

United Parish@Home

Sunday Services



September 2025

**The United Parish of Chinnor, Sydenham,
Aston Rowant and Crowell**

The ministry team offer you these services, particularly if you find you are unable to attend church.

Our prayer is that these services will help you still feel connected to, and loved by, your church family.

September Service rota page 3

Prayers page 4

Events page 5

Pastoral letter page 7

Sunday September 7th page 9

Sunday September 14th page 17

Sunday September 21st page 24

Sunday September 28th page 35

September 2025	TIME	CHURCH	SERVICE	LED BY
Sunday 7th September TRINITY 12 Green	8am	St Andrew's, Chinnor	Holy Communion (No hymns)	Jacky
	9am	Aston Rowant	Morning Prayer	Margaret
	10:30am	St Andrew's Chinnor	Holy Communion	Jacky
	6pm	St Andrew's Chinnor	Taizé	Tony + Monica
Sunday 14th Sept TRINITY 13 Green	9am	Aston Rowant	Holy Communion	Jacky
	10:30am	St Andrew's, Chinnor	All Age Worship	Tessa and Jo
	10:30am	Sydenham	Harvest Festival	Joan
	6pm	Crowell	Holy Communion	Tony
Sunday 21st Sept TRINITY 14 Green	8am	St Andrew's Chinnor	Holy Communion	Jacky
	9am	Aston Rowant	Harvest Festival	Brian, Richard Pam
	10:30 am	St Andrew's, Chinnor	Harvest Festival with Methodists	Jacky
	6pm	Sydenham	BCP Evensong	Margaret
Sunday 28th Sept TRINITY 15 Green	9am	Aston Rowant	Holy Communion	Tony
	10:30 am	St Andrew's, Chinnor	Holy Communion	Joan and Margaret
	6pm	Crowell	Harvest Supper and Hymns	Jacky

PRAYERS

*Prayer is God listening to the whispers of the World'.
This quote came from a child at St Andrew's School*

Please pray for:	Baptisms	For those who mourn
<p>Bev Joan Brian Dorothy Claire Karen Baby Mollie Rose</p>	<p>No baptisms this month</p> <p>Weddings No weddings this month</p>	<p>for:</p> <p>David "Skip" Bartlett</p> <p>Alan Tew</p>

Parish Prayer Link



If you would like prayers offered for yourself, someone you know or a situation you are aware of, please do let us know by contacting Tricia in the Parish Office by email at office@unitedparish.church or by phone on 01844 352472

Your request will be handled with utmost sensitivity and discretion.

And if you would like to become one of the prayer link members then please get in touch with Jacky.

CONFIRMATION



An invitation to the next part of your faith journey

Confirmation is an ancient Church of England rite of passage that marks a person taking responsibility for their own faith, and moving on from having Godparents (still to be cherished, of course!).

Bishop Gavin is coming to the United Parish to confirm our candidates. If you would like to join them and become confirmed yourself, do let me know and we can have a chat about it.

**The Confirmation service date is
Sunday 30th November at 1030am.**

There does need to be some preparation before you are confirmed, once I have an idea of who would like to be confirmed I'll arrange the preparation sessions accordingly.

Journeying through Grief



A four-week course offering comfort, hope and gentle support in bereavement.

Whether your loss is recent or long ago, you are warmly invited to a small, safe group where we explore grief in light of Christian hope.

- **Starting: Monday 6th October**
- **Time: 3pm – 4:30pm**
- **Venue: St Andrew's Church, Chinnor**
- **Duration: 4 weeks**
- **Places: 12 places available (but don't worry it will run again)**

To book a place please contact Rev'd Jacky

rector@unitedparish.church

07769 825 305

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Matthew 5 vs 4

PASTORAL LETTER September 2025
by Rev'd. Brian Griffiths

Greetings dear reader

So, here you are reading this month's @home magazine. Tricia in the church office tells me this Magazine is sent out by email to 300 people. So, who are these 300 people? They are friends of the United Parish or ex-parishioners who have moved away or the house-bound or those away at College or University. This 300 is significant – it is effectively another congregation, but one at a distance. You could call them a 'hidden congregation' when compared to our electoral role number of 124. It shows the extent of the reach of the church into the community and how the ministry of the church is appreciated.

In addition to these email copies, 100 hard copies of the Parish Magazine are printed in booklet form and these are mostly for the four sets of congregations in the United Parish. Many congregation members take them home for information, as an aide-memoir or for prayer. The office printing machine is really a sophisticated computer which, can print in a large variety of sizes, formats and styles. It takes minutes to print the 50 pages of each magazine.

Recently, a visit to Hereford Cathedral helped me to put these Parish Magazine numbers in an historical context. I had a tour of the Cathedral Chained Book Library, see the LHS photo. In a chained library, the books are attached to their bookcase by a chain, which is sufficiently long enough to allow the books to be taken from their shelves and read but not removed from the library itself. Recording and disseminating information is quick and easy today, but in medieval times, this process, was slow and laborious. Manuscripts were written by hand. This process of copying and disseminating books was essential to the preservation of knowledge.

The Hereford Chained Book Library is the largest in the UK. The oldest book in the collection is the Hereford Gospel, dated 780. The RHS photo shows the illuminated front-piece of the gospel.

Our expert guide told us that each hand-written manuscript takes months to produce and costs the equivalent of a village farm, being made up of the cost of the skins plus the cost of the scribe/monk.

In contrast our parish magazines costs a small amount to 'make', and it is done in seconds. However, the end result is the same – it is the dissemination of knowledge, so easy today but so hard in those days. Aren't we lucky that our parish information and the knowledge it contains can be disseminated so easily and that we live in a country where all can read and write, not just monks?



Sunday 7th September

12th Sunday of Trinity

Opening prayer

Dear Lord, we come to you from busy lives, with our burdens and concerns; help us to place these worries in your care. May we centre our hearts and minds on you, so we can worship you as you deserve. Amen

Psalm 1

Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither-
whatever they do prospers.
Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Prayer of confession

Father God, we have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and humbly repent for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us; that we might delight in your will and walk your ways to the glory of your name. Amen

Collect

The 12th Sunday of Trinity

Almighty and everlasting God,
who art always more ready to hear than we to pray,
and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve:
pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy,
forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid
and giving us those good things
which we art not worthy to ask,
but through the merits of mediation
of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Bible Reading

Luke 14 vs 25-33 (*The cost of being a Disciple*)

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters-yes, even their own life-such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For, if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Reflection *(by Margaret)*

Early in the last century two groups of explorers, one British, led by Captain R Scott, and one Norwegian, led by Roald Amundsen, set out to race to the South Pole. When Captain Scott reached the summit, he found that the Norwegians had planted their national flag a month before. Not to be able to plant the British flag was a great disappointment to him and his team.

The return trek without the victor's crown was beset with appalling weather conditions and reduced rations. Lawrence Oates a member of the team, developed severe frostbite. His concern for his team members survival and wellbeing was so great, that one night when they were weatherbound, Oates left the safety of the tent and walked out into the blizzard, sacrificing his own life for his friends.

In our Gospel reading it is this type of loyalty and self-sacrifice Jesus wants us to consider as part of our own Christian witness.

As always when speaking to his disciples he used dramatic and descriptive language to demonstrate true commitment and dedication. This was so that his disciple truly understood what he was asking of them. There were to be no half measures.

In the same way Jesus calls us to do the same, taking on the responsibility to prepare ourselves as disciples of Christ. In the end nothing and no one must come between us and our Christian faith: nothing can ever be more important than carrying out the will of the God to whom we have pledged our lives.

As Christians, Jesus wants us to have no doubts as to what our commitment must be, and to what extent we should go in being true to our faith.

Many followed Jesus, many had witnessed miracles, the healing, heard him offer the promise joy and glory to the downtrodden and oppressed. They wanted to be part of the action to share the immediacy of events, touching his glory.

Knowing that he was on his way to Jerusalem, he lays bare the truth of what will happen. He wants followers, not hangers on, sincere disciples, not opportunists. So, he challenges them, can they pay the price and risk having to make the sacrifices? Are they equal to the challenge, can they face the cross?

Although it was over 2,000 years since Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus still poses this question to us today. Do we, can we make the same kind of sacrifices and meet the challenge of being one of Jesus' disciples in our world today?

If our personal discipleship does not contain questions about these elements of our lives, perhaps we are living more like hangers on, missing the point.

Are we following Jesus for the rewards, security, community, consultation, rather than being committed to him and to his values?

He wants us to commit ourselves to him, take the risks and make those tough choices because in the end, it's this way of life that will bring us greater joy than we could ever imagine.

It will be tough, Jesus doesn't want heroics, seeking pain for its own sake; remember Jesus has done the suffering for us. He doesn't want us to live in fear but be courageous.

If we live in constant fear, if we are scared of the risk, and do nothing, then our lives are like an unopened gift, like salt that has lost its saltiness: useless.

A Christian life worth living is one that is not afraid of commitment of standing up for what one believes in and being prepared to share it with those we meet.

It is risking derision by offering ourselves by effort of time and money to enhance the lives of others.

It may even take us to the furthest boundary of human giving, like in the case of Lawrence Oates, the offering of our lives that others might live.

Jesus has gone before us, and he doesn't want us to fear the cross and our end-times, in whatever form it takes in our lives. He shows us the way and is the perfect example if, however imperfectly, we too have the courage to follow him.

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

you gave everything of yourself for our sake and yet our response can be meagre.

Confront us with the challenge of your good news, that we may give freely of all that we are and have in your service as we journey day by day.

Refresh our hearts in you and fit us for your Kingdom.

Lord Jesus,

you call us to discern your presence in the world:

grant us wisdom to perceive you, grant us courage to work with you,
grant us power to proclaim you, above all grant us courage to love you
and to share love with those whom we meet, day by day.

Lord Jesus,

We give thanks for family and friends who support us in our hour of need. We also give thanks to those who minister to us as they share their Christian faith through love.

Give us thankful hearts for the love expressed and teach us to trust in your divine care.

Lord Jesus,

We give thanks for the promise of eternal life and the hope of glory, for all the saints who are in your kingdom.

We pray for loved ones and friends who are departed from us. May we, like them be granted a glimpse of your glory. Amen

A time for personal 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 today 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

Hymn The Church's one Foundation

The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the word:
from heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy Bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses
with every grace endued.

'Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace for evermore;
till with the vision glorious
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious
shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is one:
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with thee.

Final Prayer and Blessing

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for this time as we gather our hearts and minds.

As we leave this time, and get on with our everyday lives, help us to carry your love in our hearts and speak kindness into all situations.

In your loving name we pray. Amen

Rejoicing that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are with us wherever we are. Amen

Sunday September 14th 2025

Trinity 13

Introduction

In the Church of England Lectionary, which sets out the readings for each Sunday of the year, there are 37 bible passages set for today, which includes Harvest readings which can be used on any Sunday in Autumn for a Harvest Festival. I was at a loss to begin with in deciding which reading to select for this @Home service. Then when I read the reading I've selected, it resonated with my experience in life. I hope you may find it relevant to your experience too.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, we remember the times in our lives when we have felt lost, or when we have lost something precious. We thank you for your comfort and presence now, as we remember these times, and thank you for whenever you have used these times to deepen our love and faith in you, and given us a peace with you, despite the circumstances. For those situations though where we have been left with questions for you about "Why?", help us today through this service to trust in you. Turn our hearts now to praise you. **Amen**

A Psalm set for this Sunday Psalm 100

1 O be joyful in the Lord, all the earth;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.
2 Know that the Lord is God;
it is he that has made us and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

3 Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and bless his name.

4 For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting,
and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

**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.**

Confession

Father,
we confess there are times when we have lost our way.
We are not worthy to be called your children.
We turn to you again.
Have mercy on us,
bring us back to yourself
as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Absolution

May almighty God,
who sent his Son into the world to save the lost,
bring us his pardon and peace, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reading Luke 15 vs 1-10

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

15 Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

3 So he told them this parable: ⁴ 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ 'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

Reflection (*By Tony*)

When reading this passage one of the things that struck me was how little contact my 5 grandchildren have with coins! In fact the last time I went shopping with two of them, they helped me swipe my phone to pay for their snack!!

But I can remember recently dropping a £1 coin in my car and spending ages searching for it as there were so many places it could have rolled into and remained hidden for ages, or maybe for ever. Like the woman with the lamp, I found a light, in my case a torch, was the key to being reunited with my money. It was such a good feeling after quite a search.

I have also though had the experience of 'losing' a Christian friend, who for all sorts of complicated reasons drifted away from Church and Christian fellowship. I don't know if they are truly 'lost' and separated from God, but I do know that I feel the loss of their fellowship, of journeying with them through life as part of one 'flock'.

This passage re-awakens my awareness of the call to share with Jesus Christ his passion for the lost.

Jesus was prepared to be on the receiving end of comments such as: *'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'* He was to go even further to demonstrate he would do anything, absolutely anything to find the 'lost', even suffer and die on a cross.

In seeking the 'lost', Jesus the Son, makes right the relationship of human beings with their Creator, God the Father. This is part of God's plan of salvation for a 'lost' World, both human and material. Being found, we share in this plan which ultimately will usher in the promised new Heaven and New Earth. God blesses us with the light of the Holy Spirit in our search for the 'lost'.

Joining in with what God is already doing in seeking the 'lost', may place us in spaces where people may 'grumble' about us and the company we keep. But the prize of the 'lost' being reunited with their Maker is 'joy in heaven', so much more than my delight in finding a £1 coin!!

So, let's go seeking so we can rejoice together with those who discover, or re-discover, just how much Jesus loves us all.

Collect

Almighty God,
you search us and know us:
may we rely on you in strength
and rest on you in weakness,
now and in all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Intercessions

Make your ways known upon earth, Lord God, your saving power among all peoples.

We pause to reflect and pray, asking God to seek out the lost, especially those precious to us. We ask him to show us how we might play our part in helping others find their way.

Renew your Church in holiness and help us to serve you with joy.

We pause to reflect and pray, asking God to bless and inspire our United Parish to be Salt and Light for the lost in our communities.

Guide the leaders of this and every nation, that justice may prevail throughout the world.

We pause to reflect and pray for those parts of the World we have read or heard about today, where is there war and conflict, poverty and injustice, hunger and disease

Let not the needy be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

We pause to reflect and pray for those known to us who are unwell in body, mind or spirit, and for those who are dying and for those who grieve

Make us instruments of your peace and let your glory be over all the earth.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **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 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.**

Hymn

1 I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me.
How He left His home in glory
For the cross of Calvary.
I was lost, but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray,
Threw His loving arms around me,
Drew me back into His way.

2 I was bruised, but Jesus healed me;
Faint was I from many a fall;
Sight was gone, and fears possessed me,
But He freed me from them all.
Days of darkness still come o'er me,
Sorrow's paths I often tread,
But the Savior still is with me;
By His hand I'm safely led.

3 He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then He'll bear me safely over,
Where the loved ones I shall meet.
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

Francis H Rowley 1886

Blessing

In darkness and in light, in trouble and in joy,
help us, Heavenly Father, to trust your love,
to serve your purpose, and to praise your name;
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Sunday 21st September 2025

St Matthew's Day, Trinity 14

Today we celebrate the feast day of one of the founding members of the church - St Matthew. He was one of the Apostles and the author of the first gospel. He must have been so close to Jesus as he obeyed the call to 'follow me'. Thus, our theme for today is the famous follower St Matthew.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, no money can buy your love, no words can adequately express our thanks, no actions can fully demonstrate our gratitude to you our Saviour and King. So, as we start this service, as we read your word, as we pray and as we rejoice, we offer you our best, and celebrate your presence with us, in this moment and in each moment of this day. Amen

Collect for St Matthew's Day

We thank you, heavenly Father, for the witness of your apostle and evangelist Matthew to the Gospel of your Son our Saviour; and we pray that, after his example, we may with ready hearts obey the calling of our Lord to follow him; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 113

¹ Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, you his servants; praise the name of the LORD.

² Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and for evermore.

³ From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

⁴ The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.

⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,

⁶ who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

⁷ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people.

⁹He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.

Gospel Jesus Calls Matthew,

Luke 5 vs 27 to 32

²⁷ After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Matthew sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, ²⁸ and Matthew got up, left everything and followed him. ²⁹ Then Matthew held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” ³¹ Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Reflection *(by Brian)*

According to the commentators, it is thought that Jesus is out and about on a road which has some form of toll station on it, probably at a cross road on the edge of a significant town. Jesus sees a tax collector named Levi at this cross-roads tax station. This Levi is most often called Matthew in the Gospels. He is the one who eventually writes the Gospel of Matthew. In fact, after this account, he is never called Levi again. Many people in the Bible have two names – one for before they met Jesus and one for after. Simon became Peter. Saul became Paul. Levi becomes Matthew. Levi means “joined” whereas Matthew means “gift of God.” And in Luke 5, we see that Levi receives the greatest gift there is.

One can image the scene, as Jesus is walking through this town, he sees Levi sitting there, at his tax collecting booth, with bodyguards on either side. Jesus simply says to Levi, “follow me.” We’re not told any back history that enables us to see the context. But we are told two things that help.

Firstly, that Levi left everything to follow Jesus which surely means his job, his livelihood, his security – what of his wife and children I wonder?

This is almost identical to what we saw Peter do when Jesus called him to be a fisher of men. Back in Luke 5:11, Peter, James and John left all and followed Jesus. Levi does the same thing here. He left his street thugs behind. He left his tax gathering booth and therefore all the money and stood up and followed Jesus. In each case Peter, James, John and indeed Levi left everything and followed Jesus.

Secondly, Levi held a banquet in honour of Jesus at his own house. Note, it's not just a banquet but a great banquet. Matthew publicly nails his colours to the mast. In response to Jesus saying follow me, by relinquishing the tax booth, Matthew is effectively saying "yes, I will follow you". And indeed, he does. Tradition has it that he carried the gospel to Ethiopia and Persia. Perhaps it is of no surprise that Matthew is the patron saint of accountants.

Personal prayer

Lord God, we thank you for the life and example of your servant Matthew. May we like him offer ourselves in your service that through our actions, your Kingdom may come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Father, we bring to mind our church, both here in Chinnor and throughout the world. We pray for right values and priorities in our attitude and in our planning that we may have your blessings in our lives.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We bring to mind all who lead and govern, and all meetings where important decisions are made. We pray that justice and mercy are upheld in line with your loving will. We pray for all local and national governments as they make decisions of significance such that conflicts may cease and peace reign.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We bring to mind our circle of family and friends with whom we share the good and the difficult times. We pray for grace to discern more readily the good in each person and the gifts they have to offer.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We bring to mind those caught up in the frenetic pressures of life and who are stressed to breaking point. We pray for insight and courage to change things.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We bring to mind those we know would love us to pray for them at this time, especially

We pray for the lonely, the ill, the pressured, the bereaved, especially

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn Why not say or indeed sing the following hymn:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness;
And all these things shall be added unto you. Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Ask, and it shall be given unto you; Seek, and you shall find.
Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out from the mouth of God. Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Thanksgiving Prayer

Heavenly Father, I am grateful for the gift of faith and the spiritual life You have blessed me with. Without these, I would be adrift without purpose, grace, or understanding of life's meaning. Thank you for filling my heart with hope, my soul with peace, and my life with purpose, just as you did for your Apostle Matthew. Amen.

The Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Sunday 28th September

Trinity 15

O Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.

Psalm 25.1a

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 146

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

² I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

³ Do not put your trust in princes,

in mortals, in whom there is no help.

⁴ When their breath departs, they return to the earth;

on that very day their plans perish.

⁵ Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the Lord their God,

⁶ who made heaven and earth,

the sea, and all that is in them;

who keeps faith for ever;

⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free;
⁸ the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.
⁹ The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
¹⁰ The Lord will reign for ever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the Lord!

Gospel Reading Luke 16 vs 19-31

‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹ who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²² The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ He called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.” ²⁵ But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.

²⁶ Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.” ²⁷ He said, “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house— ²⁸ for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.” ²⁹ Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.” ³⁰ He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” ³¹ He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.””

Reflection *(by Jacky)*

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is unique to Luke’s Gospel and it fits with the concerns that we often see in Luke: concern for the poor, warnings about riches, and God’s heart for outsiders.

As presented in Luke, this is the last of a string of parables and Jesus tells it in response to the Pharisees, who sneered at the parable of the Dishonest Manager (Luke 16:1-13) and Jesus saying that you cannot serve both God and money. We are told that they sneered because “they loved money”.

This is parable that contains vivid and colourful details, maybe inviting us to use our imaginations to picture the story and the contrasts that are painted for us.

In life, the rich man has everything while Lazarus lays hungry and unclean at his gate, unnoticed by the rich man.

In death, however, their situations are dramatically reversed: Lazarus is comforted by Abraham and the rich man is in torment.

The message here is that money and wealth are not bad or evil but they are spiritually dangerous, because wealth can stop us seeing the suffering of others. It is easy to see wealth and the good life as a sign God's blessing and approval, and this is how the Pharisees thought. And the danger in that way of thinking is to assume anyone less fortunate is not blessed, is not loved by God.

This means that harsh judgements on others could be made, and kindness and compassion not extended to the less fortunate.

The rich man's mistake was not that he had possessions and wealth, but that he closed his heart. Although he did not deliberately hurt Lazarus; he didn't see his suffering and ignored him.

Jesus is also teaching us that our worldly possessions, wealth and status in this life will not necessarily directly translate into the life to come. How close we are to God (at Abraham's side or in Hades) depends on our hearts and if we have lived a life of loving compassion.

In the parable Abraham refuses the rich man's request for Lazarus to warn his brothers. This may seem harsh, but what this tells us is that, actually, we do already know how we should respond to each other, and to God. We have the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus, and we have our intuition and consciousness to guide us.

How we live is the choice we make. And if we are determined to consistently make bad choices then even the resurrection of Lazarus will not convince us.

This parable leaves us with both a warning and an invitation. It asks us to look honestly at our relationship with money, to notice those who suffer at our gate, and to remember that in God's kingdom true riches are found not in possessions but in compassion, generosity, and love.

The Benedictus (*The Song of Zechariah*)

- ¹ Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.
- ² He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.
- ³ Through his holy prophets God promised of old
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
- ⁴ To show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.
- ⁵ This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- ⁶ Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his
sight
all the days of our life.
- ⁷ And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- ⁸ To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- ⁹ In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1.68-79

Prayers

Take some time to offer to God your own prayers.

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Awaiting his coming in glory, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

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.

The Conclusion

May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.

Let us bless the Lord, thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn (to sing aloud or silently, or to pray with)

O Jesus, I have promised

To serve Thee to the end;

Be Thou forever near me,

My Master and my Friend;

I shall not fear the battle

If Thou art by my side,

Nor wander from the pathway

If Thou wilt be my Guide.

Oh, let me feel Thee near me;

The world is ever near;

I see the sights that dazzle,

The tempting sounds I hear;

My foes are ever near me,

Around me and within;

But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,

And shield my soul from sin.

Oh, let me hear Thee speaking,
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will;
Oh, speak to reassure me,
To hasten, or control;
Oh, speak, and make me listen,
Thou Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised
To all who follow Thee
That where Thou art in glory
There shall Thy servant be;
And Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Oh, give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend.

Oh, let me see Thy footmarks,
And in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
Is in Thy strength alone.
Oh, guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then to rest receive me,
My Saviour and my Friend.