

## Prayers:

Loving Father, we thank you for sending Jesus to give us your promise of abundant life. Grant us reassurance for today's journey and strength for the future. By your Holy Spirit, guide us to the need around us and enfold the lost in your comfort and peace. Keep us all in your abiding love. We pray especially for:

**Sick:** Edwina, Lolita Alvira, Dawn Forey, Ruth Gillespie, Hanna Lebrato, Jack Mannix, Marion Mason, Ken Peters, Sue Ralfe and Sam White.

**RIP:** Inez Bennett, William Brignell, Beryl Duhig, William Swanwick (father) and Billy Swanwick (son).

May God's eternal love and peace enfold us. Amen.

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The Parish Office is closed.

**Matthew and Jonny are continuing to say  
Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer  
in their homes every day. Join them [here](#).**

# St John's Church

## Alternative Pew Sheet

### 3rd May 2020

## Welcome!

The Church of England continues to follow Government advice. Sadly it is not possible for services, baptisms, weddings and funerals in church to take place. We also have to keep the church closed.

This is the seventh edition of our alternative pew sheet. We are committed to keeping in touch with everyone at St Johns and offer some resources: [here](#).

If you need any help or assistance from Matthew or Jonny, please be in touch (see opposite).

**"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself  
and God our Father, who loved us  
and through grace gave us eternal comfort  
and good hope, comfort your hearts  
and strengthen them in every good work and word."  
2 Thessalonians 1:16-17**

## **ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST - MISSION STATEMENT**

Drawn together by Christ's love, we seek by his grace to live out his commandments to love the Lord our God with all of our being; and to love everyone we come across as we love ourselves.

**[www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk](http://www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk)**

Please do check our website for future updates

# St John's

## The Fourth Sunday of Easter

### **The Collect**

Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep: teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command, that all your people may be gathered into one flock, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

### **Bible Readings** (click on links to access passages):

[Acts 2:42-47](#)

[Psalm 23](#)

[1 Peter 2:19-25](#)

[John 10:1-10](#)

### **Short Sermon (by Lydia McLean, Licensed Lay Minister)**

What an exciting time it must have been in the early church! A growing church... fellowship together... inspirational teaching from the apostles who had lived with and been taught by Jesus during his ministry... awesome wonders and signs being done by the apostles... praying in the temple, and breaking bread together in each other's homes... supporting, caring for each other... praising God together.

For the apostles there was heartache, challenge, anger, disappointment, sadness, disbelief, numbness and abandonment after the crucifixion. After all the miracles and healings, things had gone wrong and their hope diminished. Since the resurrection, they had seen Jesus and eaten with him, now he was gone again and they were losing heart, rather like sheep without a shepherd.

The apostles were distraught after Jesus' Ascension before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and this resonates with us at this time of physical distancing. We have lost our sense of touch with our families, work, fellow Christians, even with God, as the apostles also felt abandonment. We are disorientated, bereft and confused. Worshipping God and caring for one another is strange as we endeavour to make sense of it all. We feel unable to share our humanity, physically and through touch, and we no longer share worship together. Maybe some of us are feeling like sheep without a shepherd.

# St John's

Yet over the last few weeks, I have shared more prayer with others than ever before; prayer over the phone and in online meetings via tablet or computer. More people than ever before, including the bed-bound and differently abled – numbers far exceeding recorded church attendance – have joined in worship via YouTube, live streaming sessions or listened to radio broadcasts. St John's Church and many other churches have online sermons, services, teaching and resources to help us learn more about God and Jesus' teaching and example. For many people, there is time to reflect and enjoy all that God offers us through these technologies. We hear that people are reading more and finding a favourite or new Bible passage brings comfort and peace.

Churches remain shut and we can feel fearful behind locked doors, holding our breath waiting for the deadlock to pass. Yet although we miss our church buildings, we remain an Easter people, the body of Christ, not only worshipping within stones and mortar, but in God's abiding presence wherever we are – in our homes, gardens or marvelling in the beauty of nature. In times of crisis, God gives us confidence to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, rejoice in his Word, pray for and encourage each other, be in contact online, through social media or phone – however fellowship works for us – being generous and sharing with one another. More than ever before, churches are reaching out and caring for the community with teaching, prayer, worship, encouragement and practical help.

The early Christians experienced confusing times after Easter and before Pentecost. It was after baptism with the Holy Spirit, that the Christian community began to grow. Through our baptism, it is God in Jesus Christ, by his resurrection and new life, who raises us from the death of sin to the new life of righteousness.

As Easter people, we are encouraged to become a learning, generous, worshipping, and evangelising church proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ together and especially for our neighbour. Jesus is the Shepherd who calls us by name; be encouraged and listen to him. For when we do, and only when we do, will all God's people, including those who feel lost, be gathered into one flock and receive Jesus' promise of abundant life. Amen.