

Parish of Central Exeter

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion
19th Sunday after Trinity 18th October 2020

St Luke's Day

Welcome everyone.

There will be a service in St Stephen's this morning, but recognising that because of the recent spike in Covid 19 cases in Exeter, not everyone will wish to attend, we have included Morning Worship using or based around material supplied by Revd Charles Edwards for today.



Today is also the feast of St Luke, doctor, gospel-writer, historian, evangelist, friend and travelling companion of St Paul. His symbol is an ox.

Preparation

The Lord is here.
God's Spirit is with us

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden;
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your Holy Name,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gathering Hymn

'Here I am Lord' sung at Hexham Abbey. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SHlrS6pMG4>

Confession and Absolution

Jesus talked about the beam or plank in our eye which prevents us seeing the obvious.
Today we tend to use the phrase 'the elephant in the room.'

So take a few moments to reflect over what elephants are in your room.

Lord have mercy; Lord have mercy; Lord have mercy.

Another phrase you may have heard is 'Britannia waives the rules.'

So take a few moments to reflect about when you do things that are right for you rather than everyone else.

Christ have mercy; Christ have mercy; Christ have mercy.

Finally remember the prayer of Alcoholics Anonymous,
*God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and the Wisdom to know the difference.*

Lord have mercy; Lord have mercy; Lord have mercy.

Say aloud:

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins
and the bondage of their guilt,
heal and strengthen us with the Holy Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

A collect for St Luke

Health giving God,
you called Luke the doctor,
in companionship and distress,
to be an evangelist, historian and physician of the soul;

by the grace of the Holy Spirit,
and through the wholesome medicine of his Gospel,
give your Church today the same love and power to heal;
we ask this in the name of our holistic Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Worship song

We hear 'For the healing of the nations', sung by the choir of the city church of Milton Keynes. The words are on the screen, but no pictures.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i19LqSpPxmo>

Reading Luke 10.1-11,16-18 & 20 from the New Jerusalem Bible

The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, "The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to do his harvesting.

Start off now, but look, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse with you, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road.

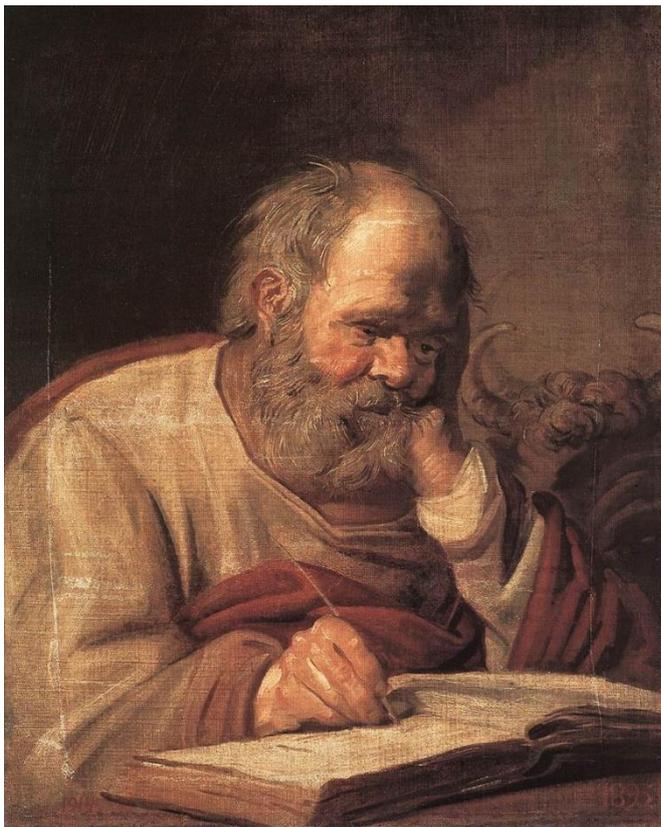
Whatever house you enter, let your first words be 'peace to this house' and if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house.

Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is put before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, 'the kingdom of God is very near to you'.

But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into the streets and say, 'We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near.'

Anyone who listens to you, listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me, and those who reject me reject the one who sent me."

The seventy-two came back rejoicing. "Lord" they said, "even the devils submit to us when we use your name." He said to them, "I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven." Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven."



St Luke Frans Hals 1625

*Museum of Western European and
Oriental Art, Odessa, Ukraine.*

Reflection

In Luke's narrative, Jesus has just begun his long journey from Samaria in the north (Chapter 9.51) with his extended company of friends, to Jerusalem, which they don't reach until Chapter 19, so in Luke's symbolic sense, the final tragedy and triumph has already begun.

Today's passage is part of what's often called "Luke's special section, where many of Jesus' words and deeds are also in Matthew and Mark but in a different order and setting. Here Jesus dispatches 70 or 72 (ancient manuscripts differ) to go ahead of him. These figures symbolise the traditional number of Gentile nations (see Genesis 10), and the number of Moses' appointed elders who share his ministry (Exodus 24.8-9).

Jesus must have had lots of friends, probably not with him all the time, but we know specifically of "The Twelve" – symbolic of the tribes of Israel, meaning all Jews everywhere. So, for Luke, and especially for Matthew who writes specifically for Jews, Jesus is a new Moses with God's message of delivery from slavery, this time out of bondage to Torah for Israel and freedom for the entire Jewish and Gentile world – symbolically from Luke 1 to Acts 28 which begins in Nazareth and ends in Rome. We could pause here to consider our own slavishness today – in both directions.

Here, this larger crowd are sent, not to arrange lodgings for Jesus and the Twelve, but to prepare people to receive Jesus' teaching.

They must travel light and in haste while the brief opportunity lasts, wasting no time on people who won't listen, and ignoring any Kosher food rules. The new kingdom of God's unrestrictive love isn't just coming soon; it's already here, and physical and spiritual illness-curing and peace-bringing are its results.

The Gospel-writers' words of Jesus say that this kingdom is a reign of peace to those who accept it, and of only suffering to those who won't.

Professor G.B.Caird writes; "The judgement of Jesus is pronounced for and against whole towns and cities, which implies that he is now looking for a corporate rather than an individual response to the gospel message. He has come to recall Israel to her true vocation as the holy people of God, and the cities of Israel must choose between his way of humble, self-denying service, and the other way of defiant and contemptuous nationalism."

In the messengers' absence, Jesus' dream of the fall of Satan from heaven is a symbol of how God's new kingdom of love delivers people from evil and guilt, in both earthly reality and eternal meaning.

G.B.Caird again: "The ultimate triumph of the kingdom is assured, but the individual servant of that kingdom must be content. . . . to leave results in the hands of (others and) God. For even the defeat of evil (Satan) is not an end in itself; it is the removal of obstacles to God's purpose of creating people fit for this heavenly kingdom, in which the disciples are already enrolled as citizens."

The Christian faith with its credibility, and the authenticity of our own commitment to it, is assessed by others only in relation to how closely our words match our attitudes and deeds. Carelessness and apathy, selfishness and cruelty of both Church and Christian, however unconscious, impair our witness to what we say we proclaim.

In our contemporary atmosphere of overt and covert competing ideologies for supremacy, be they sacred-religious or secular-worldly, our Christian proclamation is, therefore, an urgent and full-time occupation and ministry for all of us, amongst families, friends and strangers, including those who vehemently disagree with us.

Love is the only key that can unlock our potential in helping to bring in the true reign of God.

Creed

We believe in God,
who has created, is creating, and will always create,
who is with us in Jesus to reconcile, and to make all things new.
We proclaim Jesus the Christ,
born a human, crucified, dead and risen, who calls us friends,
and invites us to love and serve others.
We trust the Holy Spirit
who empowers us to seek justice and to resist evil;
our judge and our hope, in life, in death and in all eternity.
God is with us and in us, and we are never alone.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Intercessions

Eternal God our maker,
you create us by your power, and redeem us by your love;
as we pray, guide and strengthen us by your Spirit,
that we may give ourselves in love and service,
to one another and to you; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bring before God things to be thankful for in the world at large.....

Gracious God, in your kindness, Hear our prayer.

Bring before God international, national and regional leaders and situations....

Gracious God, in your kindness, Hear our prayer.

Bring before God "the whole state of Christ's Church" universal, ecumenical, Anglican, diocesan, local.....

Gracious God, in your kindness, Hear our prayer.

Bring before God families, friends, colleagues, local people and issues, ill, lonely, bereaved, anxious and fearful people. Don't forget at the end to pray for yourself.

Gracious God, in your kindness, Hear our prayer.

Finish the Intercessions with your chosen version of the Lord's Prayer.

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.



A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to 'I pray you Lord Jesus', a prayer of St Bede, set to music by Nigel and sung by St David's virtual choir. Words are on the screen.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIHDYMajN4E&list=PLqBLixTy9an7geXqCsL903tgRBAAd7GYHF&index=2>



Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Lord, we pray that your grace
may always precede and follow us,
and make us continually to be given to all good works;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Commissioning and blessing

Author of all,
We give you thanks and praise that when we are still far off
you meet us in your Son, and bring us home.
Dying and living he declares your love, gives us grace,
and opens the gate of glory.
Keep us firm in the hope you set before us,
so we and all your children shall be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name:
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May God bless the world in which you move,
and bless your home and bless your friends.
May God bless the eyes with which you see,
and bless the ears with which you listen.
May God bless the way you use your hands,
bless the way you employ your tongues. *(From a Celtic prayer)*

Closing Hymn

We close with 'Forth in they name O Lord I go.' Words by Charles Wesley and music by Orlando Gibbons. It is sung here during lockdown by members of the Choir of Grimsby Minster.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGDSkqgGA7I>



Scroll down for Coffee Break

Coffee Break

Our thanks to Viv for this piece.

As usual, Steve went to bed early on Sunday so that he could sit in bed and catch up on the news in the paper but gradually sleep had overtaken him.

Then suddenly, he jumped awake. Someone else was in the room - she was leaning over him blowing gently on his cheek. 'Who are you?' he cried, 'how did you get in?'

'You've heard of your fairy godmother?' She answered playfully, 'You? You're my fairy godmother?' Steve asked in disbelief. 'Not quite. I'm your fairy devil-mother,' she smiled wickedly. Steve looked at her carefully. She wore a scarlet cat-suit, with two horn like bumps on top of her head, and some sort of tail hanging behind her.

'If that's who you are, I know God will protect me,' said Steve in what he hoped was a strong voice but which he suspected was a squeak.

The scarlet apparition casually picked up the newspaper from where it had fallen on the floor and began to read from it. 'Man dies falling from a ladder. Leukaemia girl loses battle for life. Woman killed by drunk driver. Your God isn't doing too well protecting those people is he?'

Steve desperately tried to think. 'Well' he said 'these things happen because God gave us free will. We couldn't live in a world where nothing bad can happen.'

'Why not?' retorted his devil-mother. 'It sounds like exactly the sort of world you 'd want.'

'Er, well, it would make nonsense of our lives. If a fall didn't kill us, we'd be jumping off tall buildings to get down to the ground quicker. There have to be consequences for our actions.'

'What about cancer and malaria?' taunted the visitor. 'He didn't need to make those, did he?'

'We've evolved with the life around us', countered Steve. 'God gave us the science and understanding to conquer such things. We would probably have wiped out cancer if we'd put more money and effort into research. So what God wants is people who reflect His love and care and help others to deal with whatever suffering they face.'

'Oh, that's what you always do is it?'

Steve paused, then answered honestly. 'Well, no, no I don't but I tell you what, I'm going to start and I can't do it right now, but I'm going to start tomorrow!' The red woman began to laugh gleefully. 'Now you're talking my language! Let's start tomorrow! Let's always start tomorrow!' And with the shrieks of laughter echoing in his ears, Steve woke up.

He sat up with a start. 'Tomorrow' he thought, 'what's wrong with tomorrow?' And then he realised. Tomorrow is always in the future. He needed to do something right now. Outside it was already light: a new day had begun. What was he going to do that day to pass God's love on to his fellow humans?

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.
Deuteronomy 6 v 5

Scroll down for Evening Prayer

Evening Prayer
19th Sunday after Trinity 18 October 2020

Welcome everyone.

*This evening we follow the next episode in Matthew's Gospel:
the question about paying taxes to Caesar.*

Preparation

Father God,
We rest in you.

Jesus the Son,
We rest in you.

Holy Spirit,
We rest in you.

Silence

Loving Father,
for the things this day that have brought us joy,
We give you thanks.

Healing Lord,
for the things this day that have brought us sorrow,
Bring peace.

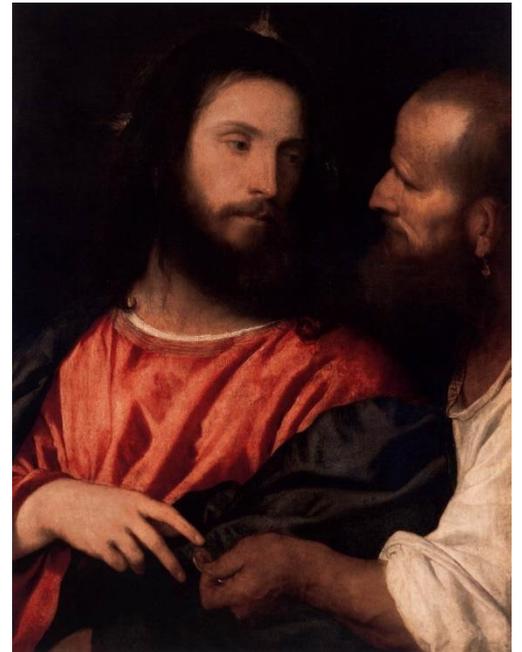
Spirit of life,
in the closing of this day,
Give us rest.

(From Josh Walker, in "Sunday Evening Prayer," posted on Lighting Beacons. <http://lighting-beacons-liturgy.com/>)

Opening Statement

We are called to be people of faith in the midst of the world,
and so we mix our worship and our work,
our faith and our life.

We gather here as people who live in the world and yet,
we gather as people who have been called to see the world
from a different viewpoint.



'The Tribute Money' by Titian, 1516.

Gemäldegalerie Dresden.

(The patron commissioning this painting owed allegiance both to the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor.)

God has called us together,
God has called us to be part of a community.

God challenges us to consider questions of priority
as we engage with the world.

In this time together,
may God open our hearts, minds and eyes,
allowing us to see deeper,
helping us to live in the world
while still offering a challenge to the ways of the world.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

(posted by Rev Gord on his blog, Worship Offerings. <http://worshipofferings.blogspot.ca/>)

Opening hymn

'O for a thousand tongues to sing' by Charles Wesley.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-dEfz6Vms>

Prayer for Forgiveness

We gather as people on a journey.
We believe and we have doubts,
we do good and we sin.
We are imperfect humans,
and still beloved by God.

Love and grace. Hope and faith.
These are the essence of the one we call God.

We seek forgiveness and grace from
the One and from those we've harmed.

Assurance

Assured of that grace,
we are ready to grow again.
We yearn for a new way,
a new perspective,
and a clear path.
Though we are full of trust
and full of doubt, we are here.

Speak to us, God!
Continue creating us!
Inspire our hearts.
Enlighten our minds.
Guide our actions. Amen.

(Tim Graves, posted on LiturgyBits. <https://liturgybits>)



The Lord's prayer

Our Father and Mother
who are in all the earth
holy is your truth.
May your wisdom come,
your circle be one uniting heaven and earth.
Give us today a nurturing spirit,
heal through us as we ourselves are healed.
Lead us into Fullness of life,
and liberate all that is good.
For the Wisdom, Presence and the Goodness are Yours
now and forever Amen.

(Adapted from a format used by a group of Dominican Sisters at a retreat in Kansas in 1993)

Old Testament Reading

The reading appointed for today is Isaiah 45 vv 1, 4-6

45 "The Lord has chosen Cyrus* to be king!
He has appointed him to conquer nations;
He sends him to strip them of their power;
The Lord will open the gates of cities for him.

⁴ I will appoint you to help my servant Israel,
the people that I have chosen.
I have given you great honour
although you do not know me.

⁵ I am the Lord; there is no other god.
I will give you the strength you need,
Although you do not know me.

⁶ I do this so that everyone
From one end of the world to the other
May know that I am the Lord
And that there is no other god.



* Cyrus the Great (c600-530 BC) is the King of Persia and reigns for about 30 years. He is acclaimed in the Bible for allowing the Jews in captivity in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. At that time his empire was the largest ever known in the world.

New Testament Reading Matthew 22: 15-22 NIV

15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?”

¹⁸ But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

²¹ “Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

²² When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

* The imperial tax was levied on the Roman Empire’s subject people. Although Luke gets the chronology wrong, the census in his nativity account was undertaken by Quirinius as Governor to determine who should be paying this tax. It was a poll tax of one denarius and had to be paid using Roman coinage.



A silver denarius of Tiberius, emperor at the time of this story.

The inscription on the obverse (Caesar’s head) reads from bottom right upwards: Ti(berius) Caesar Divi Aug(usti) F(ilius) Augustus. Our word order is different, so it translates best as Tiberius Augustus Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.

On the reverse: Pontif(ex) Maxim(us) (High Priest) The image may be of Tiberius’s mother Livia, represented as Pax (Peace).

Interestingly all Tiberius’s denarii were minted in just one place: Lugdunum, modern Lyon.

Reflection

There were many different coins circulating in Judea at the time, but the Roman Poll Tax of one denarius had to be paid in Roman coin. The denarius was indeed the emperor's property: he used it to pay his soldiers, officials, and suppliers. The coin's inscription makes clear his authority not just as head of state, but also through his divine nature, and his role as chief priest of the Roman state religion. Its use was a constant reminder to all the Jewish people that they were the subjects of the Roman Empire.

In the Hebrew faith everything rightfully belonged to God. In Roman law the emperor likewise claimed everything ultimately belonged to him. As stated like that, the two are mutually exclusive.

Jesus is faced with a dilemma. If he says that it is lawful to pay the tax, he would have been seen as a collaborator with the Roman occupiers and would alienate the people who had just proclaimed him a king, and present himself as undermining Jewish religious belief. If Jesus says that the tax is illegitimate, he risks being branded a political criminal and incurring the wrath of Rome. Jesus seems trapped. With either answer, someone would have been likely to kill him.

Let's look at the way Jesus responds. He does not produce a coin himself but asks his questioners to produce one. This meeting is quite possibly taking place in the precincts of the Temple. The mere fact that they can produce one, in the place where God is worshipped, bearing the image of the 'divine' Tiberius, is an action that demonstrates their complicity with the Roman state and their repudiation of the commandment about graven images. His question whose is this image and superscription would have reminded his questioners of their belief that God demanded exclusive allegiance of his people. This is yet another exposure of hypocrisy amongst the religious leaders, and the contrived nature of their question. Their mumbled short answer reveals their embarrassment.

But Jesus does go on to give an answer himself, though not to the question as posed. It is indeed a brilliant and memorable response, but it carefully does not define exactly what is Caesar's and what is God's.

This has led to many different interpretations including:

- this justifies a clear division between church and state.
- We should pay taxes to the authorities.
- We should not pay taxes to the authorities.
- Give a penny to the state, and give everything else to God.

Perhaps we need to stop seeing this as an either...or situation. To survive as a human being requires some level of dependence on other people, and as time has gone by that has led to us becoming part of a society within some sort of state. We have obligations to each other and to our wider society. The way we understand these obligations is shaped by many factors including any religious or spiritual beliefs we might have. There are times when what we believe is the right thing to do is in keeping with society practice or state policy, other times when it is not, and you can add to that your fifty shades of grey in between.

I think Jesus has very deliberately refused to see the Kingdom of God as opposite or hostile to the kingdoms of humankind. They could actually work together in harmony. The Old Testament reading for today presents Cyrus the non-Jewish king of Persia as being God's chosen instrument to release the Jewish people captive in Babylon and restore the nation of Israel. God's purposes can be achieved in many ways. Not everything can be achieved by throwing money at the situation. Paying our obligations both to Caesar and to God are part of this, but Caesar and God use different coinage.

We listen to a song

'Nothing can come between us and the Love of God' - a Taizé chant.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQInYSKIR_c&t=68s

Affirmation of Faith

We believe
Faith demands choice.
By the grace of Christ, we can choose.

We choose to believe
that light is better than darkness,
sharing is better than hoarding,
truth is better than deceit,
mercy is better than revenge,
love is better than indifference,
God is stronger than chaos.

We choose to have faith in the God who is love
and choice will verify itself
on the long and narrow road of life.

By grace, we choose to choose faith.
Thanks be to God!

(from Bruce Prewer's Home Page. <http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C60sun31.htm>)

Meditation

Has God's face
ever been on a coin?
We are the coin
that bears the living likeness of God.
Giving of ourselves
with whatever that may include,
is the only legal currency
of the kingdom of heaven.

(from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa: New Zealand)



Prayer for Others during Pandemic

In this time of COVID-19, we pray:
When we aren't sure, God,
help us be calm;
when information comes
from all sides, correct and not,
help us to discern;
when fear makes it hard to breathe,
and anxiety seems to be the order of the day,
slow us down, God;
help us to reach out with our hearts,
when we can't touch with our hands;
help us to be socially connected,
when we have to be socially distant;
help us to love as perfectly as we can,
knowing that "perfect love casts out all fear."

We pray for all those working in hospitals and care homes,
for the researchers and investigators,
for those who are sick,
and those who are grieving,
for all who are affected,
all around the world...
we pray
for safety,
for health,
for wholeness.

May we do all that we can
To keep others safe
and to heal —
in spite of the epidemic,
in spite of the fear.

Help us, O God,
that we might help each other.

In the love of the Creator,
in the name of the Healer,
in the life of the Holy Spirit that is in all and with all,
Amen

(Adapted from a prayer by the Right Rev. Richard Bott. Posted on the United Church of Canada website.)



Commission and Blessing

Go now as those who have found favour in the sight of God.
Be imitators of Jesus Christ
and an example to all of the life of faith.
To the world in which you live, give your love and service,
and to God, give all that you are and all that you shall be.

And may the glory of God's goodness be revealed to you;
May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ take root in you;
And may the inspiration of the Holy Spirit fill you with joy.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Christ. Amen.

(© 2002 Nathan Nettleton LaughingBird.net)

Reflective music

'The day thou gavest Lord, is ended', sung by the choir of the Abbey School, Tewkesbury.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pigh8VHr-ZE>

Thanks

To Charles for the liturgy and reflections this morning, Nigel for the communion music, and to Viv for material in Coffee Break.

