

26 April 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

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

Welcome to Christ Church New Southgate and Friern Barnet's service on the 26th April 2020. I'm Ruth and I'm the minister here.

Today we are starting a new series looking at the book of Philippians. Our key verse for this service is:

‘And so I am sure that God, who began a good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus.’
Philippians 1.6

Let's pray:

Thank you Lord for the opportunity we have as your people in all sorts of places to worship you. We thank you for all the people who carry on in these strange days. Thank you for all who carry on caring, loving, serving others, and for all those who celebrate by carrying on clapping to recognise your goodness at work. Lord would give us a sense of your purpose and peace now as we draw near to you. Amen.

Let us spend a moment in quietness.

I invite you to share in confession together. When we confess, we are saying sorry to God. We will use our hands to pray today.

Make your hands into fists. This shows we are holding onto something bad. When I say: Lord help us, please say: God help us and open your hands. This shows we asking God to help us to be good.

Dear God

When we have been angry or cross
Lord help us

ALL: God help us

When we do not love others
Lord help us

ALL: God help us

When we forget to be kind
Lord help us

ALL: God help us

When we do not trust you
Lord help us

ALL: God help us

When we cannot see you carrying us
Lord help us

ALL: God help us
Give us love, joy,
peace and hope. Amen

Let's proclaim this hope by singing with music provided by John and a special guest Andy from Poynton Baptist brought together by fantastic technology.

Hymn: I Stand amazed

https://youtu.be/wCJ_wn37PtY

I stand amazed in the presence
of Jesus the Nazarene,
and wonder how He could love me,
a sinner, condemned, unclean.

How marvellous! how wonderful!
and my song shall ever be:

*How marvellous! how wonderful!
is my Saviour's love for me!*

He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Calvary,
and suffered, and died alone.

How marvellous . . .

When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
'twill be my joy through the ages
to sing of His love for me.

How marvellous . . .

Lord's prayer with actions

Our Father in heaven,

arms up

hallowed be your name,

make banner shape

your kingdom come,

hands to side

**your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

palms down & up

Give us today our daily bread.

Hands together

Forgive us our sins

brush right hand

as we forgive those who sin against us.

brush left hand

Lead us not into temptation

fist to chest across

but deliver us from evil.

Other fist to across chest

For the kingdom,

arms wide, palms to side

the power,

fists lifted

and the glory are yours

make sign of rain with fingers

now and for ever.

Right hand pointing, left hand spiral finger out

Amen.

Hands clap above head

Normally on a 4th Sunday, we discuss the scripture for the day and create a time for dialogue and sharing across the congregation. We use these three symbols (question mark, light bulb, arrow) to help us to think when reading the bible. So, I invite you to listen to our reading, and then think: What questions do I have? What has God shown me? What might God be asking me to do today?

Let's pray. Dear Lord, would you help us today please? Show us afresh your word, help us to understand, learn and ask questions. Grant us faith and curiosity that we might hear you and be transformed by the Spirit and word today. Amen

Tanya will read our scripture this week, thank you.

Reading: Philippians 1.3-11

³I thank my God for you every time I think of you; ⁴and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy ⁵because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now. ⁶And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus. ⁷You are always in my heart! And so it is only right for me to feel as I do about you.

For you have all shared with me in this privilege that God has given me, both now that I am in prison and also while I was free to defend the gospel and establish it firmly. ⁸ God is my witness that I tell the truth when I say that my deep feeling for you all comes from the heart of Christ Jesus himself.

⁹ I pray that your love will keep on growing more and more, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment, ¹⁰ so that you will be able to choose what is best. Then you will be free from all impurity and blame on the Day of Christ. ¹¹ Your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities which only Jesus Christ can produce, for the glory and praise of God.

Sermon & Discussion

So what are your questions? Is there anything you don't understand? Has God made a word jump off the page? Hold that word in your heart and pray over it. Have you read something that has caused you to think about doing something differently, changing your outlook or behaviour? Pray over that too.

We can chat about this over Zoom today from 12noon, if you don't have the church email with the details, please contact us via our website.

I had some questions: what is the day of Christ? Well that's a new testament version of the day of judgment when God will call us to heaven. I phrase that niggled with me was 'perfect judgment in v9. I read this now I think as love needs perfect wisdom for balance – what do you think? And how can we pray with joy? Joy is the gift of being a Christian, it doesn't mean having a silly smile all the time but a confidence in God to

sustain us. Please do get in touch if you'd like to discuss more by email, letter, zoom today.

What I'd to explore more fully today is v 6: 'And so I am sure that God, who began a good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus.'

God carries on

Stuart Manley is the owner of a small bookshop in Alnwick. In 2000, he found an old poster at the bottom of a box he had bought at auction. The poster read: 'keep calm and carry on'. His wife liked it and put it in a frame on the wall in their shop and it started to sell. In 2005, a guardian journalist spotted a copy of the poster at a writing retreat and put it in an article –millions of people bought a poster. 'Keep calm and carry on' was wartime poster but now can be found on t-shirts, mugs, even deckchairs with a difference – 'keep calm and go shopping', 'keep calm and drink gin', and surprisingly 'keep calm its twins'.

Since the virus came, sales of keep calm posters and trinkets have soared again. What does this tell us? It means that we want to feel calm, we want life to carry on. Perhaps we feel there is some similarity between fighting the virus and the lockdown measures we are experiencing now. It does feel like a wartime to queue for food, when products are rationed to 2 per customer and having to make do and mend around our homes.

There is a collective grief for all of those who are enduring treatment in hospital, a great concern for those who seek to heal them, and a sense of mourning as the most vulnerable in our society as immigrants and older people are dying every single day at heart-breaking levels. We mourn our old way of life, we miss the tube – ok maybe we

don't miss it, but we miss other humans, we miss celebrating, gathering, exploring and sharing in joy, loss and grief. It's like a war, because we know we will not be the same on the other side. It feels like a battle to know our enemy and to beat it through the tremendous efforts of our scientific community. However, it is distinctly unlike a war for a virus is not a country on the move but a bug that is simply easily spread.

We want to carry on, we want to keep calm. We want to keep our heads calm so that we can carry on. And if a cute magnet helps – great.

But ... there is a God who carries on. There is a God who created the world, who bore us, who gave us life, who carried our very breath in his and gave it to us. There is a God who is at work in our world now. He always has been, and always will be. This God carries on. What does he carry on? He carries on loving us and he carries on his promise to always love us. He never drops the ball on loving us. God does not carry our bags to the door and say 'cheerio', he carries on loving us, holding us and keeping us in his heart.

In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, Paul has found himself in prison. He has been thrown in jail for preaching the gospel, and yet he declares that his life is a privilege. What privilege can he have in prison and in freedom? Sharing the work of the gospel. The Philippian church has shared in this work too, they have been partners in the gospel with Paul. What does it mean to be partners? Or to have helped in the work of the gospel?

Pennie told me recently that she really missed being able to go to church. I wonder, do you feel the same? I do! I miss being in a beautiful space, I miss worshipping as a congregation, I miss Hettie our magic music player, the flowers, the crafts, the coffee and

the cake but I miss all of you more, very much. Maybe we have begun to question: how will the church carry on? How will it look in the future? Will anyone want to go to church, or will a video be OK forever?

Our building may be closed, our time may be crushed on every side, but God carries on. We learn from Paul that he has confidence, he is sure because Christians have confidence in God not our efforts. God will carry his church and is carrying our church. Do you know that we have had nearly double the number of viewers on youtube than attend on a normal Sunday morning? Did you know that our church is not alone, but that many churches have increased their visibility by being closed?! It seems to me that God is carrying his work just fine for now, despite our situation. God's message to the world – that he loves us – is still being preached, still being discovered and for many for the first time. God is carrying on asking us to work for his gospel purposes. God is carrying on inviting us to work with him.

Each of us will have pressing worries about our health, our families and our friends. All of us have been praying for the NHS and essential workers, we are aware of the effect of the virus on the vulnerable and the lonely. How does God carry on now? Well he needs us. He chooses to work in partnership with us, just as Paul and his first ever church plant in Macedonia did. They worked together, as best they could to declare the joy and love of the Lord.

Prayer, support, communication, care, shopping for the vulnerable and sewing for the NHS: this is gospel work. I pray that we might be a people who will carry on the gospel work that God has given us to do, and not be afraid to see new opportunities for God who sent Jesus to us and sent the Spirit to live among us.

It is his Spirit that empowers us to serve, his Spirit that gives us joy despite being in prison, being in lockdown, being unable to comfort those in need. For the Holy Spirit is nothing but creative, the Holy Spirit broke through locked doors, transformed the words and gave the church a new message to declare. How can we think afresh our work for the Lord?

May we know, deep, deep in our hearts that we worship a God who carries on, who carries us in a ragged moments – the times when we are tired, weary and at our wits end, who carries us when we are serving him, and will keep carrying on his church until the day of Christ. Christ Church may we carry on, for God carries on.

May we carry on like he does, always seeking fresh ways to share his love. May we carry on in confidence not in our own work, not in our buildings, services but confident in the Lord who carries on. Carrying on isn't about holding tight to what we have but allowing the Lord to lead us into a new future confident of our destination in heaven because it is the Lord who carries us as he has always carried us.

Intercession

Psalm 126.4-6

⁴ *Lord make us prosperous again*

Lord we pray for all those whose businesses are struggling, for those who cannot find work,
ALL: Sustain us Lord.

⁵ *Just as the rain brings water back to the dry river beds
Let those who wept
as their sowed their seed,
gather the harvest with joy!*

Lord we pray for all those weep,

who mourn and those desperate for change, for those worried about tomorrow

ALL: Turn sorrow into deep joy Lord

⁶ *Those who wept as they went out carrying the seed*

*Will come back singing
for joy as they bring in the harvest*

Lord we pray for churches and ministers carrying heavy burdens.

Lead us to be creative and confident in you.

To plant your gospel

and see what you make grow.

ALL: Spirit lead and guide us.

Blessing

from Philippians 1.2

ALL: May our God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give us grace and peace.

Amen