



Collect for the day

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified; hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

<sup>6</sup> To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

### Reading from Psalm 119

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light upon my path.  
I have sworn and am determined to keep your righteous judgements.  
I am deeply troubled; preserve my life, O Lord according to your word.  
Accept, O Lord, the willing tribute of my lips,  
and teach me your judgements.  
My life is always in my hand, yet I do not forget your law.  
The wicked have set a trap for me,  
but I have not strayed from your commandments.  
Your decrees are my inheritance for ever;  
truly, they are the joy of my heart.  
I have applied my heart to fulfil your statutes for ever and to the end.





## A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

**13** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears listen!"

<sup>18</sup> "Hear then the parable of the sower. <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>23</sup> But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

### Words from Bishop Nick Baines

#### **To all parishes in the Diocese of Leeds**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are living through challenging and extraordinary times. The church, committed to the real world and the communities in which we are set, has continued to worship and serve despite the restrictions. Given the nature of the virus, it will be some time before we emerge into something resembling 'normality'. We have to be clear and honest about that.

Thank you for both the remarkable ways you have continued to be the church ... in the world ... even if the buildings had to be closed for a long time. I want to say one or two things to encourage you, building on material you might have seen on the diocesan website or had passed to you from letters I have written to the clergy.

## **Inhabiting the Scriptures**

Lockdown and our attempts to innovate ways of worshipping together have been experienced by many as a sort of 'exile'.

In the Old Testament prophets (such as Isaiah) we see people exiled to a strange land where nothing is familiar. All that shaped their life and worship had been stripped away. They lamented the loss of their familiar life (and what this said about God and them); they tried to come to terms with the present realities; and they then began to look forward to shaping a different future.

This time in our life enables us to re-read the biblical experience afresh – so much of the Bible was written by and for people whose normality was uncertainty and fragility. This also accords with the daily experience of most Christians around the world, including those in our link dioceses in Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania and Pakistan. Let's not waste the opportunity to learn anew how to live with uncertainty, aware of our own limitations and fragility.

## **Being the church**

The Church of England has a unique vocation in and for England: we are committed to particular places. We are called to pray for those in our parishes, to be the answer to our prayers when appropriate, to love and serve those in need, to care for the sick and to support those who mourn, and reach out with the good news of God's grace. We have been doing all this – and will continue to do so into the future. We know we are not always strong, but God is and we trust in him ... whatever comes our way.

## **Emergence**

We don't know what the future church might look like in every place, but we do have a role in shaping it. There will be things we need to let go of and new ways of being that are being discovered or yet to be discovered. We will emerge at different paces over the coming months and care needs to be taken over how and when we open our buildings and hold onto the new forms we have learned recently. Church House is providing detailed and digested guidance at every step, but your archdeacon and area bishop are there to be consulted for any support as we move forward.

## **Encouragement and challenge**

I mainly want to thank and encourage you. We will face big questions – nationally as well as in our diocese – about finance and buildings, threats

and opportunities. But, as a diocese we are confident and well set up to face these.

Indeed, we have been doing just this since our creation in April 2014; so, this isn't a new challenge. You can be confident that we will deal with the challenges of the months ahead with confidence in God, confidence in the Gospel, confidence in our clergy and lay leaders, confidence in our unique vocation as a church to worship and serve God together.

So, be encouraged. Use the resources available to you in the diocese and parish. Pray simply and hopefully, knowing that God is never surprised.

And please be assured of the prayers of your bishops and archdeacons, the deans and area deans, our lay staff at Church House and all who are committed to you. May God bless you in all you are and do. I look forward to the time when we can be together again, physically and in person.

In Christ.

Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds



## Let us pray

Loving father as we are joined in prayer with our brothers and sisters in faith far and wide, we give thanks for the fellowship we share and for the many ways our lives have been touched by your love this past week. We also ask for wisdom and strength to guide our faith leaders and all those involved in the challenges of moving forward while supporting one another and our communities safely. Amen

Father as we bring before you our world we hear the words of Saint Paul reminding us that your spirit is the source of life and peace. Today we pray therefore for peace, justice and tolerance in those areas of the world, our own country and communities where there is division, hatred and inequality. Send your spirit to guide us, our leaders and all those in authority so that we come together to build a fairer, kinder world. Amen

Today Father we also continue to pray for our families, friends and neighbours and we thank you for all the many acts of kindness that have brightened our days this past week. We pray for all those amongst us who are lonely, anxious and struggling to cope, for those worried about their futures and their livelihoods and particularly for our young people worrying about the next phase of their lives in these uncertain times. We also pray for all the key workers in our communities and give thanks for their sacrifice and service for the good of others. Amen

Father as we think of those who are sick in body mind or spirit, we pray that they, their loved ones and all those who care for them are given the courage, faith and strength to lighten their path in their darkest times. We bring before you particularly any those we wish to pray for today... those suffering in the pandemic and all those working to bring help and support to them. We also ask you to bless the efforts of all those working on vaccines and treatments. Amen

Finally Father we pray for all those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them, we particularly pray for those who have died and were known to us...those who have lost their lives in the pandemic and any whose anniversary falls around this time. In our sadness help us to draw comfort from the Holy Spirit within us and as we remember that out of darkness comes light. Amen

*In a moment of silence bring your own prayers to God*

The Lords 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.