

Newsletter St Mary's & St Augustine's:

Sunday 10th May - 5th Sunday of Easter and the start of Christian Aid Week.

Sunday's Bible readings: Psalm 31; Acts 7 : 55- end; John 14: 1-14; 1 Peter 2 : 2-10

Wednesday's Bible readings: Psalm 122 : 1-5; John 15 : 1-8 Acts 15 : 1-6

Reflection for Sunday

Today is the first Sunday of Christian Aid week, a time in the year when we particularly remember that we are part of a global community – this year we are all going through the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, but we know that the world's poorest people are the most vulnerable to the crisis. They are less resilient, have less access to healthcare and the necessary resources and will be less able to weather the economic impact. For the last 75 years Christian Aid has stood alongside the world's poorest people, and as Christ's family we are also called to stand alongside our worldwide neighbours, sharing our resources our love and our prayers. Do make time this week to learn more about some current Christian Aid projects - from their website www.christianaid.co.uk or look at some of their stories on Youtube – just search Christian Aid Week 2020 – there you will find the stories of Rose coping with drought in Kenya and of Florence and her community, joyfully transformed as they work in partnership with Christian Aid to tackle climate change. These stories can inspire our prayers, our giving and changes in our behaviour as now more than ever we are aware of our worldwide neighbours.

“ Do not let your hearts be troubled” are the comforting words of Jesus in our Gospel reading set for today. They are spoken to the disciples in an unsettling time and have fresh resonance for us today in these challenging and unsettling COVID weeks. Likewise the promises of Jesus we find in this passage; they are often read as words of hope and reassurance at times of bereavement and loss, but they take on a new relevance for us in this time when we are experiencing an enforced “dwelling” in our own homes during lockdown. For some this has offered an opportunity to explore a deeper understanding of what it is to “dwell” in God's presence. For others who are juggling work, home-schooling, and separations or for those who are struggling with their own and others physical and mental ill-health there seems even less time to dwell with God – but we are all learning afresh that God does not dwell in our church buildings but dwells with us and within us. As the verses from 1 Peter 2 remind us - we are the living stones, being built into a spiritual house.

And perhaps Thomas' cry to Jesus in this passage, again echoes our own current cry – “we do not know the way”(v.5) We share Thomas' uncertainty because we don't know what lies ahead for us, but Thomas' cry invites us to be honest in prayer before God and honest with each other as we seek to find new ways forward and to follow Jesus in these exceptional times.

At St Mary's we often sing “ Let us build a house.....all are welcome” today, let's sing and pray this, not about our physical church buildings but about ourselves, living stones, being built into a spiritual house, where Love dwells and is lived out in our everyday actions.

*Let us build a house where love can dwell
And all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell
How hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
Rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions;
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are
welcome in this place.*

*Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are
welcome in this place.*

A Christian Aid Prayer for a global pandemic

*Loving God,
Strengthen our innermost beings
with your love that bears all things
even the weight of this global pandemic
even the endurance of watching for symptoms
of patiently waiting for this to pass
watching while we pray
keeping our gaze fixed on you
and looking out for our neighbours
near and far.*

*Instil in our shaken souls
the belief and hope that all things
are possible with your creative love
for strangers to become friends
for science to source solutions
for resources to be generously shared
so everyone everywhere
may have what they need.
May your perfect love that knows no borders
cast out any fear and selfishness that divides.
May your love that never ends
be our comfort, strength and guide
for the wellbeing of all and
the glory of God*

Collect for this Sunday

Risen Christ, your wounds declare
your love for the world and the
wonder of your risen life :
give us compassion and courage to
risk ourselves for those we serve, to
the glory of God the Father.

*Loving God,
we seek your presence
in the silence beyond words.
Looking to you for comfort,
strength, protection
and reassurance.
Breathing with gratitude
holding on to hope,
trusting with faith
that you are still God
in the midst of the turmoil
and that your love reaches
to the ends of the earth.
Be present with us now.*



Thank you for your magnificent generosity and very well done to everyone on our fundraising efforts so far. St Augustine members have been "Climbing Snowdon" using their own staircases and St Mary's pledges are up to £850 (not including gift aid). So thank you especially to Michelle and to Yo respectively for organizing. **It's not too late to give !!** Via the just giving page on St Augustine's website or via pledges to Yo (07925 634420) and paid directly to Christian Aid.

To help you mark and journey through Christian Aid week why not sign up for their daily reflections. <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/christian-aid-week/daily-prayer-reflection>

We continue to use the Easter season sheets for our Home Acts of Worship – the suggestion is to gather in our homes at 10.30am on Sunday and 7pm on Wednesdays to share worship together but separately – or at a time which suits you !

Jem Clines will continue to offer a zoom service on Sunday mornings at 11am - the meeting link is 955-8571-0442 join from 10.45am via zoom or by phone using one of these numbers 0208 080 6592; 0330 088 5830; 0131 460 1196; 0203 481 5237; 0203 481 5240; 0208 080 6591.

Roots resources are providing free prayers and reflections for adults, families and children for each Sunday <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/public-copies/worshipathome10may>

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