

17 May 2020, 11am

*Christ Church New Southgate &  
Friern Barnet*

Please join with us at 11am to read this service together either in printed form, whatapp or via the youtube link on our website [www.christchurchnsfb.org](http://www.christchurchnsfb.org)

Each person in the church is assigned a deacon who will call you to see if you are alright in these times and to pray for you. Please feel free to call Ruth too if you wish – only happy to help! 020 8368 8157

---

Good morning to you all. You are warmly welcome at our communion service today. Please make sure you have some bread and a drink for communion later on.

Today we are celebrating two birthdays among our community. Happy birthday to Daniel – he's 6! And to Roger who has reached the majestic age of 80. We delight with both of you on your birthday and hope you had a blessed time celebrating. Let's pray for Daniel and for Roger.

Even in normal times, it can be difficult to connect with God. God can seem far away from our situation. For some of us we don't want to speak to God for we are struggling in life, and others of us don't know where to start. In all circumstances there is wisdom in the bible, for through the bible God speaks to us.

*Reading:* Psalm 139 is a poem that expresses what it is like to feel close and distant from God.

Let's use these words to still our hearts:

You have searched me, Lord,  
**ALL: and you know me.**

<sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise;  
**ALL: you perceive my thoughts from afar.**

Lord thank you that we can feel your presence with us today. In our world we are apart from those we don't live with, and this distance is wearing us down. As we long to gather with those we love, please sustain us. Remind us that you are with us, right by our side. Help us to be able to notice you, even if we feel too far away.

Where can I go from your Spirit?  
**ALL: Where can I flee from your presence?**

<sup>8</sup>If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
**if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.**

<sup>9</sup>If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
**if I settle on the far side of the sea,**

<sup>10</sup>even there your hand will guide me,  
**your right hand will hold me fast.**  
Amen

This week is Christian Aid week, we have a video coming up all about a wonderful woman Florence who sings wherever she goes:



*My name is Florence Mbone Muthiai. I live happily and love singing all of the time. I make sure I live happily and if anyone disappoints me, I walk away and start singing.'*

The climate crisis is causing unreliable rains and drought in Kenya. The poorest and most vulnerable communities are the hardest hit. Florence used to have to walk six hours every day to collect water for her family.

*'The water was so far away I could only use it for cooking and washing. My husband and I got pregnant while I was in school and we got married. We were blessed with four children. After my husband died, I tried to keep strong. I was feeling as if I had been left alone in this world. But God heard me and now I have gained strength.'*

Florence and her community, with the help of Christian Aid, built an earth dam.

*I'm highly motivated, especially since the dam was constructed. I've worked in community gardening. I've also managed to keep chickens and livestock. Any extra vegetables I'm able to sell for additional money.'*

With the water from the dam, the women have set up a community garden. The dam has enabled Florence to keep a bee farm, and she now harvests honey. She sells honey with friends at the market to support her family. With your continued support we can help more people like Florence thrive.

*I'm thankful to the people in the UK. God keep them well and continue to bless them. I pray for peace for my children and I pray for it to rain.'*

---

Lord we thank you for the work of Christian Aid. We thank you for the beautiful story of Florence, a joyful singing inspiration.

Lord as we struggle here in the UK coping with the pandemic, we remember those around the world who are experiencing the

pandemic and also live in drought. Lord for those desperate for rain,

**Lord: please sustain them.**

Lord for us, as we consider our own response to the climate crisis, help us to live in a way that helps the entire world.

Lord we pray for community projects in Kenya like the earth dam and garden scheme. May these be fruitful times of friendship and economic growth.

Lord we echo Florence's prayer – we pray for peace in Kenya, peace that enables communities and economies to grow. And we pray for rain, rain that sustains, brings life and gives hope.

**Lord: please sustain them.**

In this Christian aid week, may we know Florence's blessing upon us.

**ALL: may the lord keep us and continue to bless us.**

May we be a blessing to her in our financial support to Christian Aid and in our prayers. In the name of Christ, Amen.

It's not everyday that we have the chance to have a guest speaker like ours today. Dr Rowan Williams previously archbishop of Canterbury and still a brilliant mind and thought-provoking pastor. We thank God for him and all that he has achieved through the gifts he has. Lord please bless Rowan as he will speak to us now. Breathe through his words Spirit and help us to see you more clearly today. Amen

*Sermon: Now is the time to reach out to your neighbours near and far*

Rev Dr Rowan Williams, Christian Aid 2020

A couple of weeks ago, I had a letter from a friend in Sri Lanka reflecting on the current global crisis. Had anyone noticed, he asked how odd it was that we should be talking so much about social distancing in a world where various kinds of ‘social distance’ were built into the way societies were organised? The life we have regarded as normal is in fact a life in which there are deep chasms of separation between those who have the resources to manage their lives with a degree of freedom and control and those who don’t. In many contexts – and not only in the developing world you can find communities living literally side by side with this immense gap between them.

One of the most dramatic aspects of the pandemic we are living through is that these familiar kinds of social distance don’t help much: sickness does not discriminate between rich and poor and we are all suddenly reminded of the limits of our freedom and our control of the world we live in. And yet, even in this situation, we can’t help being uncomfortably aware that the level of risk varies. We think with gratitude and admiration of all those who are daily exposed to high levels of risk – health and care workers of course, but also shelf stackers and rubbish collectors; and we think too of those for whom lockdown restrictions mean the risk of abuse, or pressure on a fragile mental health condition or simply the growing demands of caring for others in the home.

This week we are invited to cast our eyes wider still, to remember those across the world with the least resources to respond effectively to the pandemic. Our Christian Aid partners in Africa are facing challenges we can scarcely begin to guess at: communities living in impossibly overcrowded conditions, communities with no safe water for washing or drinking, communities where you can’t rely on

consistent public health provision of any kind.

As the pandemic takes a tighter hold in such environments, the economy of entire countries begins to unravel, far more dramatically even than the painful economic effects of the disease here in the UK and Ireland. Part of the social distance we have tolerated in our world is the reality that the securities we take for granted, even in times of crisis – healthcare, pensions, unemployment benefits – are lacking in so many societies.

So even as we observe the social distance, we need to keep each other safe in our households and neighbourhoods here, we might think about how we are called to step across another kind of social distance, so as to stand alongside those who are so much more at risk. In the story of the Good Samaritan, we have the picture of a person who crosses more than one gulf of distance to bring life and hope to someone whose life was at risk. He must stop on a lonely road where danger may still be lurking. He must take time and pay attention, putting aside his own preoccupations and worries and go and see carefully and intelligently what needs doing. And not least, he must distance himself from his own prejudice and hostility towards a stranger – a man who would be likely in other circumstances to see him as a contemptible and dangerous enemy.

He steps across the distance by putting a distance between his perception of someone’s suffering on the one hand, and the familiar human mixture of self-preserving instinct and inherited fears and hatreds on the other. The Samaritan’s act of saving the life of his Jewish neighbour is a sign of what a world might look like in which the distance created by fear, ignorance and bigotry had been abolished a world where we were free to

respond to one another's needs with prompt and deliberate action.

Another name for such a world is the Kingdom of God. We're not going to bring it about by policies and programmes, certainly; but we need constantly to be finding ways of letting its reality show through, so as to challenge the 'social distances' we so easily take for granted. In a rather strange way, we are learning about this through the conditions we are currently living with.

We are learning to put on hold a lot of our instincts for the reassuring pleasures of company and entertainment; learning to pay attention to our physical habits in a new way, becoming aware of the literal distance between us when we shop or take exercise, remembering to wash our hands and so on; and we're also learning the crucial importance of so many unromantic jobs in public service without which we'd be lost- the jobs done with selfless professional concentration that provides us with a steady backdrop to all our anxieties and uncertainties. Whether it's a health service professional routinely staffing the intensive care unit, or just someone stepping aside on a footpath to allow another to go past at the right distance, we are recognising that living thoughtfully – mindfully, if you like – rather than just letting our own comfort and convenience dictate everything is something life giving.

We are still in the Easter season, celebrating the central fact of our Christian faith. The God we worship has abolished the distance between heaven and earth, manifesting the glory of divine life at the very heart of human failure and pain in the cross of Jesus Christ. The God we worship gives us the power and freedom to step aware from the prison of our self-preoccupation; to confront with joy and thanksgiving God's own radiant beauty, and to confront with honest and love the urgent needs of his creation. Jesus in his life and his

death distances himself from safety and self-obsession, his life is a journey towards a deeper and deeper solidarity with human beings in their pain and guilt and helplessness. And in that journey to the heart of our darkness he renews the whole human race and created a new level of connection and compassion between human beings.

So the painful days we are experiencing at the moment give us a chance to think again about the way in which we fail to notice just how far we have slipped away from each other in our global society, and indeed in our own country too; to see how we have lost sight of the promise of the great events of Good Friday and Easter - not to mention the vision of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit who brings the gift of understanding between diverse languages and cultures. We have come to think that distance is normal, the distance between rich and poor, powerful and powerless; and we've not found the energy we need to challenge this.

As our own society faces great challenge in the shrinking of its economy, these things will be of immense concern to all of us – but most of all to those in insecure jobs, without work, the elderly and disabled and homeless. Likewise on the world stage, we shall all be affected by the burdens that will fall on the poorest and least protected nations. One thing we should have worked out in the light of the crisis is that in our tightly interconnected and mobile world, no problem is only local; disaster and disruption anywhere rapidly become an issue on our doorsteps.

As many have said, our best hope as a world community for avoiding another lethal pandemic, perhaps even worse than this one, is to urge the creation of effective health care in every country and rapid and efficient international vehicles for response to medical emergency. It means no longer tolerating the

deadly inequalities that condemn so many to dangerous exposure to sickness and hopelessness.

In our enforced social distancing, we have the opportunity to reflect on how we learn to live more consistently in and by the grace of the God who abolishes distance, who breaks down the walls of separation and loves us as one family. God help us to rise to this challenge and learn to love as he loves us, with a love that never fails in its willingness to cross over, like the Good Samaritan, to wherever there is suffering and fear, leaving behind the narrowness that we have let ourselves get used to. Love never fails; don't let us fail the call and opportunity that love gives us.

---

### *Communion*

As we care and love one another, we stay 2metres apart, we step off the path, and wait in corners of tiny shops.

As we love each other, we yearn to celebrate together as one family around one table remembering the God who comes to us.

As God cares for us,  
he abolishes distance  
Suddenly heaven and earth meet  
The son of god becomes just like us  
Gods heavenly heart is present on our streets.  
His hands transform the sick to healed  
His actions turn water into wine  
His voice calms every storm

In his presence an ordinary table becomes a foretaste of heaven  
And he is with each of us at our tables, our desks, our tray.  
With our bread and drink, he is here.  
With our open hands and hearts, he is here.  
Lets say together:

**ALL: 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**

*Share peace*

Peace be with you: **and also with you**

*Read: 1 Corinthians 11.23-26*

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

As we prepare to share this meal together, let us spend a moment in quiet. This is a space for you to be honest to God. To say sorry for any hurt we have caused, and to ask God to forgive us and to help us live differently.

Silence - confession

**ALL: Loving God  
We praise and thank you  
That your love is not distant  
but Jesus is present with us  
We give you thanks  
for this bread and wine  
For feeding us and  
transforming us by your grace  
Send us your Holy Spirit, we pray**

**That we might be changed  
To be more like Jesus everyday  
Amen**

Great Heart of my own heart,  
whatever befall,  
still be Thou my vision, O ruler of all.

*Break bread*

Jesus said 'this is my body which is for you.  
Do this in memory of me.'

<https://youtu.be/ihJAJA4ibEs>

*Share wine*

Jesus said 'this cup is the new covenant sealed  
by my blood. Whenever you drink it do this  
in memory of me.'

Don't forget to pray for Christian Aid and if  
you are able to donate this year, please do as  
door-to-door collections are unable to take  
place. You can donate online or by phone.

*Silence*

May we no longer be content to live at a  
distance from God, draw us closer to you  
Lord. Help us to support each other in our  
church, community and in the world.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk>  
020 7523 2269

God bless, see you next week.

As a blessing to each other, let's sing be thou  
my vision. Thank you to John and to our  
friend Andy at Poynton Baptist Church for  
keyboard this week.

- 1 Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my  
heart;  
be all else but naught to me, save that  
Thou art –  
be Thou my best thought, in the day  
and the night,  
both waking and sleeping, Thy  
presence my light.
- 2 Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my  
true Word;  
Be Thou ever with me, and I with  
Thee, Lord;  
Be Thou my great Father, and I Thy  
true son;  
Be Thou in me dwelling, and I with  
Thee one.
- 3 3 High King of heaven, Thou  
heaven's bright Sun,  
O grant me its joys after victory is  
won;