

**St Peter's Wolvercote & All Saints Wytham
Fifth Sunday of Easter 10 May 2020**

Dear Friends

I imagine we all have very mixed feelings about the current situation we are in - some relief that things are now getting better yet concerned that it has been a lot worse than we had hoped. And the novelty of staying at home will certainly be wearing off by now, especially for those who live by themselves.

We are grateful to William Whyte for giving us our sermon for this Sunday, reflecting on our Sunday readings and what they say to us in our present situation.

Meanwhile please don't forget it is Christian Aid Week - a time to look outward to the needs of poorer parts of the world as they face the threat of the coronavirus. Again, a reminder that if you would like to give towards their work, then please do so directly via their website or the phone number they have given us. And do pray for the poorer parts of the world, especially for refugees and slum dwellers, that they may be protected from the worst effects of the coronavirus.

With love and prayers
Charles

Hymn: Beauty for Brokenness.

1 Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

*Chorus: God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame*

2 Refuge from cruel wars
Havens from fear
Cities for sanctuary
Freedoms to share
Peace to the killing-fields
Scorched earth to green
Christ for the bitterness
His cross for the pain

3 Rest for the ravaged earth
Oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned
Our future, our dreams
Lord, end our madness
Carelessness, greed
Make us content with
The things that we need

4 Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise

5 Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsman
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

Holy Communion in the Easter Season

The Lord be with you
All and also with you

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

May the God of love and power
forgive *you* and free *you* from *your* sins,
heal and strengthen *you* by his Spirit,
and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Collect

Let us pray

Risen Christ, your wounds declare your love for the world and the wonder of your risen life: give us compassion and courage to risk ourselves for those we serve, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen

Acts 7.55-60

Standing before the high priest and the council, ⁵⁵Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

For the gift of the Word

Thanks be to God.

1 Peter 2.2-10

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation – ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.' ⁷To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner', ⁸and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

For the gift of the Word

Thanks be to God.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John 14.1-14

Glorify to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples: ¹'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.' ⁵Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' ⁶Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' ⁸Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' ⁹Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon prepared by Revd William Whyte

This morning's readings are almost too full of stuff. In Acts, we encounter the martyrdom of Stephen: the first martyr for the faith, stoned to death for his belief. In 1 Peter we encounter a different sort of stone, as we are called on as Christians to become 'living stones, built into a spiritual house.'

And then we come to today's Gospel, a passage that starts with houses, and Jesus' promise that 'In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.' But the passage goes on to even bigger themes, as the disciples ask him will they see God; how they will find their way to the Father. And Jesus teaches them two critical lessons. First, that they will come to God through him. Second, that they themselves will become the vehicles – the medium – by which other people will come to him and through him to God.

There's a lot here – a whole lot, as they say, going on. So, what are we to make of all this meaning? It seems an important question, especially as we enter yet another week of lockdown. Another week in which most of us will stay at home and some of us will be going out to serve the sick and the wider community. A week in which yet others may fall ill, may even die; yet others will worry and others will mourn. A week so like last week and yet so unlike all the other weeks we lived through before COVID-19 came.

I'm greatly struck by the words with which our Gospel closes – and I'm struck by them because they seem the hardest to deal with here and now. They are the most challenging, the most difficult to reconcile with our current situation. *'Believe me,'* Jesus says, *"That I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, in fact will do greater works than these ... If in my name you ask me for anything I will do it."*

At a time of general crisis, of sickness, of suffering and of death; a time in which our usual world has been turned upside down and our churches closed, it's quite hard to read these words. It's certainly challenging to hear that the one who believes will be able to ask for anything – and that, if the believer asks, it will be done.

Why, you might well ask, can't we just ask – and then end all this? Shouldn't our faith, our prayers overcome suffering and sickness and death? What are we doing, whether out in the world or staying locked down at home? Why aren't we miraculously solving all these problems? Are we failing? Failing to believe enough? Failing to pray enough? A general anxiety at the best of times, it's hard not to feel it particularly acutely today.

And doubtless we should pray more. Doubtless we could have more faith. But not, I think because we should expect to be rewarded for it. Prayer – even the most serious, fervent, faithful prayer shouldn't ever be understood as a sort of quick fix to all our problems.

If we return to our Gospel, we'll see that what Jesus calls 'works' – the healings, the teachings, the miracles – were not, for him, an end in themselves. They served another purpose. They were signs of the kingdom, glimpses of God. And they were, of course, secondary to the real thing: Jesus himself.

Works, too, are not the important part of his message: his disciples are. In his absence, it is they who provide the best evidence of God's love, the literal embodiment of God's continued presence with his people.

That's what we encounter when reading the story of Stephen's martyrdom. He, too, embodies and shows God's love – not through miracles but through self-sacrifice. And that's of course what our reading from 1 Peter also speaks of: a church not made of doing, but of being; a church in which each member shines with the marvellous light of God.

And that's surely what we are being called to do and to be here and now. It may not sound heroic, and it's certainly not the stuff of myth or legend. But, in the midst of this darkness we are called on as Christians to embody in our everyday lives the proof – the evidence – that this is not it; that there is something more, something better. We are called to live our lives as proof that hope and love will ultimately fill the world. Let us pray for the courage to do that, to be that. Let us pray that we will build up and to embody the Kingdom of God.

The Intercessions - prepared this week by Peter Bridges.

Let us pray for the church and for the world and let us thank God for his goodness.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you promised through your son, Jesus Christ, to hear us when we pray in faith.

We give thanks for the worldwide church and pray for its peace and unity. Remembering especially fellow Christians facing hostility and persecution. In the Deanery we pray for the parishes of Kidlington with Hampton Poyle, North Hinksey, Botley with St Frideswide and Binsey, St Aldate and St Andrew. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

Lord, bless and guide Elizabeth our Queen and direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and of peace, that people may honour one another and seek the common good. We pray that all International leaders may work for a just and lasting peace in all countries and territories where war is being waged whether declared or not. We pray for those

facing homelessness and famine as a result. For victims of state sponsored violence or terrorist activity. For Refugees and Asylum seekers. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

We pray for our Prime Minister, Cabinet, Parliament and all Healthcare workers and Researchers dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Also those who are ill and the family members caring for them. Those with livelihoods and income which are threatened by the outbreak and all living in uncertainty and loneliness. We pray for wise decisions, increased compassion and recognition that all who are affected share a common humanity as children of the one God. We offer this prayer in the confidence that your perfect love casts out fear. "Do not look forward to what might happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you to-day, will care for you tomorrow and every day. Either he will shield you from suffering or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings" St Francis de Sales. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

Lord, give grace to us, our families and friends, and to all our neighbours, that we may serve one another, and love as he loves us. We give thanks for our local community with its opportunities for friendship and service, praying for those who live in Church Lane, Millway Close, Godstow Road, Churchill Place, Goose Green Close, Webbs Close, Millstream Court and the CALA homes on the Mill site. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

Lord, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind and spirit. We especially remember those who have asked for our prayers: Margaret Williams, Jenny Gerrard, Trixie Collier, Ray Voss, Marion Boulton, Vicki Shepstone, John Waugh, Margaret Ewert, Jean Tuffley, Charmaine Anderson, Lyn Dean, Gordon Killie and his wife, Jane, and children Charlie and Isabella. Gordon Murray, Ian Kennedy, Andrew Hosier, James Bastin, Holly. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

We remember those who have recently died: Tim Bravington, Leonard Trafford, all who have died as a result of COVID-19, and we pray for their families and friends. We pray for those whose year's mind occurs this week: Ethel Rogers, Michael Gover, Wilf Godwin ('young Wilf'), Irene Purry and Les Waine. According to your promises grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.**

We commemorate this week: Gregory Dix, Priest, Monk, Scholar, 1952; Mathias the Apostle; Caroline Chisholm, Social Reformer, 1877.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of St Peter and of all your Saints we commend ourselves and all people to your unfailing love.

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

The Peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said,

'Peace be with you.'

Then were they glad when they saw the Lord.

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you

All and also with you.

The Lord is here.

All His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Almighty God, good Father to us all,
your face is turned towards your world.

In love you gave us Jesus your Son
to rescue us from sin and death.

Your Word goes out to call us home to the city where
angels sing your praise.

We join with them in heaven's song:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Father of all, we give you thanks for every gift that
comes from heaven.

To the darkness Jesus came as your light.

With signs of faith and words of hope

he touched untouchables with love and washed the
guilty clean.

This is his story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

The crowds came out to see your Son, yet at the end
they turned on him.

On the night he was betrayed

he came to table with his friends to celebrate the
freedom of your people.

This is his story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Jesus blessed you, Father, for the food;
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:
This is my body, given for you all.

Jesus then gave thanks for the wine;
he took the cup, gave it and said:
This is my blood, shed for you all for the forgiveness of
sins.

Do this in remembrance of me.

This is our story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Therefore, Father, with this bread and this cup
we celebrate the cross
on which he died to set us free.
Defying death he rose again
and is alive with you to plead for us and all the world.
This is our story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Send your Spirit on us now
that by these gifts we may feed on Christ with opened
eyes and hearts on fire.

May we and all who share this food
offer ourselves to live for you
and be welcomed at your feast in heaven where all
creation worships you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Alleluia. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

All Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

We invite you to join in at home with this prayer:

**Lord Jesus Christ, since I cannot at this time receive
communion, I pray you to come into my heart. I unite
myself with you and embrace you with all my heart,
my soul, and my mind. Let nothing separate me from
you; let me serve you in this life until, by your grace, I
come to your glorious kingdom and unending peace.
Amen.**

Post Communion Prayer

Let us pray
Eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:
grant us to walk in his way,
to rejoice in his truth,
and to share his risen life;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Blessing

God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The Dismissal

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

Hymn: Make me a Channel of your Peace
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2svZhZT6Pro>

1 Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love,
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

2 Oh Master, grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,

To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul

3 Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy

4 Oh Master, grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul

5 Make me a channel of your peace,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned

In giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

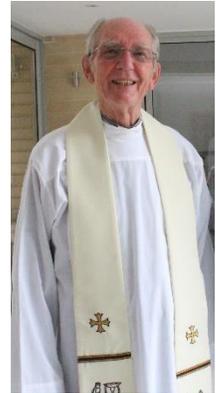
6 Oh Master, grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood, as to understand,
To be loved, as to love with all my soul

Revd Tim Bravington RIP

Last Saturday morning was sunlit as we placed Tim's ashes in St Peter's Garden of Remembrance. It was a small group of Rosemary, Desmond and Helen.

We were conscious of prayers around the world as Rosemary had sent a copy of the Order of Service to Tim's wider family and friends who had promised to pray with us at the exact time. Other local clergy were doing the same. It was a privilege to be with Tim and the family and we were all delighted in the beauty of the Garden. Thank you all for your prayers.

Shei



Leonard Trafford "SLOG"

Leonard Trafford, known as Slog, of Wolvercote, passed away peacefully at home with his family by his side on 17th March 2020 aged 83 years.

Husband of the late Gladys. Dad of Julie, Jon, and Sarah. Gramp and great gramp. He will be sadly missed by all his family and friends. The funeral cortege will leave from Godstow Road, Wolvercote on Thursday 14th May at 12.30pm and travel through the village to Wolvercote Cemetery for a private service.

All those wishing to pay their respects may stand along the roadside as Slog makes his final journey. Flowers welcome. There will be a truck parked at Godstow Road for any floral tributes. Donations if desired for Battersea Dogs Home may be sent c/o C.S. Boswell Independent Funeral Services, 364 Banbury Road, Summertown, OX2 7PP

"V8 FOREVER"

Please pray for Shei as she liaises with the family to plan a fitting graveside burial service for Leonard (Slog).

Diocese of Oxford Church at Home & Christian Aid Week

This Sunday's diocesan service marks the start of Christian Aid Week and VE Day. There is an opportunity to donate to Christian Aid after the service; come prepared! You'll find details here: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/coronavirus-covid-19/livestream/>. You can participate at 10am or later. This week Bishop Steven will preside, and we'll hear a reflection from the new Archdeacon of Oxford, the Venerable Jonathan Chaffey CB.

Those unable to watch online may call 01865 920930 to participate by telephone. You can either listen to the full service with worship and the Eucharist, or a shorter version without. Once an option is selected, there will be a few seconds of silence before the service starts. Standard call rates apply.

NOTICES

A gradual easing of restrictions on our buildings and activities

Bishop Steven has written to all clergy and wardens with news of a gradual easing of restrictions on our buildings and activities *while keeping our buildings closed*, and also a return to the normal arrangement of charging for all funerals in accordance with the established charges.

Next e-newsletter Wed 13 May. Contributions to tel: 01865 559316

The Quarterly submission deadline Sun 17 May. Contributions to Ann Stedman, Michael Daniell or John Harding.

The Flying Goose copy deadline Wed 20 May Contact Stephen Drew 01865 554352, to reserve space.