

Welcome to
your Parish Church
in the Diocese of Birmingham



ALL SAINTS
KINGS HEATH

Learning to Cherish Holy Communion

Easter V, Sunday 15th May 2022

Christian Aid Week

We gather

At home, have ready in an honoured place a portion of food and something to drink. It may be bread and wine or something else. Set your Bible alongside. You might light a candle.

We imagine everyone in their homes around the parish, united in preparing for prayer.

Music as we gather:

1. Soon, and very soon, we are going to see the King; (x3)
alleluia, alleluia, we're going to see the King!

2. No more crying there, we are going to see the King; (x3)
alleluia, alleluia, we're going to see the King!

3. No more dying there, we are going to see the King; (x3)
alleluia, alleluia, we're going to see the King!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

4. Soon, and very soon, we are going to see the King; (x3)
alleluia, alleluia, we're going to see the King!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

(words & music: Andrae Crouch)

When the song finishes we stand in silence. We sing:

1. Alleluia, alleluia, hearts to heav'n and voices raise;
sing to God a hymn of gladness, sing to God a hymn of praise:
he who on the cross a victim for the world's salvation bled,
Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, now is risen from the dead.
2. Christ is risen, Christ the first-fruits of the holy harvest field,
which will all its full abundance at his second coming yield;
then the golden ears of harvest will their heads before him wave,
ripened by his glorious sunshine, from the furrows of the grave.
3. Christ is risen, we are risen; shed upon us heav'nly grace,
rain, and dew, and gleams of glory from the brightness of thy face;
that we, with our hearts in heaven, here on earth may fruitful be,
and by angel-hands be gathered, and be ever, Lord, with thee.
4. Alleluia, alleluia, glory be to God on high;
alleluia to the Saviour, who has gained the victory;
alleluia to the Spirit, fount of love and sanctity;
alleluia, alleluia, to the Triune Majesty.

(words: Christopher Wordsworth; music: Arthur Seymour Sullivan; descant: John Barnard)

We acclaim:

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with us all. **Amen.**

WELCOME, BANNS and NOTICES

We pray: **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.**

We seek forgiveness

CONFESSION

Deacon: We pause to acknowledge the ways in which we eclipse God's love in
our lives and make it hard to cherish one another.

When we enjoy something not because it's good, but because others
don't have it, God, have mercy.

God, have mercy.

When we expect others to do the dirty work, but then criticise them for it, Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

When we de-humanise others to excuse mistreatment or exclusion, God, have mercy.

God, have mercy.

ABSOLUTION *In church forgiveness is declared for all while at home we pray:*

*May the God of Love, bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.***

We stand to give thanks for forgiveness, singing THE GLORIA

1. Glory be to God in heaven,
songs of praise and joy we bring;
thankful hearts and voices raising,
to creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you: Lord we bless you:
glory be to God our King;
glory be to God our King.

2. Lamb of God who on your shoulders
bore the load of this world's sin:
only Son of God the Father
you have brought us peace within.
Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy,
now your glorious reign begin;
now your glorious reign begin.

3. You O Son of God are holy,
you we praise with one accord:
none in heaven or earth is like you,
only you are Christ the Lord:
with the Father and the Spirit
ever worshipped and adored;
ever worshipped and adored.

THE COLLECT for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

Almighty God, who through your only begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

READING [Acts 11:1-18](#)

PSALM 144

SONG [I will enter his gates](#)

I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart,
I will enter his courts with praise,
I will say this is the day that the Lord has made,
I will rejoice for he has made me glad.

He has made me glad, he has made me glad,
I will rejoice for he has made me glad.
He has made me glad, he has made me glad,
I will rejoice for he has made me glad.

(words & music: Leona von Brethorst)

We remain standing for the GOSPEL READING [John 13:31-35](#)

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end This is the Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON from David

What an extraordinary moment in the life of the young church our Acts reading shows. Peter says his vision happens three times, and Luke uses a lot of parchment to recall this triple vision twice in the space of two chapters. The vision leading to Peter's visit to Italian Centurion Cornelius, then to this conversation with his fellow apostles back home, is clearly, for Luke, something that deserves huge emphasis because it reveals something fundamental in the character of the embryonic Church.

The power of Peter's visiting, eating with and baptising a man, who is not only foreign, but who is a senior officer in the outfit that executed Jesus, is overwhelming. Who is the good news for? Friends and family of Jesus? Well yes, but also for gentiles, for the thief who died beside him, for the other centurion who participated in the execution but at least acknowledged Jesus' innocence, and now for this senior officer of the deadly force still occupying the land of Jesus' birth. Luke wants us to feel the transformative power of such grace reaching across seemingly impregnable barriers.

All Saints is not a place of uniform opinion, and we claim no superiority. We're on a journey. Like many a congregations we have thought long and hard about who the church wilfully and unwittingly excludes. When his colleagues criticised him for eating with, let alone baptising Cornelius, Peter's heart-felt response to the well-meaning but exclusive faithful was to say: "the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it

had upon us at the beginning...If...God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed...who was I that I could hinder God?"

Fundamental to the life of the church, for Luke, is the church's surprise as it learns to learn about God from unexpected people. Even Gentiles? Yes. Even Roman Soldiers? Yes. You as a congregation have long felt the same about ordination. Seeing the Spirit's work in the lives and calling of women for decades in the 20th Century, All Saints members wanted the Church to say: "who are we to hinder God?" At last the Church of England has embraced Peter's words and we ordain women deacon, priest and bishop. Again, here today we see the Spirit at work magnificently and movingly in the faithful lives and relationships of gay and trans friends and neighbours. Long before my time you reflected carefully as a group and, without saying everyone has exactly the same opinion, you did agree to state publicly a collective desire to celebrate life-giving relationships and ministries to which gay people are called. I am heart-broken and ashamed that we are not able to marry them, and that the Church's response to their vocations to ministry is passive aggressive and embattled.

[At this point I should say that these last few sentences were edited out of the online service for the CofE broadcast today. I was called by a very good colleague responsible for overseeing this, and she and her team had agonised over what is appropriate for a national CofE service, what shows our Anglican diversity on the one hand and what on the other would be counter-productive to share in the context of worship offered to such a wide online congregation. She was regretful and shared our desire to celebrate such relationships. The twitter storm that would ensue (and they have bitter experience) was seen as possibly hindering the Living in Love and Faith conversation that is going on around the Church of England. We did agree that this edit is a symptom of the passive aggression I described.]

In response, far from feeling we have made it somehow, here we would do well to wonder whom we might unwittingly exclude by asserting such inclusivity. The Biblical point is: we find that this joyous surprise in Acts continues. Luke would not need to assert six times about the animals and the invitation to Peter to eat if he thought the surprises about who is welcome were going to stop at the end of Acts. He asserts this characteristic of the young church, at first puzzled, then delighted by the Spirit broadening their horizons. Luke is challenging us to this day as we discover more and more about the rich diversity of humanity until the end of time.

Another important thread in All Saints' polity is the thread of pacifism. Again, we are by no means a congregation of one unified opinion, but you have tried over the

years to be politically alert and socially aware and, if not always agreeing, at least agreeing to think hard together about such things. So today's reading challenges us here to consider how we include and support anyone who, like soldier Cornelius, is caught up in conflict, managing the worst mess humankind makes when prejudice takes hold. Peter baptised him and Luke ensured it was enshrined as an unforgettable lesson to the church not merely to be tolerant, but to welcome, affirm and learn from people like him.

We may be very clear in the Ukrainian conflict about who is at fault and who we are determined will win. For a church like ours, some of whose members have demonstrated outside Midlands weapons factories, we might feel our pacifist leanings deeply challenged. What are we to pray about the lethal equipment sent to Ukraine to help them fend off President Putin's wicked aggression? When the heart leaps as we hear about a Ukrainian victory, then dips as we think of the young Russian men killed, how are we to hold those dissonant feelings honestly before God? How best do we cherish those in our fellowship – like the Green family - who serve with the armed forces? Kim has spoken movingly about how a military family tries to keep a balance of awareness and hopefulness. She speaks of the questions children raise, and of "not hiding, but sheltering" them. Wherever we are on the pacifist spectrum, we are surely called to search our hearts and find a way to pray honestly about these hardest possible things.

Psalm 144 is one soldier's beautiful prayer which may not only be offered to military personnel to pray with, but can shape and inform our prayers for them at a time like this.

We might recoil at the opening blessing that gives thanks for God training hands for war and fingers for battle. It is so distressing that Ukrainian lawyers, teaching assistants, lorry drivers and shopkeepers have been learning to handle guns. While admiring people's courage, it's not to be romanticised. Staying with that difficult verse for a while, though, we realise it's an acknowledgement that all human skill is God given. The question is, how do we use it? It reminds me of a conversation with an artilleryman who talked about his careful range-finding. Accuracy saves lives, he said. Better skilled fingers might have been able to avoid the tragic, *possibly* accidental killing of Shireen Abu Aklee this week. So this verse gives us something very specific to pray: that in fighting, skill might minimise what is hideously termed collateral damage.

Then the soldier calls God his “fortress....stronghold and... shield.” This soldier-poet knows that all the military kit in the world cannot protect his soul, and that’s what really matters.

Then comes a reflection that every human life is fleeting. Subtly, humbly, the humanity of both friend and foe is asserted. This perspective does not prevent him being critical of his opponent. He asks for God’s help, deeply frustrated at the lies and falsehoods his enemy peddles. We can quickly empathise, revolted by President Putin’s righteous tones and absurd narrative, doing terrible violence to Ukraine while deceiving his own people. But that emphasis first on our common humanity just tugs the soldier, and maybe us, back from de-humanising and demonising the enemy.

Having candidly asked God for help, (in the back of our minds now the thought that Russian soldiers may be praying, too, out of their vulnerable humanity) the soldier establishes the purpose of the conflict. It is to achieve a peace where the agriculture – like that of abundantly fertile Ukraine - can flourish; a peace where broken down walls are rebuilt; where children live with dignity. It is a prayer ensuring the soldier’s heart never settles on conflict as an end in itself.

Beautifully, unbearably poignantly, the soldier dreams of the day he can turn his skilled fingers from weaponry to musical instruments . Like that Ukrainian soldier playing the piano in a bombed out school, this is the faithful soldier’s prayer as he faces conflict. He knows where his humanity lies.



[left, a Ukrainian soldier; right, a Russian soldier amidst the moral wreckage in Chechnya some years ago]

If we're going to ask people to head towards conflict for our protection, we need to cherish their souls and protect their hearts. This prayer might help us do so. It gives us specific things to pray, and might prepare our hearts to honour them, and welcome them home.

If we're going to have an army, we might be glad to think of military personnel praying in such a way. Peter baptised gentile soldier Cornelius and the church learned to cherish him. Luke invites us never to stop learning how to cherish one another. When this present conflict ceases, living in the power of Jesus' resurrection, a prayer like this will make our hearts ready to re-learn what it means to cherish Russia.

We affirm our faith

We stand and at home, if able, we turn to look in the direction of Church, to affirm our faith in God, revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

Deacon: As we affirm our faith, if you are able, you might like to turn to face East where conflict continues as we say the first phrase, asserting our common humanity. Then for the second, place your hand over your heart, to affirm Christ's company with you. Then, for the third, imagining the Holy Spirit's energy we turn to face South, towards Zimbabwe and Christian Aid's life giving service with partners there.

East **We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and earth is named.**

Hand on heart
**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

South **We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen**

(Authorised Affirmation of Faith from Common Worship)

INTERCESSIONS *In church intercessions are led by Nicola Slee.*

God, you sent Cornelius to the early church, broadening their horizons and deepening their prayer. Raise up humble, faithful people like him in armed forces the world over, especially those which, like Rome, presume to occupy others' land. We pray for all engaged in combat: that skill in war may save more lives than it takes.

We pray for the mental health of those seeking refuge from conflict or returning from battle. Cherish their souls and surround them with communities of prayer and patience, compassion and wisdom where they may re-discover your praise and turn their skills once more to creativity and playfulness.

God, hear all who cry to you in frustration and hurt, angered by lies and senseless devastation. Understand their visceral anger. Do not let bitterness take hold. Honour their humanity and send them the company and help they need, if you will, through us and all our neighbours.

We pray for those struggling with the consequences, not only of war, but of climate change, the long term consequences of past political strife, and any imbalances and injustices of world-wide trade. We pray particularly for the people of Sri Lanka, and for all frightened and endangered by the violence there, and for faith leaders taking risks to speak out, including a number of our Queen's PhD students at the Theological College of Lanka. We think too, of those mourning the death of the Palestinian Christian journalist Shireen Abu Aqla, and pray for restraint on the part of Israeli soldiers and a healing of the wrongs of decades of injustice.

We pray for all who work for a greater honouring of the inclusivity of the gospel in practical and political ways. Honour the work of Christian Aid, Islamic Relief, Red Crescent, Red Cross and all who seek the welfare of the poorest. Bless Christian Aid this week and, as we collect money for their work, God, collect the prayers of people of every faith and respond with your Spirit to breathe new life into Zimbabwe and every land.

**All: God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.**

**We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen**

The Archbishops' Prayer for Ukraine

THE PEACE

We pause to remember each other: those worshipping at home, and those worshipping in Church and those we care for who are far away.

Deacon: Jesus said "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another." We say to one each other:
The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

SONG [A new commandment](#)

*A new commandment I give unto you:
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.*

1. By this shall all know that you are my disciples
if you have love one for another. (x2)
2. You are my friends if you do what I command you.
Without my help you can do nothing. (x2)
3. I am the true vine, my Father is the gard'ner.
Abide in me: I will be with you. (x2)
4. True love is patient, not arrogant nor boastful;
love bears all things, love is eternal. (x2)

*(words: v1 unknown, from John 13; vv2-4 Aniceto Nazareth, from John 15 and 1 Corinthians 13;
music: Anon, arr Andrew Moore)*

*The Table is prepared in Church. At home, now is the time to say the Lord's Prayer
(below) and consume the food and drink you have prepared, first praying:*

God, we long for Communion. With this symbolic meal stir my hope for
the fellowship meal we cannot yet see, and help me wait for it with
patience. **Amen.** (cf Romans 8:2)

We tell the story of salvation

Priest: The Lord is here.

All: God's Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Blessed are you, Lord God, our light and our salvation; to you be glory and praise for ever. From the beginning you have created all things and all your works echo the silent music of your praise. In the fullness of time you made us in your image, the crown of all creation. You give us breath and speech that with angels and archangels and all the powers of heaven we may find a voice to sing your praise:

We repeat after the cantor:

All: Holy, holy, holy Lord!

God of power and God of might.

Heav'n and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes

in the name of the Lord most high.

Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.

How wonderful the works of your hands, O Lord. As a mother tenderly gathers her children, you embraced a people as your own. When they turned away and rebelled your love remained steadfast. From them you raised up Jesus, our Saviour, born of Mary, to be the living bread, in whom all our hungers are satisfied. He offered his life for sinners, and with a love stronger than death he opened wide his arms on the cross.

On the night before he died, he came to supper with his friends and, taking bread, he gave you thanks. He broke it and gave it to them, saying: take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

A bell is rung

At the end of supper, taking the cup of wine, he gave you thanks and said: Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

A bell is rung

Deacon: Great is the mystery of faith:

**All: Christ has died,
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.**

Father, we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross; we remember his dying and rising in glory, and we rejoice that he intercedes for us at your right hand. Pour out your Spirit as we bring before you these gifts of your creation; may they be for us the body and blood of your dear Son. As we eat and drink these holy things in your presence form us in the likeness of Christ, and build us into a living temple to your glory. Remember, Lord, your church in every land. Reveal her unity, guard her faith and preserve her in peace. Bring us at last with all the saints to the vision of that eternal splendour for which you have created us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom and with whom and in whom, with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, God almighty, in songs of everlasting praise.

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

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Deacon: As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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.**

Priest: We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All: Though we are many, we are one body.
For we all share in one bread.**

Draw near with faith. Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you. Eat in remembrance that he died and now lives for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

We sing: **Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.**
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, Redeemer of the world, give us your peace. (x2)

We pause to remember all who pray at home, then share the bread, now for us the body of Christ.

SONG *during Communion* [You are the Vine](#)

You are the Vine, we are the branches, keep us abiding in you.
You are the Vine, we are the branches, keep us abiding in you.

Then we'll grow in your love, then we'll go in your name,
that the world will surely know that you have power to heal and to save.

(words & music: Danny Daniels & Randy Rigby)

We are sent out

Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with your Word [*and with the body of Christ*]. Strengthen us in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

THE BLESSING

May God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has given humanity not the victory we want, but the victory we need, give *us* joy and peace in *our* faith. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with *us* and all for whom *we* pray now and always. **Amen.**

HYMN [O Jesus, I have promised](#)

1. O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;
be thou for ever near me, my Master and my friend:
I shall not fear the battle if thou art by my side,
nor wander from the pathway if thou wilt be my guide.

2. O let me feel thee near me: the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me, around me and within;
but, Jesus, draw thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin.

3. O let me hear thee speaking in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
O speak and make me listen, thou guardian of my soul.

4. O let me see thy foot-marks, and in them plant mine own;
my hope to follow duly is in thy strength alone:
O guide me, call me, draw me, uphold me to the end;
and then in heav'n receive me, my Saviour and my friend.

(words: John Ernest Bode; music: James William Elliott)

We acclaim:

Deacon: Alleluia! Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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



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