



WELCOME TO ST PETER'S ASH



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT ST PETER'S IS CALLED TO CELEBRATE, LIVE AND REFLECT THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

5TH JULY 2020

ST PETER

<u>READINGS FOR TODAY</u>	PARISH OFFICE: Closed until further notice. TEL: 01252 331161; e- mail: office@saint-peters-ash.org.uk BOOKINGS OF WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS – 01252 321517 WEBSITE: www.saint-peters-ash.org.uk
Acts 12 v 1 – 11	
1 Peter 2 v 19 - end	
Matthew 16 v 13 – 19	



Jesus said I will make you fish for people

COLLECT FOR THE REST OF THIS WEEK – TRINITY 4

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.

DON'T FORGET OUR ST PETER'S PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like emergency prayer for yourself or somebody else please phone: 01252 322292 or 01252 323037 – this is a confidential service.

There is a free national phone line 'Daily Hope' that offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services. Available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044**

RE-OPENING OF CHURCH FOR SERVICES

Following the governments' easing of the lockdown restrictions from 4th July, we are pleased to be able to announce that we are planning to re-open our church for public worship from Sunday 12th July. Initially we shall be having a 10 am Family Communion only. In future weeks we are hoping to add an 8 am Holy Communion on Sundays and also a 9 – 30 am Holy Communion on Wednesdays – dates for these will be announced later. Here are some of the procedures we will be putting in place, following the advice from the government and the Church of England, as we prepare for a safe return:

Social distancing and Public Health requirements must be met. The two-metre 'rule' applies for public worship. The maximum number that we will be able to accommodate in church will be 40. To preserve social distancing, you will be

shown to your seat by a Steward. The wearing of face-coverings is voluntary.

Those at extra risk, which includes people of 70 years and over regardless of medical condition, and the 'clinically extremely vulnerable', or those who are self-isolating, are advised to stay at home as much as possible. They should carefully consider the risks associated with indoor gatherings and decide accordingly whether to attend public worship at this time. Those who are shielding until 31st July should not attend at this time. We shall be continuing to provide the Pew Sheet services for those who can't attend.

Everyone will have to use the hand sanitiser provided on entry and exit from the church. Also, we will be requesting the names of attendees, and these details will be kept for 21 days to assist NHS Track and Trace if required. It is essential that people do not gather on the church path, at the doorway or in the porch.

Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend church due to the risk they pose to others. They should self-isolate at home.

To minimise the risk of transmission, we will not use the normal service booklets. A disposable service sheet will be provided each week. Singing will not form part of our worship at this time. There will be no 'passing the peace'. Holy Communion will be in the form of the bread only (except for the celebrant) and hands should be sanitised before receiving. Kneeling at the rail is not permitted. Only the celebrant will be allowed in the sanctuary and prepare the altar and touch the vessels. There can be no servers at present.

We will aim to keep the service much shorter than usual. The 'sermon' will be replaced by a short reflection and will be the same as that on the pew sheet.

After the service, sadly, we will be unable to have our usual coffee time together. Also, people cannot stay and chat inside the building. Outside, in the churchyard and in the car park, social distancing rules will still apply.

In an emergency, the disabled toilet in St Peter's Centre will be available. The other toilets are out of use.

All of these restrictions are necessary to protect your health and safety and that of your families, friends and neighbours. The pandemic is far from over and we need to stay alert to save lives! I hope that you will still be able to enjoy worshipping God at St Peter's. Just being together once again will, I know, be a great support – even socially distanced.
(Fr Keith on behalf of the PCC.)

Morning Prayer to share at 10 am on Sunday

If there is more than one person present, someone may wish to read the parts marked (L), everyone says the rest together. You can say alternate verses in the Psalm and in the Canticles. Please have a Bible to hand. You may wish to light a candle.

(L) Jesus said: 'You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.'

(L) O Lord, open our lips
All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

(L) The Lord is righteous and delights in righteous deeds; the just shall see his face

All: The Lord is righteous and delights in righteous deeds; the just shall see his face.

(L) When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?

All: The just shall see his face.

(L) His eyes behold the inhabited world; his piercing eye weighs our worth.

All: The just shall see his face.

(L) The Lord weighs the righteous as well as the wicked, but those that delight in violence he abhors.

All: The just shall see his face.

(L) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

All: The Lord is righteous and delights in righteous deeds; the just shall see his face.

This hymn is said or sung:

Jerusalem the golden,
with milk and honey blest,
beneath thy contemplation
sink heart and voice oppressed:
I know not, oh, I know not,
what joys await us there;
what radiancy of glory,
what bliss beyond compare!

They stand, those halls of Zion,
all jubilant with song,
and bright with many an angel,
and all the martyr throng:
the Prince is ever in them,
the daylight is serene;
the pastures of the blessed
are decked in glorious sheen.

There is the throne of David;
and there, from care released,
the shout of them that triumph,
the song of them that feast;
and they who with their Leader
have conquered in the fight,
for ever and for ever
are clad in robes of white.

Oh, sweet and blessed country,
shall I e'er see thy face?
Oh, sweet and blessed country,
shall I e'er win thy grace?
Exult, O dust and ashes!
The Lord shall be thy part
his only, his for ever,
Thou shalt be, and thou art!

(L) The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind:

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

(L) Jesus said to his apostles, 'You are my friends if you obey my commands.' Let us now confess our disobedience to him:

Pause to call to mind our sins. We confess them to God:

(L) Lord Jesus, in your love you invite us to be your friends: Lord, have mercy.
All: Lord, have mercy.

(L) Lord Jesus, in your joy you choose us to go out and bear fruit: Christ, have mercy.
All: Christ, have mercy.

(L) Lord Jesus, in your power you send us to be your faithful witnesses: Lord, have mercy.
All: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to eternal life, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

All say The Gloria:

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

We now say the collect for St Peter's Day:

All: Almighty God,
who inspired your apostle Saint Peter
to confess Jesus as Christ and Son of the living God:
build up your Church upon this rock,
that in unity and peace it may proclaim one truth
and follow one Lord, your Son our Saviour Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Read Acts 12 v 1 - 11 followed by Psalm 125 concluding with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Read 1 Peter 2 v 19 - end

All: Alleluia, alleluia. I do not call you servants but friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. Alleluia.

Now read Matthew 16 v 13- 19. Here are some thoughts from Fr Keith:

Aren't we lucky that people in the past chose Peter to be our patron saint? There is so much about him to inspire us. He was an 'ordinary' fisherman, and yet God chose him to do great things. He sometimes messed up, and yet God, in Jesus, forgave him. He wasn't afraid to speak out for Jesus. He was loyal to Jesus on all but one occasion. I'm sure we can identify with some of that in our own lives – 'ordinariness', messing up, forgiveness, maybe doing greater things with God than we could have imagined!

I tend to picture Peter as a kind of 'Brian Blessed' character, probably loud and larger than life! He would almost certainly have been strong and physically fit, from his fishing days. He didn't go to university, neither was he rich. Before Jesus called him, he would have been unknown outside his own village, and yet, now he is one of the most famous people in history. Millions have flocked to pray over his tomb – beneath the altar of St Peter's in Rome, and, the most powerful of Christian leaders, the Pope, is seen as Peter's direct successor. What a difference Jesus made to Peter's life!

There is certainly plenty to say about St Peter, and the children of our local primary schools are well aware of his importance as a good example for them to follow. It helps that he has a lot of mentions in the gospels, in the book of Acts, in St Paul's letters, and that there are two letters ascribed to his authorship. So, we have plenty to contemplate and celebrate today.

What we must avoid though, is ever thinking that such a famous saint is somehow above us lesser mortals. It is likely that, looking at it in purely worldly terms, Peter achieved more than most of us will do in our lifetimes. I doubt if people will erect a huge pilgrimage church over my grave site in years to come! Neither will they be likely to quote what I have said about Jesus, or preserve any of my sermons for posterity! It's possible that having a saint like Peter can make us feel a bit overwhelmed and inadequate. Well that is to miss the point entirely. Following Jesus isn't about competition with our fellow Christians, living or departed. As Peter found out in John 21 v 20, when he asked Jesus about the disciple whom Jesus loved 'what about him?' he was basically told to mind his own business!

Jesus has called us to be 'fishers of people for God' just as he called Peter and the other disciples long ago. We don't have to do the 'great' things Peter did, or, indeed, what any other Christian has done or is doing, in order to be faithful disciples. We are each called to live out the gospel in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. Small things done for God can be as important as big things. Also, the world in which Peter lived and ministered is vastly different to ours in the twenty-first century. It is true that human nature hasn't changed much in the past 2000 years, but circumstances have. Were Jesus to ask the question 'who do people say that I am' today, we would need to give a different answer to what was said back then. Of course, Jesus is still the Messiah and Son of God, but not many of our contemporaries would understand what that meant. Nor, would they say that Jesus was a prophet or Elijah or John the Baptist. Most would probably say that Jesus is an irrelevance, or at best just a good man who lived a long time ago. So, our task is going to be a bit different to Peter's! Ignorance, indifference, or misconceptions about Jesus, are what we face today, and we need our own strategies and guidance from God to tackle them.

So, how can Peter fit in with our own discipleship, and what help can he be to us today? Well, firstly he can pray for us. Some people are a bit unsure about asking for the prayers of saints, but it is no more disrespectful to God to ask the prayers of a saint than it is to contact our church prayer chain. As the body of Christ, living and departed, we can

pray for one another as well as praying directly to God ourselves.

Secondly, Peter is a good example of keeping going through the difficult times. Our reading from his first letter, this morning, is talking about just that. Written in a time of persecution, Peter says that when you do right and suffer for it you have God's approval (1 Peter 2 v 20).

Thirdly, he shows us what it is like to be totally caught up in the love of God. His devotion and determination are wonderful examples of what it means to take Jesus' calling seriously. Peter gave up everything that was familiar, in order to take up Jesus' invitation, and he found true fulfilment in that. He was willing to be changed by God, so that he learned to reach out to gentiles not just his fellow countrymen, when God prompted him to do so. Peter was obedient to God's will no matter what the cost to himself, after his one slip up was forgiven.

Whatever picture of Peter that we have in our minds, he has a lot to teach us about faithful discipleship. Making sacrifices, not letting past failures discourage us, not being afraid to speak out, being prepared to suffer for what you believe in, are just some of the ways in which Peter is relevant for us today. Whatever God is calling us to do, we can trust that he will be walking with us, no less than he was with Peter long ago. One day, we will be with Peter and all the saints in that place where even pain, suffering and death are no more, and that is something to truly celebrate every day of our lives. So thank you God for St Peter!

Now pause for your own reflections, and then we say the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe 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 to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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.

We now say together:

*All: You have raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of your servant David.*

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ♦
who has come to his people and set them free.*
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ♦
born of the house of his servant David.*
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old ♦
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,*
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors, ♦
and to remember his holy covenant.*
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,*

- 6 Free to worship him without fear, ♦
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the
Most High, ♦
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God ♦
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, ♦
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All: You have raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of your servant David.

Our prayers today are written by Ceri Hurcombe:

Almighty God, your blessed apostle Peter glorified you in death as well as in life. Grant that our church be inspired by his teaching and example and made one by your spirit. As we reflect today, with our St Peter's Day service, we remember that God chose Peter to be his rock, a steadfast foundation on which his church was built. We pray that we can also be a rock on which faith, devotion and love for others can grow and strengthen.

Lord in your mercy . . .

We pray for our Christian family throughout the world. We give thanks for those who have been able to strengthen their relationship with you through the challenging time of lockdown. We give thanks to our church family who have kept in contact with us during this time and given us a sense of belonging. We pray for those who have wandered from the path of faith because they couldn't gather with others to worship or because loneliness and worry has overcome them. Guide us Lord to them and help us to support them.

On St Peter's Day when we would have joined together for a service outside, encourage us all to sit outside take time to be with you Lord in our hearts with focused minds. Remind us that we are all blessed to be part of the community of St Peter's church even if we aren't physically together. We pray for the bible study group who begin a journey together this week.

Lord in your mercy.....

We pray for our local schools. They have opened their doors to the vulnerable and key worker children and then opened more widely giving more children a safe and secure place to learn and be cared for. We pray for the new prayer space at Walsh Junior School and we ask you to guide the children who use it so they develop a stronger connection to you.

Lord in your mercy . . .

Father we bring before you today those who are suffering with ill health at this time, including those with Coronavirus. We pray that the leaders of the world see the virus as global issue, sharing resources where they can and remembering that we are all neighbours. We pray that those who are unwell seek the medical care they need so that any treatment they need isn't delayed.

Lord in your mercy . . .

Lord God we bring before you today our local community. Help us to follow the example of Peter and be a rock of faith

for those around us. We send thanks for all those who work locally, for those who volunteer to help keep our village a safe place and for those who have been instrumental in providing support to the vulnerable during the pandemic.

Open our hearts Lord to our neighbours and our personal responsibilities towards them. Help us to recognise your call to help those who are hungry, those who are homeless, those who are seeking refuge, those who are oppressed, those who are sick and those who are exploited. Help us to hear you summon each of us to give a loving response.

Lord in your mercy . . .

Loving God hear our prayer for all those who mourn, Reach out to them in their shock, their grief, their sorrow and their loneliness. We pray that they find comfort in knowing that their loved ones are at peace with you and the saints in heaven. We take a moment to pray in silence for those who have died recently and the families they leave behind.

Lord in your mercy . . .

We pray that we can stand tall on the solid foundations of our faith and help others to see your glorious light.

Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

As Jesus taught us, so we pray: Our Father in heaven....

This hymn may be said or sung:

1. For all the saints, who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed. Alleluia, Alleluia!
2. Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress and their Might;
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well fought fight;
Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true Light.
Alleluia, Alleluia!
3. O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine. Alleluia, Alleluia!
4. And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave, again, and arms are strong.
Alleluia, Alleluia!
5. The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blessed.
Alleluia, Alleluia!
6. But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day;
The saints triumphant rise in bright array;
The King of glory passes on His way. Alleluia, Alleluia!
7. From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Let us pray:
Almighty God,
who on the day of Pentecost
sent your Holy Spirit to the apostles
with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame,
filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel:
by the power of the same Spirit
strengthen us to witness to your truth
and to draw everyone to the fire of your love;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gracious Father, by the obedience of Jesus you brought salvation to our wayward world: draw us into harmony with your will, that we may find all things restored in him, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

May God, who has prepared for us a city with eternal foundations, bring us, with Peter and all the saints, to the eternal and triumphant joy of that city; and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us and all who we love, today and always. Amen.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace, and rise with Christ in glory. Amen.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF THE RECENTLY DEPARTED, ESPECIALLY: CALEB PERFECT; JOHNY JONES; AWAIS ALI; TERRY RIGBY

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK – TRINITY 5

Isaiah 55 v 10 - 13; Romans 8 v 1 - 11;
Matthew 13 v 1 – 9 & 18 - 23

HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:

SOPHIE BOUD (6TH); PHYLLIS EXLEY &
WILLIAM HOOKER (7TH)

THE HUNDRED CLUB JUNE DRAW

Congratulations to the winners:

First prize £79 – 50: Harry Coupland

Second prize £33 – 13: Evelyn Hadland

Third prize £19 – 88: Tony Whelton

If you wish to join the 100 Club – please contact Fr Keith.

CARE AND SHARE

We have started a new initiative to help those who may be short on food supplies in the current crisis. Food is being left outside church for people to take for themselves or to share with others who they know are in need. If you would like to donate any tins, packets, UHT milk etc. please leave it on the doorstep of the Rectory. So far, the scheme is proving to be very popular. Thank you.

Online PCC meeting – there will be a ‘Zoom’ meeting this Thursday 9th July beginning at 7 – 30 pm. Members of the PCC will receive an invitation to join the meeting.

CHURCH NOW OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER

Our church building is now open for INDIVIDUAL PRIVATE PRAYER. Social distancing, hygiene and cleaning of the building have to be carefully followed. Those at risk because of underlying health conditions or age are still urged to stay at home. We are using only the Lady Chapel and limiting entry to no more than 6 people at a time. We are open on

Saturdays from 9 – 30 am to 11 am & Tuesdays 2 – 30 pm to 4 pm. This will be supervised with two volunteers each time.

ANY LOCKDOWN STORIES TO SHARE?

I have included some of my thoughts from Lockdown this week. We would love to hear some of *your* stories, experiences, thoughts, insights during lockdown. If you have something you would like to share please send it to Fr Keith and it will appear on this weekly sheet. From this experience I know we all have a lot to learn about ourselves and each other.

BIBLE STUDY

‘Great Prayers of the Bible’. There will be seven weekly sessions, online, using Zoom, starting on this Tuesday 7th July 7 – 30 pm to 8 – 30 pm. If you haven’t got internet access you can still do the course using the book by yourself – or, with one socially distanced visitor, perhaps.

THOUGHTS FROM A LOCKED DOWN RECTORY

Maps? Who needs them? Modern technology has surely made sheets of coloured paper that blow in the wind, get wet, get torn, and get grubby, redundant. Well, it will come as no surprise to those who know me, that that isn’t the case at the Rectory. Good old-fashioned Ordnance Survey maps are still alive and well-used here!

It is no secret that one of my great interests in life is travel (some might say obsession!). During lockdown I have to admit to dreaming of future holidays in Europe, the USA and Canada, but, as far as this year is concerned, for me, that’s not going to happen. It will be a long time before I risk my life to go on a plane, or go to a pub, restaurant or coffee shop, come to that. Some things may be worth risking your life for, but a flight to Spain, or pint of beer or an Americano, not for me! Even day trips to London are out for the time being. So, what does an inveterate traveller do in such circumstances? The answer, in my case, has been to stay local, and, with my trusty OS Explorer Map covering Guildford & Farnham, discover the beauty of the countryside here on my doorstep. The Surrey Hills may not be able to rival the grandeur of the Canadian Rockies that I visited last year, but they have a beauty all of their own, and are no less worthy of visiting, in my view.

The joy of a map, for me, is that it gives you a more detailed overview of an area on one sheet, bigger than anything you get on a screen – phone or I-pad. Sad, though it may sound, I can spend hours sitting in my armchair planning circular walks taking in, what usually turns out to be, very lightly used footpaths. At the beginning of lockdown when we were limited to one hours’ exercise per day, my walks were, of necessity, begun and ended at my front door. Now, sometimes, I allow myself up to 30 minutes-drive from home before I begin. But what an awful lot there is to enjoy in this relatively small area! I have experienced heathland, woodland, lakes and rivers, and passed lovely hidden-away old houses that I could only dream of living in – mostly in the £1 to £2 million bracket!

The weather over the past few weeks has helped of course. Even sitting in the garden, listening to the birdsong, has at times felt *almost* Mediterranean. After 17 years of living in Ash, I have enjoyed discovering new local places more than

I would ever have thought possible. All of those places that I have driven past on my way to somewhere 'more exciting,' have given me hours of pleasure, thanks, in part, to my trusty map.

So, for me, these past few weeks have had their 'silver lining'. Now, I know that that won't have been the case for a great many who have been unable to do walks like me. I have had the health to do what lots of people have been unable to even contemplate. So, as I write this, I hope it doesn't come across as, in any sense boastful. The fact is, though, that getting out and about, has been very enjoyable, and it has made me think about how little we often appreciate what is close at hand. We don't bother to notice the beautiful surroundings in which we live in Ash, and just take them for granted.

I have written before about how, as a Christian, we believe all this natural beauty to have been created by our loving God as His gift to all of us. Thankfully, many of us are waking up to the fragility of it all, and realising that we have to do more to look after it. But, we also need to learn to show our thanks to God, by making time to enjoy it more. I'm sure we've all had the experience of giving someone a gift that is under-appreciated. You know, you've taken ages to carefully select an item to match the recipient, only to have it briskly unwrapped and cast to one side, with the most perfunctory thanks. We feel disappointed, let down and angry that what was meant to be a significant moment, has fallen so flat. We ask ourselves 'why did I bother?' I suspect that God, too, feels let down by us, when his precious gifts are either ignored, taken for granted or cast to one side.

There *will* come a day when the threat of Corona-virus will no longer hang over us. Now is the time to plan ahead for what our life is going to be like when that happens. Will we simply revert to constant busyness? Will we go back to not appreciating the good things that are on our doorstep? Will we take many of God's gifts for granted again? Will we go back to ignoring the needs of the vulnerable people who live down our street? Will we forget what it feels like to be isolated ourselves, and so choose to forget those who have felt isolated and lonely for years? Are we going to look again at how our life is mapped out and do we have the courage to set off in new directions, if that is what God wants us to do?

Before it's over, the pandemic will bring more challenges. The virus isn't signing a peace treaty on 4th July! As we face many more months of uncertainty and the 'new normal' there will temptations to do too much too soon. We'll need to go on taking lots of precautions to keep each other safe for quite a while yet. But we don't need to descend into despondency because it's all taking longer to go away than we may have hoped. Our generous God will continue to provide many opportunities for us to live fruitfully and safely. Our challenge is to make the most of whatever He gives us. There is still plenty to do that is free, and socially distanced. Are we up to adapting our routines to make the most of new opportunities? With God's help, I believe that we can and will. Fr Keith.

Evening Prayer for this week

O Lord open our lips,
and our mouth shall show forth your praise.

O God make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

- 1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse, ♦
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
- 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, ♦
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
- 3 The spirit of counsel and might, ♦
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
- 4 He shall not judge by what his eyes see, ♦
or decide by what his ears hear,
- 5 But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, ♦
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.
- 6 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, ♦
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.
- 7 The calf, the lion and the fatling together, ♦
with a little child to lead them.
- 8 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, ♦
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

This hymn may be said or sung:

Firmly I believe and truly
God is Three, and God is One;
and I next acknowledge duly
manhood taken by the Son.

And I trust and hope most fully
in the Saviour crucified;
and each thought and deed unruly
do to death, as he has died.

Simply to his grace and wholly
light and life and strength belong,
and I love supremely, solely,
him the holy, him the strong.

And I hold in veneration,
for the love of him alone,
holy Church as his creation,
and her teachings are his own.

Adoration aye be given,
with and through th'angelic host,
to the God of earth and heaven,
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
we pray with one heart and mind:

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever. Amen.

A Psalm is said: Mon 85; Tue 89 v 19 - end; Wed 91; Thurs 94; Fri 102; Sat 104, ending with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Two Scripture Readings now follow (see below). Between the two readings we say:

All All nations shall come and worship you, O Christ, and share in the feast of your kingdom.

- 1 Great and wonderful are your deeds, ♦
Lord God the Almighty.
- 2 Just and true are your ways, ♦
O ruler of the nations.
- 3 Who shall not revere and praise your name,
O Lord? ♦ for you alone are holy.
- 4 All nations shall come and worship in your
presence: ♦ for your just dealings have been
revealed.

All To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb ♦
be blessing and honour and glory and might,
for ever and ever. Amen.

All All nations shall come and worship you, O Christ,
and share in the feast of your kingdom.

Readings:

Monday: Job 33; Romans 14 v 13 – end

Tuesday: Job 38; Romans 15 v 1 - 13

Wednesday: Job 39; Romans 15 v 14 - 21

Thursday: Job 40; Romans 15 v 22 - end

Friday: Job 41; Romans 16 v 1 - 16

Saturday: Job 42; Romans 16 v 17 - end

Gospel Cantic: The Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

All You have filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

1) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit
rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on
his lowly servant.

2) From this day all generations will call me blessed; the
Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his
name.

3) He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation
to generation.

4) He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered
the proud in their conceit.

5) Casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting
up the lowly.

6) He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the
rich away empty.

7) He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to
remember his promise of mercy.

8) The promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and
his children for ever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

All You have filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.

*Prayers of thanksgiving are made for the day that is
ending. Intercessions are offered for the church, the world
and for individuals, the sick and the departed.*

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

The Collect for this week (see first page)

O God,
the source of all good desires,
all right judgements, and all just works:
give to your servants that peace
which the world cannot give;
that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments,
and that, freed from the fear of our enemies,
we may pass our time in rest and quietness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray, and in your great
mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all
evermore. Amen.

May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the
mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

SERMON FROM BISHOP ANDREW - 5TH JULY

'Come to Me'

Romans 7:15-25a, Matthew 11:16-19, 25-end.

Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'.

And so, may I speak in the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

It was one of those really awkward moments. Seven of us had just met at Heathrow airport, on our way to Russia. Seven of us had agreed a couple of nights before that we'd only take hand luggage on this short mission trip to save time at the border. Six of us had arrived with the minimum of baggage as agreed. One of us – a girl called Annabel - had brought three pieces of hand luggage and a whopping great suitcase with a capacity of about 20 cubic feet.

Now we didn't know each other very well – and we were all keen not to fall out at the beginning of our trip; so no-one said a word as Annabel took her monster suitcase to the check-in. Even when we reached Moscow, and waited for three full hours by the luggage carousel, the communal stiff upper lip remained firmly in place.

Annabel was quite relaxed throughout, and seemed oblivious to the fact she was holding us all up: so relaxed in fact that when the suitcase finally arrived, she asked me whether I could carry it for her, as it was rather heavy. It was a hot day, the suitcase weighed a ton, and it was the best part of a mile from the airport to the bus station. Crossing the bridge over the River Volga, and only just resisting the temptation to drop the suitcase overboard, I struggled on; and finally we arrived at the bus station, and from there travelled to the train station where – after another half a mile's walk - we boarded the train bound for our final destination, the Soviet city of Yoshka Ola.

By now I was hardly feeling at my most charitable, but it was a relief to collapse into a comfortable train compartment and settle down for a 17-hour journey. The great train ground into action, and started worming its way through endless sprawling suburbs followed by still more endless pine forests; and now we we'd set off, a couple of us walked up and down the train to seek out the buffet car. Buffet car? What buffet car? It slowly dawned on us that there was no food on the train – and that the 17-hour trip would be a time of enforced prayer and fasting.

The news came as a shock to the whole team – all except Annabel, strangely enough, whose 20-cubic feet suitcase was stashed in the luggage compartment above. She invited me to lift it down from there, and opened it up: and there, miraculously, was a picnic for seven, complete with crusty bread, cheese, pate, crisps, fruit, chocolate, everything. And from that moment on we laughed together and prayed together and witnessed together, and it was a really fantastic trip.

'Come to me', said Jesus, 'all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'.

It's such a wonderful verse, isn't it, and one to which many of us will have returned over these past few months, with all the many challenges that they've thrown our way. Even in more normal times than these, we all too easily become heavy-laden, as the older version puts it – 'cumbered with a load of care', in the words of the old hymn: so that an invitation that is specifically issued to all who are weary and burdened should certainly make us prick up our ears.

There's one particular weight, though, which some people bear much more than others, and perhaps have done so over this time of lockdown, with some of the feelings of uselessness that it may have engendered: and ironically it's often better people, more conscientious people, more caring people, more religious people that carry this burden, while others seem to get away scot free. Jesus spoke of how the religious leaders of his day – the so-called scribes and Pharisees – almost specialised in imposing this weight on others: *'They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear',* as he put it in Matthew 23 verse 4, *'and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them'*. St Paul, who had himself been brought up as a Pharisee, also spoke of this weight in our epistle reading for today: *'I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do'*. So what is that weight? What is the heavy suitcase that Paul and some of the ordinary people of Jesus' day felt so compelled to drag through the streets? It's what Paul describes as the 'law', the ten commandments, of course, but all of the rest of the laws too that make up a good chunk of the so-called Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.

If Paul hadn't known his Bible so well – and if the Pharisees of Jesus' day hadn't been so keen to promote its teaching, along with a thousand fiddly byelaws of their own – then life might have been freer, without the weight of guilt and shame weighing people down. Some people continue to argue that, blaming their low self-worth, perhaps, on what they learnt in Sunday School or on their Catholic upbringing, and they may well be right. And our epistle reading today expresses that beautifully, as Paul pictures himself dragging the suitcase of the Law along with him, and no doubt strongly tempted on occasions simply to let it sink into the murky depths of the River Volga.

But then along came Jesus: the Jesus who issued the invitation to *'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'*; the Jesus who was later to reveal himself so powerfully to Paul on the Road to Damascus. And then came the Spirit of Jesus on the Day of Pentecost – the Spirit who is entirely absent in Romans chapter 7 but who bursts forth in chapter 8, which begins with those ringing words, *'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'*, and which ends with that fabulous affirmation, *'I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come, nor power, nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'*.

In Jesus' day, and still in many parts of the world today, two oxen – one more experienced and the other with its metaphorical L plates on - would be yoked together so as to plough a field. The Pharisees spoke of the yoke of the Law, the heavy rulebook which they laid on the shoulders of others. But when Jesus spoke about his yoke, he described it as easy and his burden as light. Better still, Jesus was the more experienced ox in the image: *'Take my yoke upon you and learn from me'*. For living as a Christian, at the end of the day isn't about following a rulebook: it's about following a person – Jesus, the Son of the Living God, and better still, a person who is gentle and humble in heart, the One – and only one - who can truly offer us rest for our souls.

So what do we do with the Law then? And how do we hold all this together with Jesus' words that he'd not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it – or with Paul's teaching that the law is holy, the law is good? To return to my story, the very heaviness of Annabel's suitcase as we dragged it through the streets was what made it full of promise as we opened it on the train. The law can't save us. The law can't make us holy. In itself the law will only fill us with guilt and shame and self-loathing and all the rest. But it's once we give up on a doomed attempt to earn the favour of God – once we come, burdened and heavy laden to Jesus, and – if you like, step into the train of his grace – then the law becomes sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, as we read in Psalm 119, as nutritious as the purest breast-milk as Peter describes it in his first letter. This is what we might describe as a 'land flowing with milk and honey'.

Sadly some of the Pharisees never got that. Jesus portrayed them as spoilsports in the playground, who'd refused to join in John the Baptist's game because his religion was too challenging and austere, and who were now refusing to join in Jesus' game because of the precise opposite – because of his joyful eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. Those tax collectors and sinners got it all right, and their lives were transformed as a result. And blessedly some of the Pharisees ended up getting it too, of whom St. Paul himself was, of course, the most fabulous example.

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest'.

It's an appropriate verse, of course, as lockdown eases and many of us can begin to look forward to a much-needed holiday. But rest for our *souls* is only possible when we return to the Lord who has is calling us, with thankfulness for his amazing grace – that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And it's from that place that we can then stand tall as sons and daughters of the living God, whatever life throws at us, with the Scriptures as our nourishment, and the Friend of sinners as our inspiration and our guide.

(Also available to watch on-line)