

Weekly Service

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

20th September 2020

WELCOME

Rev Zoe Heming, Vicar and Disability Adviser for Lichfield Diocese

Good morning and welcome to our Sunday service. My name is Reverend Zoe Heming, I am the Vicar of St Andrew's Church in Shropshire, and the enabling church adviser for the Lichfield Diocese. You join me in my little home office, and home chapel, my little camper van outside. The theme for our service today is 'belonging', as we enjoy sharing our worship with many disabled Christians who have been able to fully participate and belong since church joined online.

Living with chronic pain for many years myself and becoming a wheelchair user has been a journey of faith, a painful journey which has led me to discover new gifts, my own prejudices and the things and barriers which exclude people like me from being able to fully participate and belong to the church. To be human is to be limited. The Christian faith teaches us that everyone is made in the image of God and are called to be interdependent, a body of Christ. No one is more important than another. We'll hear that the first shall be last and the last shall be first in our reading later. We know that the Coronavirus has hit the most vulnerable members of the community, the hardest.

Enabling us in our worship this morning is the wonderful WAVE community. Emily Richardason shares what everyday faith looks like to her as her ministry thrives through social media. Our prayers are led by Ian Grantham, a passionate campaigner for churches to maintain online worship so that housebound Christians like him can continue to belong as they do through our current offering. You'll meet Katy Browne, who is a valued member of my own parish church, and Zoe Corney, a colleague and friend who lives with M.E. You'll meet Peter Philips, a newly gifted poet through his Motor Neurone Disease. Our service today is a celebration of belonging, a church of God's wonderfully gifted, wonderfully diverse people, in body mind and spirit.

Grace, mercy and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All: and also with you.

During our worship today, we are all invited to open our hearts and minds to encounter God in the stories, experiences and struggles of one another and in the radical, upside down Kingdom of God where the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

We begin by taking a moment of stillness, wherever you are, however you are, to rest in the presence of God.

We come from scattered lives to meet with God

All: Let us recognise his presence with us.

We meet in the presence of God

All: Who knows our needs and heals our wounds.

God knows us and calls us by name

All: With childlike faith, we come.

HYMN

O God, you search me and you know me

Sung by St Martin's Voices

O God, you search me and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze.
When I walk or lie down you are before me:
ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar.
And with love everlasting you besiege me:
in ev'ry moment of life or death, you are.

For you created me and shaped me,
gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am, I praise you:
safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

Bernadette Farrell (b.1957) from Psalm 139

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The president says

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden, to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

Silence is kept.

All: Lord our God,
in our pride we ignored your call.
Our love for you is like a morning mist,
like a dew on a ground that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
Bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

REFLECTION

Peter Philips

My friend Peter has Motor Neurone Disease. That's just one part of who he is. He's a husband, a poet, a retired social worker, and prison chaplain and a Licensed Lay Minister. His declining health and disability has changed but not shrunk what he offers and enjoys. Since church and community is now possible online, instead of housebound isolation his Christian vocation has been set free. He remains a valued and vital part of a vibrant faith community, sharing God's life, love and hope in the world.

OK Yes, my health has deteriorated over the last 18 months or so, but what has been more remarkable, my life has completely changed for the better. The "new" people I have met and worshipped amongst, as well as being able to reconnect with old friends, has been a real blessing. But, my gift didn't stop there, oh No. I began to compose a collection of 'Poetry' about all sorts of things, for the first time in my life. Local friends were surprised that some of my poems spoke to them on a very deep and spiritual level and this is why I truly believe my Motor Neurone Disease is a 'Gift of God'. I believe that through each one of us, God is working and calling us to 'get out there' and proclaim His Kingdom here on Earth. We all come across wrong doing, injustice and human suffering of the modern age, such as climate change, poverty, and how we respond to 70 Million Refugees. Christians surely must not be afraid to speak out and act.

Having a terminal illness has not changed that. For me, it will remain a Gift and I pray others will discover the gifts of their own mortality too. After all: To live in Christ, to die would be a real gain, don't you think?

CHANT

The Lord is my light

Sung by St Martin's Voices

The Lord is my light. My light and salvation. In God I trust. In God I trust.

The Lord is my light. My light and salvation. In God I trust. In God I trust.

The Lord is my light. My light and salvation. In God I trust. In God I trust.

The Lord is my light. My light and salvation. In God I trust. In God I trust.

Taizé Chant

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Read by Katie Browne

A reading from the Letter to the Philippians, chapter one, verses 21 to end.

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well, since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

This is the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

Everyday Faith Testimony

Emily Richardson

Hi, I'm Emily and I work at All Saints, Fulham on the comms, which as you can imagine has been quite demanding of late.

I always counter myself though by saying I only work part time because I have never really had the bodily stamina for a normal 'nine to five', in fact some days in lockdown my office is my bed. So in this story Jesus tells about the workings of the vineyard, rather than lamenting the unfairness of those who've been working since the start of the day, I've always known either one of the late-comers doing a smaller share for the same wage. But rather than feel guilty about that, I've learnt to focus on the vineyard owner.

He pays the wage according to what he sees fit, his only demand is the willingness to work. It's to me a picture of grace. It's also interesting that the latecomers had not been asked by any other employers. All day they'd been overlooked, maybe judged on a perception of their productivity, so on my less productive days, and even on my most productive days it's always good to be reminded that I serve a God who isn't a clock watcher, or a bookkeeper, but a generous, gracious employer who works always according to the economy of grace.

CHANT

The Lord is my light

Sung by St Martin's Voices

The Lord is my light. My light and salvation. In God I trust. In God I trust.

The Lord is my light. My light and salvation. In God I trust. In God I trust.

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The Lord is my light. My light and salvation. In God I trust. In God I trust.

Taizé Chant

THE GOSPEL

Dramatised Reading by WAVE Church

The gospeller says

Parable of the workers in the vineyard, Matthew 20, verses one to sixteen read by members of WAVE church.

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a Denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace, doing nothing. He told them, "You also go out, work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. He went out again in the afternoon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing.

About five in the afternoon he went out and found others still standing around; he asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?", "Because no one has hired us." They answered. "You also go out and work in my vineyard."

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first." The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a Denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a Denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner, "Those who hired us worked only one hour they said, you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day." But he answered all of them, "I'm not being unfair to you friends, didn't you agree to work for the Denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give one who was hired the last, the same I gave you. Don't I have the right to do whatever I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I'm generous? So, the last will be the first, and the first will be the last.'

SERMON

Rev Zoe Heming

HYMN

Just as I am, without one plea

Recorded by St Martin's Voices from their homes

Just as I am, without one plea
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings within and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve:
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am (thy love unknown
has broken every barrier down),
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, of that free love
the breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Words: Charlotte Elliott (1789-1871)

Tune: Just as I am

Let us declare our faith in God.

**All: We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

PRAYERS

Written and recorded by Ian Grantham

Let us pray.

Unifying God, we pray for your Church, both hidden and visible, gathered online, in homes, and in churches throughout the world.

We give you thanks that the church is a place where broken, poor, and marginalised people can belong, and through loving acceptance of all our limitations, be a blessing and flourish as essential members of your Body.

As those called to know and share light and hope, help your people, during these challenging times in and out of many kinds of lockdown and isolation, to secure and protect the bridges and bonds which connect us and unite us, that all may fulfil your purposes for our lives as part of your family.

Lord, in your mercy,
All: receive our prayer.

Empowering God, we give you thanks for all the disabled people who belong to our church communities, for those who lead and minister, for those who struggle with barriers seen and unseen, and for those who speak of your love without saying a word. We bring before you today all people who long to belong but feel excluded.

We give thanks for those who are less mobile who teach us to be still; those who have experienced mental distress who teach us to hold on to an honest faith in you, and those who live with pain and teach us how to live with vulnerability.

Lord, in your mercy,
All: receive our prayer.

God of Justice and Peace, we give thanks for the beautifully diverse yet wounded and divided world in which we live. We ask for your peace to fall upon those places where there is war, terror, violence and injustice.

We hold before you all those who have been and continue to be injured or scarred, physically or mentally, by war, those who live with pain from their injuries and those who have been traumatised. We also pray for all those living without the safety, medical care, and social support which we take for granted.

Lord, in your mercy,
All: receive our prayer.

Gentle and compassionate God, who enters into and shares our human fragility, we pray for all those in our wider communities, amongst our families, our friends and our neighbours, who are vulnerable because of their disability. In a moment of solidarity, we hold out before you in prayer those who are exploited or abused, and all who struggle to cope.

We pray for all those who care for disabled family members, medics, nurses, social care staff, and those informal but equally important family carers, both young and old, who bravely surrender their own resources for the good of their loved ones.

Lord, in your mercy,
All: receive our prayer.

Loving God, we pray for all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit; for all who live with pain, fatigue, loss of faculties, or side effects from medication. We pray for those who have become disabled in later life, and who are struggling to come to terms with impairment. Lay your healing hand on all those who suffer, that they may know the wholeness which your presence with them can bring.

Lord, in your mercy,
All: receive our prayer.

Timeless God, we remember with thanksgiving all those who died before we were ready to let them go, and those who knew that their lifespan would be limited by disabling conditions. Give strength and hope to all who mourn for loved ones. We give thanks that in this life and the next, you offer healing and wholeness of life beyond all which limits us. Help all your children to rest in your eternal love and share the journey of life in all its fullness without fear.

Merciful parent, saviour, companion and friend, by your Spirit, unite our hearts, minds and souls to serve you with joy for ever, through the life, death and resurrection of Christ,

All: Amen.

COLLECT

(Anglican Church of New Zealand)

Our collect prayer for today comes from the Anglican Church of New Zealand.

Let us pray:

God of grace,
you are kind to all people, good beyond our understanding.
Help us to be grateful for what we have been given
and merciful and generous with our sisters and brothers.
Teach us the ways of your kingdom where the last will be first and the first will be last.
Through Jesus Christ our Liberator,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Led by Zoe Corney

Let us pray the prayer that unites us over 2000 years and across the globe, the Lord's Prayer:

**All: Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

ANTHEM

Prayer of St Patrick

Sung by St Martin's Voices

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.

Christ above me, Christ beneath me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Words: Saint Patrick's Breastplate, 5th century

Music: John Rutter

BLESSING

Rev Zoe Heming

As you go into this week, whatever it brings you in these changing times, may we not fear our limitations as individuals or as churches, may we discover gifts that we'd overlooked and through our lives together grow in faith, hope and love through being known and loved by God.

A prayer of blessing for us all:

The love of the Lord Jesus
draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen you for his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you, and those you pray for,
care for, miss and love this day and evermore.

All: Amen.

Last week I wrote a poem, it's called 'I am blessed'. Would you like to hear it? OK.

POEM

"I am Blessed".

By Peter Philips

I am Blessed. Above, my eyes can see a cumulus cloud,
My ears can hear the birdsong, it is so loud.
I am Blessed. My fingers can touch nature's leaves
I can feel the earth beneath it, and all that greaves.

I am Blessed. I can stroke our labrador, he smiles, and wags his tail.
I am Blessed. Sweett conversation on demand.
Silent times, when contemplation can be found.
I am Blessed. Universal happenings at my fingertips
World gossip, drama, scandal is on everyone's TV lips.

I am Blessed. I am able to see my future clear.
As I come to understand why my life's end may be so near.
I am Blessed. For I have been given gifts beyond compare
Now shortly, may be my time to float upon eternal Prayer.

*Peter Phillips
July 2020*

MAKATON UK BLESSING

With signers from across the UK.

Hiya, my name's Becky George, welcome to our Makaton UK Blessing.

The lord bless you and keep you, make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.
The Lord bless you, and keep you, make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

The lord bless you and keep you, make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

May his favour be upon you and a thousand generations and your family, and your children and their children and their children.
May his favour be upon you and a thousand generations and your family, and your children and their children and their children.
May his favour be upon you and a thousand generations and your family, and your children and their children and their children.
May his favour be upon you and a thousand generations and your family, and your children and their children and their children.

May his presence go before you and behind you and beside you, all around you, and within you, he is with you, he is with you.

In the morning, in the evening, in your coming and your going, in your weeping and rejoicing, he is for you, he is for you. He is for you. He is for you. He is for you. He is for you. He is for you. He is for you. He is for you.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

May his favour be upon you and a thousand generations and your family, and your children and their children and their children.

May his presence go before you and behind you and beside you all around you, and within you, he is with you, he is with you.

Acknowledgements

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