



Join others in our parish and beyond on Sundays, from 10:30am (or at any other time that suits you) to worship God, in the comfort of your home.

## God is good... all the time ....

### Call to worship

God of love,  
as Jesus reminded His disciples  
that love is always the answer,  
love us, receive our imperfect response  
and our lack of love, receive our reactions  
and our worship.

### Opening Prayer

**God, we love you, we love each other,  
and we love what you have created:  
our planet, the people who look after us,  
our families and friends; all the things and  
people that show love for us.**

**Love is the way that we know you.  
we know you as the Creator, as the Son,  
as the Spirit, we know that you are always  
with us, always in our lives,  
taking care of us, loving us.**

**Your message is love, your commandments  
are love, so, we live our lives, happy that  
you have promised to be here forever,  
because of your love for us. Amen.**

### 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 debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory, forever.  
Amen

*"...and the streets again will be full  
of boys and girls playing."  
[Zechariah 8:5]*

### Bible Reading: The Promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-21)

<sup>15</sup> 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. <sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, because He abides with you, and He will be in you.

<sup>18</sup> 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

<sup>21</sup> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

### Brief Reflection

Here is an ambiguous message - one of many church noticeboard bloopers! But I have no doubt



St Martha's EC does not love to hurt people. They love to welcome and take good care for people who hurt. Jesus understood the challenge of living in an ambiguous world where, as the saying goes 'the waters are murky and hard to wade through'. And yet it's into this very world full of joy, troubles and uncertainty that He calls us to a deeper understanding of what it means to love and follow Him. He says, **'if you love me, you will keep my commandments'**.

Now, I personally do not view this verse, as some do, as a conditional imperative statement. I do not hear Jesus saying, "If you really love me, you'd better keep

my commandments.” Instead, like many other Christians, I hear and indeed respond to Jesus’ invitation to follow His commands **because I love Him**. As one translation specialist suggests, ‘It might be easier to grasp this verse if we translate that first word as “since” instead of “if.” We would then hear better Jesus saying to us, “Since you love me, you will be keeping my commandments. Won’t you, my beloved?”’

But what commandments are Jesus referring to? Well, there are over 40 in the New Testament. They include repenting, following Him, rejoicing, letting our light shine, making disciples and loving our enemies. Another command, I mentioned recently (on Christian Aid Sunday) is, ‘love one another, as I have loved you’ (John 13:34). And it’s that “as I have loved you” part that often gets us. How are we supposed to love others the way Christ loves; the way He showed incredible compassion, listened to all, respected all and, above all, laid down His life for all? It is simply not easy for us love as Jesus loved. But thankfully, He sent us a special gift – in the person of a helper, counsellor and advocate. He is the Holy Spirit who comes alongside us to comfort, strengthen, enrich, guide, direct, teach, encourage, rebuke, exhort and abide with us forever.

Note that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our *other* advocate. We need Him with us, in us and around us, all the time. One man ([Nicholas Senz](#)) uses the picture and words below to illustrate why we need the Holy Spirit



Ever think of the Holy Spirit as your lawyer?  
If you know a bit about the devil, you should!

Also, in his book, *Encounters with Jesus*, theologian Tim Keller gives us this extremely helpful insight on the role of the Holy Spirit. He writes, ‘**Many people say that the Holy Spirit gives us power, and that’s true, but how does He do that? Does He merely zap us with higher energy levels? No—by calling Him the other Advocate [or Helper], Jesus has given us the great clue to understanding how the empowering of the Holy Spirit works. The first Advocate [Jesus] is speaking to God for you, but the second Advocate [the Holy Spirit] is speaking to you for you.**’

In other words, the Holy Spirit was sent to remind us about Christ and to empower us to live in the light of the gospel. He “speaks” to us both for our good and God’s glory. Also, just as Jesus is our advocate before the Father, the Holy Spirit is our advocate before the world – with all its mess, uncertainty, craziness and

ambiguity. We need the Holy Spirit! We need Him to help us love one another as Jesus loves us. We need Him because the world does not recognize Jesus as Christ, and because of this, the world cannot see the Spirit of Truth. On the night before the crucifixion, Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” (John 18:38), and Jesus didn’t say a word. He didn’t need to. The answer was standing right there, in front of Pilate. We need the Holy Spirit to help open eyes to see Jesus, to love Him and His people more and to make Him known, in word and through our actions. Amen.

Here is love, vast as the ocean

(Grace Community Church)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgugcW7Ez-Y>

**Here is love, vast as the ocean; loving kindness as the flood. When the Prince of Life, our Ransom; shed for us His precious blood. Who His love will not remember? Who can cease to sing His praise? He can never be forgotten; throughout Heaven's eternal days**

#### Prayer for Others and Ourselves

Ever loving God, in the long years since the world has seen you, we come together in prayer; in the hope and assurance of your commitment to us and the life of this world. We pray for ourselves, that we might be filled with your Holy Spirit, that we will be agents for peace, in a world where destruction seems insurmountable, that we will be confident in your commandment to go forth in love for you and each other.

We pray for our church (still open and meeting in the comfort of our homes) as it continues to change, to evolve, to seek out the best way to follow you. We ask that your church will be a conduit for your promise to the world, that it will work for your purpose, not its own concerns of bricks and mortar, arbitrary numbers, or the dreams of past glories.

We pray for all those on the margins of our societies, our communities, and our interests. We pray for those who are cast aside by a world obsessed by monetary wealth, the eternal goal of so-called growth, while those with the most continue to gain, and those with the least continue to lose.

We pray for our world, torn apart by fighting, by greed, by disregard for the environment. In particular we pray for all your children who have been ravaged by the sin of war, for families destroyed, lives lost, dreams shattered and liberty denied, for all those orphaned by this evil, that they will know your love, and through your people peace might become a reality. In your love, in your spirit, in your life, we pray these things. Amen

#### Final blessings

We love God, we strive to love others, we worship God, we share that knowledge with those whom we meet.

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all the time...