

THE SUNDAY SUPPLEMENT

19th April 2020 – Second Sunday of Easter

WELCOME

Welcome to this week's *Sunday Supplement*. Thank you once again for all your messages, and also for several generous donations to the Foodbank, or for use to assist people who are struggling in the parish.

Several people have been in touch for more information on vehicle maintenance following the advice given in the *Wednesday Supplement* about cars that have not been used for several weeks. Do make sure that your car is ready if you need it.

*We are not people of fear:
we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety:
we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.
We are not people of greed:
we are people of generosity.
We are your people God,
giving and loving,
wherever we are,
whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
wherever you call us. Amen.*

To get in touch:

stephen@kdbchurches.com or (01229) 715259.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

An Act of Spiritual Communion can be found on page 4. Morning Prayer (audio) and Holy Communion (video) can be found on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMSD6J4ngi9rCe7kzY66Xfw>

Today is the Third Sunday of the month and would have been our Easter Taize service. The Taize Community is affected by the French lockdown and is not accepting pilgrims. However, the brothers are livestreaming their evening service every day at 7.30pm BST:

<https://www.facebook.com/taize>

You don't need to be on Facebook in order to view (click through any login request). The video remains accessible after the service if you miss it live.

EASTER SEASON

The church celebrates Easter for 50 days: 40 days from Easter to Ascension Day and then a further 10 days to Pentecost (Whit Sunday). In the early church, there was a very strong presumption that new members would be admitted, by baptism, at Easter only, following a long period of preparation as catechumens. Easter of course remains a traditional time for baptism. Until their baptism, catechumens left the Sunday service prior to the communion. Early Church Orders, such as the *Apostolic Tradition*, provided for a final examination of catechumens before their admission to baptism!

READINGS & COLLECT

Acts 2:14a, 22-32
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-end

Almighty Father,
you have given your only Son to die for our sins
and to rise again for our justification:
grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and
wickedness
that we may always serve you
in pureness of living and truth;
through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

SUNDAY MESSAGE

Also available as the sermon in our video service.

If you had attended a communion service every day this past week (as I am sure you would all have done had it not been for the lockdown!) you would have heard a distinctive pattern of readings. Instead of the Old Testament, we have had a passage from chapters 2 - 4 of the Acts of the Apostles, paired each day with a post-resurrection passage from the Gospel of Luke or John.

It's all a bit achronological, rather like many films have insisted on being since the mid-1990s. At the start, in our first reading, we see something from near the end of the story. In the final reading, we see what happened earlier.

Each day begins in the Book of Acts, with the disciples striding through Jerusalem, performing miracles, preaching the Good News of Jesus and confidently cocking a snook at the Temple authorities when they are challenged. They are not the disciples we know from the Gospels: it's like the same characters are being played differently, by new actors. It's like Dr Who after a regeneration. Tom Baker has become Peter Davison - and there I show my age.

On Wednesday, Acts 3:1-10 described the healing of the crippled beggar by the newly confident Peter and John. Their actions "*in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*" cause wonder and amazement. Also on Wednesday, as Chris described in his reflection on the Gospel for the day, we had Luke's account of the Emmaus Road. The disciples in this story seem to be perplexed, rather than excited, by the account of the empty tomb and the appearance of Jesus – Jesus himself says to them "*how foolish you are*".

There has been an amazing transformation in the attitude of the disciples between the closing chapters of the Gospels and the early chapters of Acts (by which time Jesus has ascended into heaven). The lectionary explains it to us, like a Quentin Tarantino film, by showing us the end first, and then returning to the background second.

Confusion and inaction become vigorous, confident witness to the Gospel, but only after Jesus' miraculous support is no longer available.

It shouldn't be too surprising that things happened this way. When we teach children something new, we know that they haven't really mastered it until they go off and try it for themselves. And Christians haven't really got Jesus' message until they take it away and put it into practice in their lives, through faith and a bit of effort.

Today's passage from John, chapter 20, illustrates two things that we need to be effective as Christians: the gift of the Holy Spirit, together with belief and trust in Jesus Christ.

The gift of the Holy Spirit empowers us and guides us in Jesus' absence. We ask for it in the prayer after communion: "*send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory*". These are not empty words. We are asking to be empowered to go out and do the things which Jesus commanded. Having received Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist a few moments earlier, we pray for the Spirit to be with us since we no longer have Jesus. In doing so, we are recreating the Gospel experience of the disciples.

We need to believe. This is what the story of doubting Thomas teaches us. Thomas is not really being held up as an object of criticism, or second best to all the other disciples. They had it easy: they had already seen Jesus in his resurrection body while Thomas was absent. They saw and believed; Thomas saw and believed. Neither Thomas nor the others is better or worse, of more or less faith. That's not the point of the story.

What Thomas does is provide the occasion for Jesus to embrace each of us in the same way. Because Thomas is one of the last who is able to see and believe. When Jesus says "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" we realise that all those who believe in his resurrection up to that point are believers because they have seen him. Before *and* after. Who are the people who have not seen and yet have believed? We are those people. Because seeing the living Jesus, then the dead Jesus, and then the risen Jesus, is something that was only possible for the first generation of Christians. Those who come after are dependent upon evidence which is not that of their own eyes.

Jesus knows that we are rational beings; he knows that we want to explore and understand the creation. He knows that we doubt. That critical faculty, that scepticism, that need for evidence, is one of the gifts God has given us that makes us human. We deny God's gifts to us when we stop looking at his creation with wonder and with sceptical enquiry, trying to see it as He made it, rather than the way we imagine, hope or (worse) prefer it to be. We must take it as we find it.

This was a week in which the ludicrous conspiracy theory connecting 5G mobile communications with the coronavirus has been much in the news. Such damaging and counterproductive misinformation might have been avoided if people had been a bit more sceptical. And, of course, if we had ensured that they received a better education in science, the discipline of discerning how God has made the universe.

Jesus knows that it will be harder for the generations that come after the disciples, who have not seen him, who haven't experienced his extraordinary teaching and amazing miracles. He knows that they will be beset by doubt and lead astray by false certainties. In our own day, we face the same challenge of belief in relation to the environment. We do not necessarily see climate change (although it is becoming increasingly hard to miss), loss of biodiversity (such as the decline of bees), or dangerous pollution, such as the truly awful ubiquity of microplastics that has come to our notice in the last few years. Unlike God, we cannot see the whole of creation; those who believe in these dangers to

creation now, and act accordingly, before it is too late, are especially blessed.

At present, we all legitimately feel that we “*suffer various trials*” as the First Letter of Peter puts it. It is important that we create a little space in our minds to keep the long view in sight: the problems that beset the world before the coronavirus will be waiting for us when the crisis is past. Some will have got worse in the meantime. Holding on to a true and imperishable faith is a big part of taking that long view, of keeping perspective.

John, chapter 20, ends with that wonderfully tantalizing reference to all the things which the author had no space to include. He has included he says, such things as are needed to help us to “*believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, we may have life in his name.*” This Easter season takes us once again on a journey of believing in Jesus Christ, not so that we can meditate forever on his life in the past, but so that we can live out his commandments and message in our own lives today and every day.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!
He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

LITURGY CORNER

The word “liturgy”, meaning the form according to which public worship is conducted, comes from two Greek roots: *leitōs*, meaning “public” and *ergos*, meaning “work”. It is, quite literally, a ‘public work’.

Sometimes this etymology is expressed as “the work of the people”. This discloses an important observation, that liturgy is the act by which the whole church worships God. A church service is not a performance by the minister; nor is it entertainment for the congregation. It is a collective act of worship in which all should be permitted to participate. Anglican liturgy is in fact unusually *participatory*, as is apparent from the amount of any order of service which is printed in bold type for all to join in with. Morning Prayer reveals this attribute particularly strongly, in passages such as the responsory, or the use of responsive or antiphonal psalms. The first time I ever led Morning Prayer I was struck by the fact the ‘leader’ has barely any more to say than anyone else.

I said that liturgy is neither a performance nor an entertainment, but it does not follow that liturgy should not be engaging. Liturgy has a vertical aspect, directed towards God in praise, prayer and worship. It also has a horizontal aspect, between the individuals who make up the congregation, building everyone up as members within the One Body of Christ. Everyone relates to

God differently and, as a result, we all have our preferences as to the style and content of liturgy and worship. We can illustrate this by reference to hymns: my favourite hymn is likely to be someone else’s least favourite and vice versa. If something has such a particular character as to appeal very strongly to one person, then that same particularity is likely to make it anathema to someone else. We must exercise patience and tolerance in worship, so that as many people are accommodated as fully as possible by our collective worship. But we should also bear in mind that some people will find God more directly in contemplation or study, in action or activism, or in nature rather than in a building. To truly reach everyone, we need to do more than any church service, high or low, traditional or charismatic, can hope to achieve.

NOTICES

Christian Aid Week: 10-16 May

The lockdown is currently extended until 7th May, but the overwhelming likelihood is that it will continue (at least in the sense of social distancing) thereafter, which means that it will preclude Christian Aid week in its usual form of services, events and door-to-door collections. However, *Christian Aid Week is not cancelled!*

There will be more information nearer the time, but suffice to say for now that there will be opportunities to pray and worship in support of Christian Aid Week, as well as virtual quizzes and fundraisers. Watch this space.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/about-us/christian-aid-week/coronavirus-guidance>

Community support group

If you need help that you can’t get elsewhere, no matter what your age or circumstances, you can email duddoncommunity@outlook.com In Kirkby, you can phone Stephen Tudway (01229) 715259 or Linda Dean (01229) 889630. In Broughton and the valleys you can phone Stephen Tudway (01229) 715259 or Selwyn Wright (01229) 716797. We will be pleased to point one of our volunteers in your direction.

CLOSING PRAYER

*Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father. Amen.*

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Prayer

You may wish to set aside a space for prayer in front of a cross and/or candle, in a part of the house which is calm and comfortable and perhaps decorated for Easter.

The Act of Spiritual Communion is best used at the time of normal church services, or as a personal response after listening to a broadcast or livestreamed service.

Guidance appears in italics. You may wish to say aloud the words in bold type.

Introduction

Begin by making the sign of the cross and thinking of those who might otherwise be sitting around you in church.



**In the name of the Father,
And of the Son,
And of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Reflection

Spend some time reflecting upon the week past.

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our
neighbour,
in what we have thought,
in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love,
and marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed,
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past;
and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light.
Amen.**

Pray that the Father of all mercies may cleanse us from our sins and restore us in His image, to the praise and glory of His name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Word of God

Read one or more passages of scripture, perhaps the readings set for the day. Sunday readings can be found in the Sunday Supplement. You may wish to read the sermon.

Begin with the Collect. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the needs of the world, our community, family and friends and to the prayers you ought to offer for them.

Pray for our churches, the buildings, the people and the common, that they may be reinvigorated in the coming year. Ask God to reveal how he is already working here and where he invites us to join with him.

Spend time in silence to reflect on your own circumstances and to feel assured that God is with you.

End with the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven... or

Our Father in heaven...

Prayer for Communion

This prayer may also be used at the appropriate point while watching a live or recorded service of Holy Communion.

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
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.**

(After the prayer of St Richard of Chichester)

Closing prayers

**You have opened to us the Scriptures, O Christ,
and you have made yourself known in the
breaking of the bread. Abide with us, we pray,
that, blessed by your royal presence, we may
walk with you all the days of our life, and at its
end behold you in the glory of the eternal
Trinity, one God for ever and ever. Amen.**

Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.'

**The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life. Amen.**