



**Reflections & Prayers  
for Sunday 16 May 2021  
Easter 7**



**Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

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## Readings for this Sunday

***You may want to find your Bible and read the lessons set for this week***

Acts 1: 15-17, 21-end

Psalm 1

1 John 5: 9-13

**John 17: 6-19 Jesus prays for his disciples**

“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

## Reflection *from Anne Edwards*

Coming out of these months of Covid-19, with its lockdowns and social distancing, we, the Church, the body of Christ, need all the help we can get to discover God's plan for our future. How are we going to "be Church" after these long months when church doors have been locked shut. Unlike the disciples who were locked in the Upper Room, we've been locked out! And we've been able to meet only at a distance with the aid of our computers, laptops, ipads and smart phones, starved of the fellowship of worshipping and sharing Holy Communion together. Even now, with the church open for Sunday morning worship, Covid-19 rules apply.

Now the necessary rules and regulations that were designed to keep all safe from the horrendous vagaries of the virus are slowly being lifted and the question for the Church is "what next?" How do we respond to Jesus' last words to his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:19 & 20) and "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) How are we going to do that in Southdown?

For a start we can celebrate God's answer to our prayers for a new vicar as we look forward to the beginning of September when the Rev'd Tim Vickers, his wife Sophie and their sons, Jem and Laurie, arrive to join us!

Last Thursday was Ascension Day, the start of the season of "Thy Kingdom Come" when the global Church asks us to join this global wave of prayer, praying daily for five of our/your family and friends to come to know for themselves the love of God revealed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, His Son, and, believing, respond to that love that is "wide, wide as the ocean, high as the heavens above", as I used to sing in Sunday School over 70 years ago. I've often wondered who was praying for me as a child, as a teenager when I knelt by my bed one night and asked Jesus into my life – and in subsequent years. I'm sure my Grandmother was until I was in my mid-twenties when she died.

[www.thykingdomcome.global](http://www.thykingdomcome.global)

Today's Gospel reading is part of a prayer of Jesus' for his friends not long before his death. He knows that the disciples will face difficult and uncertain times. His prayer – his conversation with his Father – can help us to understand the breadth and potential of prayer – whatever our preferences – as something that informs and shapes everything that we are and everything that we do.

The Christian life is countercultural. What makes us different is our faith that Jesus came to earth to rescue us from evil, from sin and death, because he loves us so much. It is good to start each day remembering and reaffirming just how much Jesus loves us, and use that conviction as a stepping-stone for our choices throughout the day.

Today prayer is more necessary than ever. In Acts ch.1, the post Ascension chapter begins as the disciples pray for God's guidance to discover God's choice to replace Judas and join them in witnessing to all they had seen and discovered as they had followed Jesus during his three years of ministry on earth, discovering on the way who they believed and trusted he was. You may find the idea of them "casting lots" as bizarre, but we 'cast lots' when we vote, placing our cross on the voting paper, putting our hands up at a PCC meeting – and I hope that before we cast our lot in the decision-making process, we will have prayed for God's guidance.

In the passage of John's Gospel we have that amazing prayer of Jesus' after his last meal with his disciples, when Jesus prays to His Father on behalf of his disciples for them to have his joy, to be protected from the evil one, and to be united. And in the following verse 20 (not included in today's reading) Jesus prayed for us – we were being prayed for by him over 2,000 years ago!

Each of us has to start from scratch in developing our personal relationship with God through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Fortunately for us, God has done all the groundwork by demonstrating his love through Jesus. The Old Testament does give a set of rules, setting out God's perfect standard. But we all discover that following rules doesn't work. We need changed hearts. We don't get close to God by following rules, but when the Holy Spirit is at work within us and we open our hearts and minds, then we are changed. Our faith, our trust in Jesus rests on unassailable facts – the disciples experienced and lived with Jesus, they wrote their Gospels, Acts and letters, and the Church grew out of their telling of their experiences in the power of the Holy Spirit. The only way to describe all this is the "mystery of God", of which we get glimpses from time to time, and our faith and trust get stronger as we recognise them and learn to build on them.

In his first letter, John tells us again and again that God is love, that we are loved, that we are born of a God of love. In this passage from John's first letter, he reiterates that it is what they ... we ... believe about Jesus, about God that counts. The essence of the Christian faith is that Jesus is truly Christ, God's Son, and we are called to bear witness to that through our living and our speaking and our praying. So as we begin these days of "Thy Kingdom Come" accept the invitation to join in this global wave of prayer which began last Thursday, Ascension Day, 13<sup>th</sup> May. It's not too late to start now!

Covid-19 rules lessen tomorrow, perhaps you could take a 'prayer walk'!

The first time this was suggested to me, I had to ask "What do you mean?" It's a walk during which we keep our eyes and ears open – perhaps a young mother pushing a pram and loaded with shopping – a quick prayer for her to lighten her load. Someone struggling on crutches – a prayer for their steady recovery. Walking past a friend's house – a prayer for them and the family; past a business, a shop, a pub or café – a prayer for the restoration of their business after the long lockdown. Prayer for people on a train, on a bus, in cars, lorries – the staff and pupils as you walk past the school. Gardens – pray for creation! There is never no need for prayer – as we walk through our days, as Brother Lawrence put it: we need to practice the presence of God, and we can do just that every day.

## Prayers

### Collect for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter

God our redeemer,  
you have brought us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

Gracious God,  
we thank you for the enduring prayer of Jesus for his disciples  
which reaches and reassures us today as we walk in their footsteps,  
reminding us that we are not alone but protected, empowered, forgiven  
and surrounded by your grace every step of the way.

**Amen.**

Heavenly Father,  
we do not ask for escape from hardships that we know are part of life in this world.  
Rather we ask: protect us from evil, make us one in fellowship and love, and be with us  
through your Spirit.  
Show us your truth and guide us as daily we go into life in your name.

**Amen.**

God of hope, we pray today in changing seasons and the gifts they bring,  
produce full of flavour, crunch and goodness, earth and fresh, no two the same.  
In Your name we celebrate rain and sunshine, our struggles and successes great and small,  
a handful of peas or a glut of beans.  
We are glad and grateful,  
and pray now for our farmers at this Rogationtide  
of ploughing and seed sowing, the months of growth. Thank you.  
**Amen.**

### Parish Prayers for the week ahead

#### **In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	The Anglican Church of Korea
Monday	The Diocese of Butare – The Anglican Church of Rwanda
Tuesday	The Diocese of Butere – The Anglican Church of Kenya
Wednesday	The Diocese of Buye – The Anglican Church of Burundi
Thursday	The Diocese of Byumba – The Anglican Church of Rwanda
Friday	The Diocese of Calabar – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)
Saturday	The Diocese of Calcutta – The (united) Church of North India

#### **In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:**

Sunday	Parish of Brent Pelham (Deanery of Buntingford)
Monday	Parish of Bygrave (Deanery of Buntingford)
Tuesday	Parish of Clothall (Deanery of Buntingford)
Wednesday	Parish of Cottered (Deanery of Buntingford)
Thursday	Parish of Hinxworth (Deanery of Buntingford)
Friday	Parish of Hormead with Wyddial (Deanery of Buntingford)
Saturday	Parish of Kelshall (Deanery of Buntingford)

#### **For the homes and families in:**

Sunday	The Deerings, Dellcroft Way
Monday	Dickinsons Field, East Common
Tuesday	Eastcote Drive, Eastmoor Park
Wednesday	Ennis Close, Fairmead Avenue
Thursday	Fairway Close, Field Close
Friday	Fovant Close, Gordon's Walk
Saturday	Gorselands, Grange Court Road

### **The Sick:**

Amy, Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

### **For the recently deceased:**

John Drysdale

### **On their year's mind:**

Joyce Cottrell, Martin Smith, John Nanson, Jean Stephen, Ronald Gardner, Angela Robinson, Willian Boon, Muriel Newby,

## Church Opening times

### Other services / in Church congregation

- Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 5.00pm
- Sunday 9.30am Parish Eucharist
- Short family service on Sundays 16 May, 20 June & 18 July at 4.00pm

### Private Prayer

- Saturday opening (in addition to Sunday), 11.00am – 4.00pm

### A reminder... of this phone service:

**Daily Hope** – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

### Church at home:

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Tel: 712776).

