

## A SERVICE OF THE WORD

O God, make speed to save us.

All **O Lord, make haste to help us.**

My heart tells of your word, 'Seek my face.'

All **Your face, Lord, will I seek.**

### SCRIPTURE SENTENCE

As a mother comforts her child,  
so I will comfort you;

### OPENING PRAYER

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.

All **Amen.**

### PRAYER OF PENITENCE

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy,  
All **slow to anger and of great kindness.**

He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
All **nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.**

For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
All **so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.**



**Welcome** to a different form of church. One which may feel alien and awkward. One which may take some time to get used to.

**Welcome** to the church in 'diaspora' – the scattered church – formed not by our gathering together but in our longing to do so.

**Welcome** to the church lost in the wilderness, longing to be found.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

**All Holy God, holy and strong,  
holy and immortal, have mercy upon us.**

As far as the east is from the west,  
**All so far has he set our sins from us.**

As a father has compassion on his children,  
**All so is the Lord merciful towards those who fear him.**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
**All and all that is within me bless his holy name.**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
**All and forget not all his benefits.**

## **OLD TESTAMENT READING**

**Exodus 2.1-10**

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

## PSALM 127

[\(click here to listen to a sung version by Jason Silver\)](#)

**All Unless the Lord builds the house,  
those who build it labour in vain.  
Unless the Lord guards the city,  
the guard keeps watch in vain.  
It is in vain that you rise up early  
and go late to rest,  
eating the bread of anxious toil;  
for he gives sleep to his beloved.  
Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.  
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the sons of one's youth.**

**Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now  
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

## NEW TESTAMENT READING

**Luke 2.33-35**

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

## HOMILY

*Revd Barry Hengist*

*Well, this is all a bit strange isn't it? This is the first time in my life and probably in yours when then Archbishop of Canterbury has told us NOT to go to church! And on a day when so many people would usually be in church to celebrate Mother's Day (or Mothering Sunday to give it its proper name). The church should be full of rainbows, brownies and guides; beavers, cubs and scouts. It should be adorned with flowers as we suspend our Lenten observance just for the day to refresh ourselves on our pilgrimage to Easter. I am hoping that (given that you're reading this) you've set aside some time to join with fellow Christians from St. George's, the other churches*

*in Shirley, and indeed around the world, in keeping the Lord's day and giving him the thanks and praise of which he is worthy in bad times and in good, in sorrow and in joy.*

*The New Testament reading tells the story of Jesus being taken as a baby to the Temple for his dedication. It should have been a day of great joy – the day when, after centuries of waiting, God finally came to his Temple as he had promised – not as a warrior king at the head of a great army, but as a helpless baby in the arms of his mother.*

*“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*Why, oh why, then did Simeon have to spoil the day by telling Mary that her soul would one day know piercing pain? Had she not experienced enough pain in giving birth to him? We can imagine Simeon's words must have rung in her ears whenever she worried about Jesus. That day when she and Joseph had to return to this very same Temple looking for the 14 year old Jesus. That day at the wedding when he called her “Woman!”. That day when she was asking to see him and he claimed that his disciples were his “mother and brothers.” That day when he was arrested, tortured, convicted and nailed to a cross. That day when his lifeless body was placed in her lap.*

*Jesus brought pain and suffering into Mary's life alongside the joy and the delight. He is likely to do so to us when we witness the world he came to save being treated so carelessly; when we see the people he came to save treat one another as objects to be used, abused, exploited and discarded; when we see the love and peace he came to share being derided and scorned.*

*Like many other crises which have befallen humankind, the Coronavirus outbreak has brought out the worst in us - racism, selfishness, blaming (I'm angered by the empty shelves, full cafes and looted foodbank donations) – But it has also brought out the best in us – community, resilience, altruism (I'm heartened to see strangers getting to know one another and offering support).*

*The Coronavirus is not God's judgement on humanity, nor it is God's test of us as individuals. In this time of crisis God is with us and longs for us to remember: **“As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.”***

## AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God,  
but made himself nothing.

Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness.

He humbled himself and was obedient to death,  
even the death of the cross.

Therefore God has raised him on high,  
and given him the name above every name:

that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bow,

and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

*All Amen.*

## PRAYER

Loving God,

as a mother feeds her children at the breast

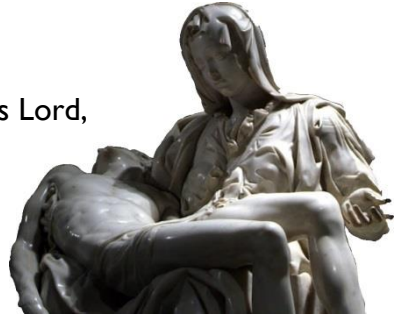
you feed us with the word of life:

help us who have tasted your goodness

to grow in grace within the household of faith;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All Amen.*



## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

In penitence and faith let us make our prayer to the Father  
and ask for his mercy and grace.

For your holy people,

that they may triumph over evil and grow in grace,

we pray to you, O Lord:

*All Lord, have mercy.*

For candidates for baptism and confirmation,

that they may live by every word that proceeds from your mouth,

we pray to you, O Lord:

*All Lord, have mercy.*

For the leaders of the nations,  
that you will guide them in the ways of mercy and truth,  
we pray to you, O Lord:  
**All Lord, have mercy.**

For the needy,  
that they may not be forgotten,  
nor the hope of the poor be taken away,  
we pray to you, O Lord:  
**All Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick in body, mind and spirit,  
that they may know your power to heal,  
we pray to you, O Lord:  
**All Lord, have mercy.**

For the poor in spirit,  
that they may inherit the kingdom of heaven  
and see you face to face,  
we pray to you, O Lord:  
**All Lord, have mercy.**

*A time for your own prayers  
(see back page for those who have asked for prayer)*

Let us commend the world, for which Christ suffered,  
to the mercy and protection of God.

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**PRAISE**     [\(click here to listen to “Mothering God” by Zebulun Highben\)](#)

Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you;  
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.  
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness;  
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.  
Your warmth gives life to the dead,  
your touch makes sinners righteous.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;  
in your love and tenderness remake us.  
In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness,  
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.

**CONCLUSION**

We believe that by his dying  
Christ destroyed death for ever.

*All Amen.*

We have been crucified with Christ  
and live by faith in the Son of God,  
who loved us and gave himself for us.

*All Amen.*

May he send us out to glory in his cross,  
and live no longer for ourselves but for him,  
who died and was raised to life for us.

*All Amen.*

Let us bless the Lord:

*All thanks be to God.*

**Blessing, honour and glory be yours,  
here and everywhere,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

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✧ *Following Christ* ✧ *Serving Community* ✧ *Welcoming All* ✧

Keeping in contact with one another is especially important during the current Coronavirus situation. If you don't have email we'll make sure you receive a copy of this weekly Service of the Word in time for us all to pray together at 10.00am on Sunday (although you may prefer to use it at another time or parts of it during the week.) If you would like to keep in touch with another member of the congregation then one of the staff team will put you in touch with them as appropriate.

**Staff Team**

Revd Barry Hengist – 020 8654 8747 or 07947 068209  
 Revd Carol Jones – 020 8777 6247  
 Revd Hilary Fife – 020 8654 8685 or 07931 761320  
 Liz Bebington – 020 8777 4840 or 07722 573282  
 Ray Wheeler – 020 8777 5271 or 07751 818405

<b>Your prayers are asked for ...</b>
<b>...those in acute need, among them:</b> Rosemary; Catriona; Sheila Dennis; Elaine Cook; David Lawn; Robyn; Elsie Lennall; Reg; Claire; Janet Pitt; Doreen Jansen; Brenda Lloyd; Angela Perry; Tracy; Pam Hooks
<b>...those whose need is ongoing, among them:</b> Bill Gibson; Clare Piner; Garth Smith; Emma-Jane; Jean; Elizabeth Lovell; Valerie Duncan; Lindsey Morgan; Brian; Martin Pitt; Julie; Ann Bloss; Hugh Aylward; George Wheatley; Ellen Maden; Sheila Dennis; Claire; Ian Cordery; Hazel Styles;
<b>...those who are no longer able to attend church:</b> Barbara Ramschit; Jean Wells; Eric Webb; Mark Hare; Ron Parsons; Clive King; Doreen Wash; Doris Hazelwood;
<b>...any who have died recently:</b> Brian Walton; Sydney Ujunwa Amadi; Fred Atkinson; Valerie Hambling;
<b>...those whose anniversary of death falls soon:</b> Leonard Eric Pearson; James Cecil Pearson; Richard James Purkis; Raymond Michael Fenner; Jean Clark