

Dear Friends

'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.' (Psalm 46.1, NIV)

I had been looking forward to bringing our two churches together on Sunday 29th March to jointly worship but sadly that is not now possible. The current pandemic restrictions have meant that our daily routines have had to be placed on hold as we stay at home as required by the States of Guernsey. It has even been necessary to close our church buildings and keep them locked for the time being. In these times it is so important that we find ways not just to maintain our faith but to stimulate and grow it. Some of these are set out below but if you have suggestions, then please be in touch with me.

Worship

As mentioned last week, each Sunday, I will be celebrating the Eucharist at 9.30am in private on behalf of both our churches. I suggest that you follow a form of service or prayer at 10.30am so that we are offering our worship in solidarity although we are apart.

Just to remind you, this Sunday is the Fifth Sunday of Lent – Passion Sunday - and this week's readings are Ezekiel 37.1-14 and John 11.1-45. Both readings speak powerfully of the hope we find in God's redemptive work.

What we find in Jesus' words in John 11 and what we see in the raising of Lazarus is a foretaste of the hope that is offered to all through Jesus' death and resurrection. And, be encouraged because it's a resurrection that's concerned with the raising of broken spirits, of hearts that lack strength, of communities that are fractured, of relationships that are in difficulty, of people who have lost hope and offers a foretaste of the kingdom to come.

I am exploring the possibility of sending out via WhatsApp, a short video each week containing a few comments on the weekly readings. If you think you might find this helpful, please let me know.

Online Daily Prayer Resources

I have looked at various resources this week and spoken with a variety of congregation members and recommend you consider exploring the following:

The Church of England is podcasting 'Prayer during the day' and 'Night prayer'. Please go to <https://soundcloud.com/user-600495787> to access these resources.

Fr Stuart, the Rector of the Vale Church, is broadcasting Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and daily Mass online. Please go to the Facebook page of the Vale Church and 'like' the site to receive access to the daily updates including service times.

Hillsong Church UK at hillsong.com

The Wordlive app – is a free app which gives a daily commentary on a Biblical passage.

The Center for Action and Contemplation is the source for a Daily Meditation by Richard Rohr. Please go to cac.org to sign up for a daily email.

I would also like to signpost you to the following religious broadcasts on TV and radio:

TELEVISION:

Sunday 1.15pm (BBC1) *Songs of Praise* Aled Jones visits Liverpool and hears how the Salvation Army is putting faith into action.

RADIO:

Sunday 6.05am (R4) *Something Understood* Mark Tully asks whether religious visionaries are empowered by their religious experience (repeat).

8.10am (R4) *Sunday Worship* A service for Passion Sunday with the director of the Center for Reconciliation, Duke University, North Carolina, Edgardo Colón-Emeric, and the Superintendent Minister of Wesley's Chapel, London, the Revd Dr Jennifer Smith.

3pm (R3) *Choral Evensong* A repeat of last week's service from the Temple Church, London, for the feast of the Annunciation, recorded on 25 February.

Wednesday 3.30pm (R3) *Choral Evensong* An archive recording from Magdalen College, Oxford, first broadcast in March 2016.

8.45pm (R4) *Lent Talks* The writer Tim Lott reflects on parenthood (5/6).

WhatsApp Prayer Group

We have set up a small WhatsApp Prayer Group which had its first video meeting on Wednesday evening.

Would you like to be part of a small WhatsApp Prayer Group?

I would suggest three or four members per group to share prayer together and offer encouragement and support to each other.

If you would like to be a part of a group, please email me and we will set up some more groups.

Remember the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:11 *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."*

Pastoral Support

This week, the States of Guernsey brought in special measures obliging most of us to remain in our homes. As this can lead to social isolation, we are endeavouring to ensure that congregation members receive a phone call every few days from one of our church

leadership teams. Should you wish for specific spiritual support then please do be in touch with either me (my details are below) or John Le Page on 257436.

The Church of England has produced a booklet containing 13 daily reflections for those who are socially isolating at home and you may find these helpful. These can be accessed at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/10961•Mental Health Reflections WEB.pdf>

and I will arrange for the pdf to be added to the resources section on the website.

Spiritual Exercise

Finally, you might like to consider trying out the following spiritual exercise – sitting in stillness for ten to fifteen minutes and opening your heart to receive God’s gift of the Holy Spirit.

This spiritual exercise will deepen your awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your heart and give you confidence that the Spirit will be with you in everything you do to make Christ known.

1. Centre yourself; sit upright, two feet firmly on the floor; breathe rhythmically with deep breaths, in and out, from the abdomen; clear your mind of all preoccupations.
2. Bring yourself to bodily stillness.
3. Now welcome in your heart this gift that Jesus has for you: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid”*(John 14:27).
4. Quietly repeat those words of Jesus and hand over to him all worries or trouble.
5. You may find it helpful if you name to God a specific area where you need healing or forgiveness.
6. Now be still for some time in the presence of God as you welcome the Holy Spirit into your heart.
7. As you are about to finish your time of prayer, focus again on your breathing while you relax in God’s presence.
8. Bring yourself gently back to your daily concerns.

May you receive that peace of Christ each day.

And, remember at all times, 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.' (Psalm 46.1, NIV)”

God bless

Gill

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Rector of St. Sampson

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