



# March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

*Welcome*

## Sunday in Ascensiontide - Sunday 29th May 2022

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 572117 or at [andrew.marchurch@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.marchurch@gmail.com)

-----

### Updated Guidance issued on 3rd May:

We are still asked to wear a mask, especially by those leading worship and when singing. Washing hands and respecting people's space is still important. Wine should now be offered, for those who wish it, but dipping is not recommended.

~ Services with Social Distancing ~

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am  
St Mary's Sundays 9.15am ~ St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am  
St Wendreda's Sundays 11am

### Prayer, Collect, for this week

Father, righteous one, your beloved Son prayed that his disciples in every generation might be one as you and he are one. Look upon this assembly gathered in his name. Fulfil in us the prayer of Jesus and crown our celebration of this paschal season with your Spirit's gift of unity and love. **Amen**

Living God, Mystery of love given and received before all foundations, you wound our hearts, hardened to division and indifference: deepen our yearning for unity and enrich our love of diversity that the whole creation might share in your communion; through Jesus Christ, who makes known your love. **Amen**

### Acts of the Apostles 16 v16-34

*One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.' She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.*

*But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.' The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.*

### **Gospel of St John 17 v20-26**

*Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed: Holy Father, 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

*'Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.'*

---

### **Meditation**

‘“Parting”, they say, “is such sweet sorrow”. But surely, Mary, when finally your son was taken from you, grief must have been piled on grief. You had lost him once already in death. One such loss is enough for anyone, and a death as terrible as his is too much for most. But you suffered a double bereavement. Resurrection, beyond the faintest hope, gave him back to you for a time. Ascension snatched him away from you again, and that time the loss was final. You will live with it until your dying day. Where can any sweetness be in your sorrow?’

‘No, no! It was not like that at all,’ Mary replied, ‘There was no parting. Ascension means there can be no more parting, never, never. We just got over the shock of resurrection, that’s all, and we began to see what it meant.

‘It had all seemed such a small affair. Oh, of course the grief of his death enveloped me entirely, and of all of those who had been close to him. Yet, as we had taken him down, laboriously, from his cross, and hurried him to the Arimathean family tomb, it had all seemed so insignificant. Not for us. Our worlds had been shattered. But the soldiers had gone back to their work, the city had settled down for the rhythms of the Sabbath and the memories of Passover, and the leopards and the owls had begun to stir for the hunt. Nothing, it seemed, had changed. On our way to the tomb, we had seen no wolves living with lambs, no lions eating straw like an ox, no little children playing safely by nests of snakes. The earth seemed entirely empty of the knowledge of the Lord.

‘A few stories had been told, a few people healed. Others had become disturbed, fearful and angry, but they would soon recover their equilibrium. The world had already returned to normal. And we had dreamed such dreams! Our hopes had been so high, higher than Sinai, and brighter than the waters of Eden. Golgotha had taken them all away.

‘So, when they came flooding back so unexpectedly with the tall waters of resurrection behind them, you can imagine we were quite carried away. Where was this torrent taking us? We had pitched our tents in the dry wadi of the shadow of death, and thought the rains would never fall again. We were terrified. The waters carried us beyond desolation, beyond anything we had ever known. We had been tied up with grief, and were not ready for such freedom. We were like small children lost in a strange place, and wished only to return to where things were without hope, but at least were familiar and predictable.

‘And then, through the sounds of our panic, we caught the strains of laughter, and we knew it for certain this time as the laughter of God. We felt again his embrace, and in his arms found God’s love.

‘In truth we were being rolled on the waves of God’s merriment, and the morning stars were singing the “Alleluya Chorus”, and the heavenly beings were shouting themselves hoarse with joy. But we did not realise that. The larger truth we could not take in at first. It still seemed only a small affair. The rest of the world went on in its familiar way, and only we seemed aware that things had changed. But, if I am honest, it was not as simple as that. We were as preoccupied with our new joy, as much as we had been with our pain. We were still shut up in our little room, unaware of the deep swirl in the ocean or the trembling in the air, deaf to the shaking of the earth and the dancing in heaven. Our only thought was that we had him back, and that was all we needed. We had been full of death, and now we were bursting with the liveliness of God, and that, we thought, was enough. His resurrection had dispelled our grief and brought us the surprise of joy, but otherwise it had not yet changed us. We had not come to terms with it.

‘Not until we went out, beyond the city walls again, outside our upper room, beyond the cramped streets of the old city, and climbed, as we had so many times with him, the low ridge of the Mount of Olives. We looked towards the Dead Sea, and saw on its shores meadows full of flowers and woods of new-leaved trees. Crowning the heights of the mountains on its far side was a great city, shining gold in the sun. The colours of its precious stones made an arc that tied heaven to earth. A carnival procession was winding its way through the city’s streets, and the music of the angels’ band came faintly to our ears. You have never heard such music in all your born days! And there he was! In the middle of the procession, riding on the shoulders of Adam and Eve! They set him down in the middle of a large square, and we watched as God was made complete again, and the Creator and the bright Spirit took his pierced hands in theirs and danced. My word, how the angels played then and how the people cheered with them, and threw our hats as high as heaven!

‘We knew then that his death and resurrection had not been small affairs at all. They did not belong to us for us to keep. They belonged to all the world, to all creation, to heaven and all eternity. We let them go, and they set us free. All was changed, and in due time all would be well. My son was home, and I would never lose him again. And so, you see, there was no parting. Ascension means there can be no more parting. Never. Never. Never ever.’

## God bless, Andrew

---

### Prayers

O God, you withdraw from sight that you may be known by our love: help us to enter the cloud where you are hidden, and surrender all our certainty to the darkness of faith in Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

All nations shall come and worship you, O Christ, and share in the feast of your kingdom.

Great and wonderful are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty.

Just and true are your ways, O ruler of the nations.

Who shall not revere and praise your name, O Lord? For you alone are holy.

All nations shall come and worship in your presence: for your just dealings have been revealed.

To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might, for ever and ever.

**Amen**

Seeing we have a great high priest who has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, and make our confession to our Lord.

Lord Jesus, you suffered a cruel death on the cross for our redemption, yet we have forgotten your pain and stayed in the realm of evil you have defeated. Your name is above every name; yet we bow to the gods of money and war.

**Lord have mercy**

Lord Jesus, you were raised from death to bring us new life, yet we have preferred the comfort of the familiar, and the empty promises of a sinful world. You turn our hearts towards the world; yet we look away from what is real.

**Christ have mercy**

Lord Jesus, you have ascended to your Father and our Father, your God and our God; plead there at the right hand of God for our forgiveness and entry into the fullness of his presence. You call us as your broken body, yet we refuse to share the gift of forgiveness.

**Lord have mercy**

As we wait in silence, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**

As we listen to your word, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**

As we worship you in majesty, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**

As we long for your refreshing, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**

As we long for your renewing, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**

As we long for your equipping, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**

As we long for your empowering, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**