

Swaythling Parish

Sunday 17 May

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Welcome

Below is a service sheet for you to use for this week's Sunday morning service. This is based on a service that is being broadcast as a video on Sunday morning through the YouTube channel. It will be available on YouTube from 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it.

If do not have access to watch the YouTube video, we hope you will be able to use these words and join us too in spirit.

Normally on a Sunday morning when we walk into the building we would ask each other questions; *how are you? how was your week? how did your friend's birthday go?* and other things. That is not as easy right now. Once you have finished worshipping with us this morning, you might like to take a prompt and call someone, or message someone and find out how they are.

Greeting

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
And also with you.

Alleluia. Christ is Risen
He is Risen indeed. Alleluia

Prayer of Thanks

Perhaps it is easier to think right now about the things that we wish were different, but it is just as important, perhaps much more so to reflect on the things we have to be thankful for. I have heard so many people tell me about things they have really valued in these times. Let us spend a moment now to own those things.

For kindness we have received:

we thank you, Lord.

For those who have helped others:

we thank you, Lord.

For the chance to play our part in helping people through this time:

we thank you, Lord.

Ann Lewin

We will sing now, which is led on the video by Robin and Olivia. This is a hymn called "*Here in this place*". It speaks of place, not in terms of buildings, but of connection. We may feel very distant from the church buildings right now, but we can still feel fully connected to the family of God.

Hymn: Here in this place

I Here in this place, new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away.
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in - the lost and forsaken,
gather us in - the blind and the lame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2 We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
we are the old - who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in - the rich and the haughty,
gather us in - the proud and the strong.
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth.
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you.
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away,
but here in this place, the new light is shining;
now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in - and hold us forever,
gather us in - and make us your own.
Gather us in - all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Marty Haugen © 1982 GIA Publications

Let's reflect on that last verse and just think about God's radical love that genuinely gathers everybody – every single one of us – in.

*Not in the dark of buildings confining.
Not in some heaven, light years away
But here in this place, any place where Gods*

abounding love is found and shown, the new light is shining.

Now is the kingdom, and now is the day.

Gather us in, gather us in – all peoples together

Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

The Confession

One of the things about being physically together is that we can share the things we get wrong, the mistakes we make, although sometimes in reality we don't feel able to share our real battles with those around us, even when we are together. We can always though share these with God, in the knowledge of God's forgiving love.

Lord God, You raise us to new life in Christ, forgive us when we chose to live in our own strength.

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Christ, You are forgiveness and love and yet sometimes we fail to love ourselves and others.

Christ have mercy

Christ, have mercy

Lord Spirit, You lead us into new revelations, forgive us when we close our minds to your prompting.

Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy.

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.

Amen.

The Collect

Today's prayer, a prayer that is said all across the land and links to the readings, speaks of the call to follow God.

Risen Christ,
by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples:
help your Church to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen

Readings

Acts 17: 22-31

Paul, addressing a non-Jewish audience, tries to get them to see that the god who is unknown to them is the one he is talking about, whose credentials are shown by the resurrection of Jesus.

Read by Rachel in the video.

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven

and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps reach out to him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we too are his offspring."

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

For the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

John 14: 15-21

Jesus promises the aid of the Holy Spirit to those who love him and keep the commandments. Read by Judith/John in the video.

Read by John in the video.

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with

you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’

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

A Reflection from Rev Canon Bruce Hartnell

Let’s take a short walk together. Since it will be imaginary, we can keep quite close together. I shouldn’t want to lose any straggler in the historic centre of Athens. We’re heading for the Acropolis (where else?) but will not be climbing to the top if you have no hat or suncream with you. Our focus is a little West, to the left of the Parthenon, on a lower hill-top named after the Greek god of war, Ares. (The Romans called him Mars.) Mars Hill or, for Athenians Areopagus, was the name of the important Council that met there as well as the district.

Being a member of the Areopagus was a feather in anybody’s cap and it had been going for

donkeys’ years. Not that it had much real power. Athens has been famous for its great thinkers and one of the Council’s tasks these days is to check up on the teaching of philosophy being offered, with or without a fee, by people touting novel ideas. A new guy, called Paul, has an audition this morning. Let’s see how he gets on.

It’s plain to see that you Athenians take your religion seriously. When I arrived here the other day, I was fascinated with all the shrines I came across. And then I found one inscribed To the God nobody knows. I’m here to introduce you to this God so you can worship intelligently, know who you are dealing with.

Don’t know about you, but I thought that was an impressive start. Pick on something people recognize and there’s a good chance they’ll stick with you. He’s talking now about the God who made the world, Master of sky and land, far too big for shrines and temples even buildings as beautiful as Athena’s Parthenon over there.

‘God is so close’, he says, ‘to quote one of your Greek writers, We live and move in him. We can’t get away from him.’

He doesn’t lay guilt on the crowd but he certainly presents them with a challenge. ‘The unknown is now known and he is calling for a radical life-change.’

You could hear a pin drop. What’s it going to mean? He hasn’t even mentioned Jesus by name yet but he clearly means him when he speaks of someone destined to set everything to rights as God wants: his authority lies in the astonishing fact of God raising him from the dead.

That does it, of course. They all chip in, some wanting to know more, others taking him for a stand-up comic.

St Luke, in his adventure story, The Acts of the Apostles, likes to note the vast numbers of people joining up after events of this kind. Not today, I think, do you?

Well, we’d better get back. I hear by the way that a small number joined this new faith group, no names given for most of them, Damaris gave hers and Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus itself.

You and I have given our names as followers of Jesus’ Way, with uncounted millions of others since. Let’s walk close beside him and close to each other. That way we’ll never walk alone.

Amen

Before prayers you may like to take a moment to reflect on what Bruce shared. In the video Debbie will play some music while we reflect.

Prayers of Intercession

Read by Gwilym in the video

Let us pray to God

For all who are affected by coronavirus, through illness or isolation or anxiety, that they may find relief and recovery.

For those who are guiding our nation at this time and shaping our national policies, that they would make wise decisions.

For health professionals, care workers and medical researchers, that through their skills and insights many will be restored to health. For the vulnerable and the fearful, the gravely ill and the dying, that they would know your comfort and peace.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God. Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

When we meet in our church we take a collection for the work of the church every week. I never like asking for money, I am far more interested in people, and community and hope. And yet if we are to continue to reach out to people, to create community and to live out hope then we do need money. If you would like to give, then next week there will be details of a new online giving scheme, but in the meantime do email me and I can let you know the best way to give.

Our final hymn, led again on the video by Robin and Olivia is *Come Down, O Love divine*. I pray that God our comforter will draw near as we sing those words.

Hymn: Come down, O Love divine

- 1 Come down, O Love divine!
seek out this soul of mine
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.
- 2 There let it freely burn
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let your glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and make my pathway clear, by your illuming.
- 3 Let holy charity
my outward vesture be,
and lowliness become my inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart
which takes the humbler part,
and for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.
- 4 And so the yearning strong
with which the soul will long
shall far surpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace
till we become the place
in which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Jubilate Hymns version of *Discendi, amor santo Bianco da Siena* (fl. 1367 - 1434) adapted by Richard F Littledale (1833 - 1890) © Jubilate Hymns Ltd

I hope you find this service sheet a helpful way to connect with God and that it gives you a true sense of worshipping with others in the parish.

Closing Blessing

Blessed are the poor
For theirs is the kingdom of God
Blessed are the hungry
For they shall be filled
Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.
Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the merciful
For they shall be shown mercy.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they are the children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness and justice,
For great is their reward.

Words adapted from the Bible ©S Claiborne,
J Wilson- Hartgrove, E Okoro. 2001.

And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always.
Amen.

Thank you for joining in with us. If we can support you in any way, please get in touch. 023 8055 4231 peter.dockree@outlook.com

The Sunday Service Video will be on YouTube at 10am on Sunday. Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it.

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