was behaving he quick-wittedly doffed his own hat. "Friend Charles," William said, with even more daring. "Why dost thou not keep on thy hat?" The king answered. "Because it is the custom of this place that only one man should remain uncovered at a time."

Hospitality and Guests - the sharing of gifts

In many rural cultures in old times, and still in undeveloped parts of the world today, the expectation of the traveller is that hospitality will be offered, and a gift will usually be made in return. There is no fixed price, no fixed expectation.

The offer of a place to sleep and some food could be very mixed - would you be offered a place in the stable, or would you be offered a posh guest bedroom, would

a poor family only be able to offer you a share of their bread and soup, would a rich family offer a place at the family table and a share in an extravagant meal?

In return, what gift might the traveller make? Might a rich traveller be very generous? Might a poor traveller not have much to offer?

Jesus says that when he sends his disciples out, he sends them out with nothing extra, they won't be able to offer expensive gifts in return for hospitality. But a prophet can always offer a prophet's gifts - words of good news and wisdom from God. A good person can always offer a good person's gifts - acts of kindness and a peaceful serenity. And, Jesus suggests, if the traveller seems to have no obvious gift to offer, well there will always be a reward, God's presence goes with those who travel in the name of the Lord, and God's reward is the gift for offering hospitality to those who travel in the name of the Lord.

This tradition of the exchange of gifts still continues. There are several cafes and hotels around the world which have benefitted when the landlord has offered food and drink to local artists, and in return has received gifts of paintings or murals on the walls from up and coming artists. As a result there are landlords who own what are now very expensive works of art. Something to hang on the wall until the need to draw a pension!

In church, we offer a welcome to many people which is made without charge. Come to worship free of charge. Have a cup of coffee free of charge. And in return all who come make gifts in return, free offers of whatever people want to put in the collection, and people freely offer to use their gifts and talents in the serve of the church. There is no fixed price for any of this, no formal exchange rate, but gifts are offered and received, and all are welcome.

Welcoming Prophets

More specifically, this gospel reading is about welcoming prophets. It's about the risks and rewards of extending hospitality to God's provocative, discomfiting, and truth-telling messengers.

The hierarchies we set up within our societies are not the hierarchies that matter to Jesus. The prominent and high paid who we might glamorise aren't always the people God rejoices in. Rather, the small gesture and the invisible kindness are what please God, who sees everything we do in secret. What is rewarded is the quiet, unglamorous meeting of basic human need. Why? Because it is in the offering of such simple, essential gifts that Jesus's kingdom announces itself. Jesus came to bring abundant life, and that life begins with the most elemental of gestures. "Even a cup of cold water?" Yes, even that.

We mirror Jesus, whether we plan to or not: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." This a staggering claim. What would happen if we took it seriously? Or even literally? How would our behaviours and attitudes change if we believed that other people see Jesus every

time they look at us? What would happen to the Church and to the world if we operated on the assumption that Jesus is visible in and through us at every moment, in every interaction, in every relationship, encounter, conversation, and conflict? Would we tread more lightly on the earth? Speak less and listen more? Reconsider our grudges and grievances? Choose our words with greater care? Examine our motivations more closely?

Jeremiah, the unpopular prophet

In our Old Testament reading this week, two prophets deliver messages to God's people. The year is 594 B.C.E. The Babylonians have made their first conquest of Jerusalem, captured many of its leaders, and carried them into exile. The people who remain in the city long for the Babylonian oppression to end, and their city to be restored to freedom and glory. They long to hear a word of deliverance from God. You probably need to read a much longer part of the story (Jeremiah 27:1- 30:3) to understand more clearly what is going on. But Hananiah is prophesying a rapid return to peace, and Jeremiah is prophesying the need for complete submission to Babylon. A prophet with easy-listening words, and a prophet with a hard-to-take message.

"Welcome" takes on a whole different meaning when we think about it in light of this Old Testament story. It's easy for the Israelites to welcome smooth-talking Hananiah. It's altogether harder to welcome weird Jeremiah with the bizarre yoke around his neck. Imagine the risk Jeremiah has to take, speaking truths no one wants to hear. What if no one offers him a cup of cold water when he's done prophesying? What if every door in town slams shut at his approach?

What about us?

It is a call to radical, risky honesty, a call to take our vocation as truth-tellers very seriously. As God's messengers in the world, we are not at liberty to soften the Gospel for the sake of our own likeability. Jesus has not commissioned us to say whatever is merely trendy or comfortable or easy or popular. He has commissioned us to say what is true. False hope is not God's hope. Easy peace is not God's peace. And convenient justice is not God's justice.

"Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward." The opposite of course, is that not everyone will welcome authentic prophets. Not everyone will open the door, receive Christ's message, and offer us the glass of water we hope for. But that doesn't excuse our inaction. Jesus still sends us out. Yes, there is a risk of rejection. But there is also the prospect of success and of reward.

Offering our Gifts

You are invited and encouraged to remember churches and charities and all those in financial need at this difficult time. We pray:

Let us not selfishly hold the blessings we receive,
But lovingly share, so that blessings and thankfulness may abound. Amen.

Hymn: Father I place into your hands (R+S 518, STF 519, SOF 1/97)

A song to lead us into our prayers.

<https://youtu.be/zBfRNrvvUfc>

1. Father, I place into your hands
the things I cannot do.
Father, I place into your hands
the times that I've been through.
Father, I place into your hands
the way that I should go,
for I know I always can trust you.

2. Father, I place into your hands
my friends and family.
Father, I place into your hands
the things that trouble me.
Father, I place into your hands
the person I would be,
for I know I always can trust you.

3. Father, we love to see your face,
we love to hear your voice.
Father, we love to sing your praise
and in your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with you
and in your presence rest,
for we know we always can trust you.

4. Father, I want to be with you
and do the things you do.
Father, I want to speak the words
that you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
that you will draw to you,

for I know that I am one with you.

Words: Jenny Hewer (b. 1945)

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Prayers

Let us pray for the church, for the world and for ourselves.

Loving God, we pray for your guidance and wisdom as your church finds new ways of reaching out into the world with the good news of your generous love and forgiveness. Gift leaders with the innovation and inspiration that comes from your Holy Spirit so that your church may be more effective witnesses of your saving grace.

Lord Jesus, as the world continues to suffer the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, we pray for compassion and fairness in sharing practical resources and medical expertise so that there might be healing and wholeness for all. We pray that all those who have influence over the lives of others, might make decisions based on kindness and for the common good.

We pray Holy Spirit that you infuse with love the hearts of those who use war as a weapon of power. Hear our prayers for an end to all conflict, and for recognition and support to be given to refugees and displaced people around the world.

Compassionate Christ, we pray for comfort and strength for those who are still isolated, for parents and children, for the elderly and those suffering long term illness. Lord, lift anxiety from those who are worried about the future, their jobs, businesses and their financial situation. May they know that they are not alone, that Jesus is always with them.

Holy Spirit we pray for ourselves, for our plans that have been changed, for the people we have lost and miss still, for our hopes and dreams for the future. Strengthen our faith, deepen our commitment to your ways and help us to better serve God and to see Jesus in everyone we meet.

Thank you Lord that you that your love never fails. Amen

Words: The Methodist Church

Hymn: Brother, sister let me serve you (R+S 474, STF 611, SOF 1/54)

This is a very popular song on YouTube. The difficulty is finding a version which doesn't drag!

<https://youtu.be/Qblqtb4jzL8>

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

Words: Richard A. M. Gillard (b. 1953)

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Blessing

The spontaneous love of the Creator renew us;
The sacrificial love of the Christ reconcile us;
The sanctifying love of the Spirit restore us;
and blessing of grace, mercy and peace be on us
and all whom we love, this day and for always. Amen

Words: Terry Oakley