

## Scattered but Still Present – St John’s Church, Farncombe 27th June 2021 – Fourth Sunday after Trinity



*Dear friends,*

It was only when I began to think about what to say both for this bulletin, the 8am service on Sunday and the 10.30am one, that I realised my customary tactic of picking the shortest reading in addition to the Gospel unless there is a good reason not to had produced a very sticky combination of texts indeed as you will discover later on. Maggie was taking the midweek Eucharist on Tuesday and while she was doing that I went into the church office to think. I found myself so overwhelmed by weariness that the best way of thinking was to find a hassock, put it under my head and lie on the floor. The readings and various disorganised thoughts about them went to and fro through my mind and I couldn't be sure I wasn't just nodding off. Eventually I heard Ray ringing the Sanctus bell and so I thought I had probably better get up. Curiously I found a few minutes later that my thoughts had in fact resolved into three separate themes which I could probably work up later into proper sermons. People sometimes ask me how I write sermons so I thought it was worth sharing this, possibly uncharacteristic, example ... !

If you need to contact the church, don't call the Parish Office as it's not likely the messages will be checked very often. Instead phone me on **860709** or Maggie on **428733**.

If there's anything you want to share with other church members as part of this bulletin, do let me know.

Other than that – please keep looking out for each other, contacting each other, and praying for each other!

*James*

**Some news:**

- You can download or listen to the audio version of this bulletin and service at [www.farncombe.org.uk/churchathome](http://www.farncombe.org.uk/churchathome).

- The standard worship pattern at St John's is now:

Sunday 8am	Holy Eucharist
Sunday 9am	Roman Catholic Mass
Sunday 10.30am	Parish Eucharist
Tuesday 10.30am	Midweek Eucharist

In time we will be restoring some worship on Sunday evenings but that's a little way ahead yet.

- You will be aware that Maggie our curate is leaving us over the summer as her husband John retires from Charterhouse and the family move to Devon. Maggie's last Sunday with us will be July 11<sup>th</sup>, so do make a note of this. We will not now be able to hold a big leaving party and I expect people may want to be present for her last service so I am asking people to book in either via the Eventbrite page (see below) or by dropping me a line. We are seeing what else we can do to send Maggie appropriately on her way!
- Sadly our friend and former congregation member Doll Newland died last week at St Catherine's Manor in Artington where she had been living for the last year. Her funeral service will be at Guildford Crematorium at 12.45pm on July 5<sup>th</sup>.
- We now know a bit more about the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit to Guildford Diocese in the autumn. There will be an initial event intended especially for church members at the Lakeside Centre in Frimley on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September, followed by a series of local events where Archbishop Justin will talk about his experience of faith and answer questions – these will be especially focused on people who may be thinking about faith rather than existing church members (though they can go). Our local one will be at Priorsfield School at 1.30pm on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup>.
- We will be trying a covid-compliant Messy Church on Saturday July 10<sup>th</sup> at 3pm! Our theme will be The Good Shepherd. We will have an hour of crafts relating to the theme and James will lead a short service. We won't have the usual tea after the service this time but hope to bring this back for future services. To comply with social distancing, each group will sit at a table and we will bring the materials for the crafts to you. Please book online at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/st-johns-church-farncombe-31813080559> or contact James or Shirley to book a table."
- Thanks to Sharon Lewer, Penny Rivers, Nick Manning and the virtual choir for their contributions to this week's audio worship.

***This week's liturgy:***

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid? (from Psalm 27)

**Opening Prayer:**

In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

St Paul says 'Be imitators of God; love as Christ loved; do not grieve the Holy Spirit; put away all anger and bitterness, all slander and malice.'

So let us confess our sins to God, who forgives us in Christ.

My God, I thank you for all your mercies to me, and especially that you have given me time for repentance and amendment of life. Give me light to see my sins, and grace to be truly sorry for them. Amen.

+ Lord have mercy; Christ have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

**The Collect for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity:**

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,  
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:  
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;  
that with you as our ruler and guide  
we may so pass through things temporal  
that we lose not our hold on things eternal;  
grant this, heavenly Father, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,  
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**First Reading: from the book Wisdom, read on the audio by Sharon Lewer**

Because God did not make death,  
and he does not delight in the death of the living,  
For he created all things so that they might exist;  
the generative forces of the world are wholesome,  
and there is no destructive poison in them,  
and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.  
For righteousness is immortal; for God created us for incorruption,  
and made us in the image of his own eternity,  
but through the devil's envy death entered the world,  
and those who belong to his company experience it.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

## **Gospel Reading: from St Mark's Gospel, chapter 5**

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This is the Gospel of the Lord: Praise to you, O Christ.

## **Sermon**

The reading from the Wisdom of Solomon, buried away in the Apocrypha – scriptures we don't often read from in church – sets us quite a challenge! It forces us to

think about the most absolutely basic elements of creation and how it works. 'God did not make death', the writer insists, and presents death as an interloper in God's world, not part of the original plan. Now of course we know that as a matter of history everything in this world is, and always has been, mortal: that everything passes away and only God himself is eternal. The invasion of decay and death into the creation must have happened very early, before what we understand as life got going at all. For us, life and death are inseparable.

Perhaps we should put that to one side, and read this passage as expressing the sense that the world as we see it is seriously awry, that it doesn't embody God's original intention: that things as they are are not how they were meant to be, in a more general way than referring only to bodily death. And this disorder, this state of having-fallen-away from what God truly wanted, is the situation Jesus has come to put right. Last week we saw him calming the storm on the lake: this time, he heals an incurable illness and snatches a child back from death. In all these instances he finds disorder, and brings into it the healing and re-ordering energy of God. He shows by his actions the way things are supposed to be.

People's reactions to Jesus are always instructive. The woman with the haemorrhage and Jairus the synagogue leader have sought his help: she is fearful and he is distraught; both are at the same time desperate and faithful; but the most interesting reaction in this Gospel passage is that of the mourners at Jairus's house when Jesus tells them the girl is sleeping. His remark is, maybe, partway between a joke and an expression of faith that the state she's in is only temporary, because Jesus knows she's dead as much as they do. They laugh; and they laugh *at him*, Mark says, meaning this is an expression of scorn and contempt. They must have been aware that Jairus had gone to fetch Jesus, that this isn't just some random lunatic off the street, so in a way they are scoffing at Jairus's faith as well as the teacher from Galilee himself. The remark they have already made to Jairus – 'your daughter is dead, why bother the teacher further?' – isn't about concern for Jesus, it's a way of saying this was always a fool's errand in the first place. So what was it they wanted: a chance (however unlikely it seemed) for the girl to be saved, or for their own view of the world to remain in place, a world in which miracles do not happen and acts of faith come to nothing in the end?

Recently I've thought about how my own relationship with the idea of death has changed. I reflect that I have had a very good and gentle life and have been very lucky. If it came to an end tomorrow, and even if my Christian faith turns out to be misplaced and there is nothing beyond that moment of dissolution, I would have very little to complain about except that I hadn't been able to finish some of the projects that I had in hand! I am extremely fortunate to have been able to reach what you might call a place of contentment.

But this is a bit of a privileged position. The great mass of human beings now and in the past have had to struggle in all sorts of ways, against illness, misfortune, injustice and oppression. They have looked towards the life beyond death as a place where they will be vindicated, and in the death and resurrection of Jesus, a victim vindicated by the Father,

they have seen a foreshadowing of the way things will be in the world to come: the hope and expectation that justice will be done, the prisoners set free, wrongs put right. Even if I find myself content, I must in Christ still share the desire of those who are justifiably not content.

Jairus and the woman with the haemorrhage bring before God incarnate the things that most concern them, the things they truly want. We have to bring our true desires before God before he can deal with them; and whether he fulfils them or he says, No, this isn't what you really need, here is this other thing instead, he will have begun to bring them to order and healing. We need not worry too much whether what we desire is the right thing or not (if it is plainly wrong we will probably know anyway) – God will sort that out and tell us. Our task, first, is to speak with all the truth we can find in our hearts, and then to listen. Amen.

### **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into hell.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **Intercessions *led on the audio by Penny Rivers***

Please pray for:

- Efforts to restrain and combat the coronavirus in this country and around the world; the just and effective distribution of vaccines and treatments;
- The epidemic to pass quickly, for recovery, and for learning from the experience;
- Our government and all those faced with making decisions in this emergency; ongoing wars in the Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, and Tigray;
- Those who are at work, those who can't work, and those who are worried about their livelihoods;

- Medical staff and carers;
- In the Global Church, the United Church of Pakistan and its Moderator, Azad Marshall;
- In our Diocese, the work of the Children's Society and all those who look after the welfare of children in our churches, schools and other bodies;
- In our Deanery, the parish of Busbridge, and the incumbent Simon Taylor; also Hambledon church and Simon Willetts who ministers there;
- In our Parish, our local police constables, PCSOs, and all those involved in the criminal justice system;
- Those who are sick or in need of prayer: Steve Ferrin, Susan Caffyn Parsons, Thelma Hunt, Sylvia Hunt, Sophie, Eve Miller, Lynn Holcombe, and Andrew Harrington;
- Those who have died recently, including Ann McCann and Doll Newland; or whose year's mind falls around this time, including Margaret Dedman.

We join our prayers with those of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St John, and all the saints, and offer them to you, Father, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Hymn** (sing (if you want to!) to Pastor Pastorum, 'Faithful shepherd feed me')

Lord, we cannot seek you  
On your altar throne;  
Yet we may receive you,  
Weary and alone.

Far from priest and altar,  
Christ, to you we cry:  
Come to us in spirit,  
Let us feel you nigh.

In our silent worship,  
Let us share the feast;  
Be your love the altar,  
Be yourself the priest.

### **Prayer of Communion**

Lord Jesus, we are created and made to be members of your Church, but for now many of us are scattered and dispersed, as the children of Israel were scattered, and cannot meet together. As you are the Head of the Body, we know that in you and by the eternal offering of your Body and Blood, once and always, we are united

together. Come in spirit to our hearts + and never let us be separated from you.  
Amen.

Almighty God, who governs all things in heaven and earth: hear the prayers of us your servants, and grant to this parish of Farncombe all things needed for its spiritual and material good and peace. Strengthen the faithful, bless the priests, protect and guide the children, crown with joy the lives of the old. Comfort the ill, the lonely, the sad and tired. Convert the wicked, rouse the careless, recover the fallen, restore the penitent, remove all that hinders the truth, and bring us all to our true home with You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Gathering together all our prayers and praises, we use the words Jesus taught us:

Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name;  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us;  
and 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.

### **Prayer of Blessing**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep our hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, + the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and for ever. **Amen.**



*Thank you to Pam Powell who has made a new curtain for the Aumbry where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.*