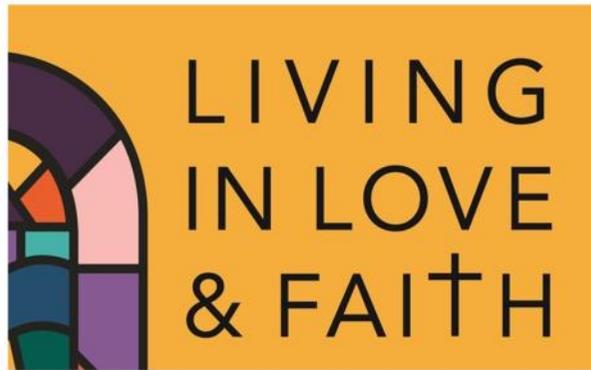




**ST JAMES' CHURCH, ISLINGTON N1 8PF**  
**15 November 2020 2 BEFORE ADVENT 20/46**

Readers: Jack Carter and Nick Fryer  
 Prayers: Sergio Villicana, Cecile Son-Vicente  
 Kerry Sabine  
 Organist: Adam Dickson  
 AV editor: Adam Dickson  
 Hymns: AM522 We cannot measure  
 WS93 We will lay our burden down  
 SP175 Here in this place  
 AM265 There's a Spirit in the air

**Collect: Gracious God, you have richly blessed all creation with your own gifts and skills; encourage us to use our talents generously so that, remaining faithful to your vision on earth, we may finally inherit your glory in the world to come. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.**



**CHANGING ATTITUDES**

It is so easy to 'have opinions' about all kinds of things without asking the question: is this actually fair and accurate? I say this because I have found myself getting very caught up with the American election in a very partisan way! Was I always being entirely objective?!

The theme for this week is about the way we think about identity, sexual relationships

and about marriage. This follows the launch of a new programme from the central Church called *Living in Love and Faith*, designed to get the whole Church to explore the questions posed by the LGBTI+ community (and others) about the rightness of accepting same sex partnerships. Are the so called 'clobber texts', which decry any kind of intimacy between people of the same gender, the absolute last word or can they be set in a new context for the 21st century?

The major intention of the LLF initiative is to find ways for us to talk openly and generously about a really big issue in our society. As such it doesn't just apply to this debate but to all major areas of disagreement. Our hope is to offer a discussion group in the New Year and to make available the LLF resources that are available on line including videos, pamphlets and a major book. Do think about whether you would like to take part.

**ARENA e-NEWSLETTER** Sorry: a glitch with the wi-fi at the Vicarage meant that it hasn't been possible to publish the Arena newsletter this week.

**THE PCC meets on Monday 23rd November** - but will have to convene again in December when we know the result of the Chancellor's ruling on the rebuilding of the organ. On the agenda: the equipment used to stream our services. The good news is that last week we got over 60 'hits' and received very supportive comments from both from older and younger families who say that there are times when watching from home is their only option. But currently services are recorded and edited on borrowed equipment before being transmitted at 10am each Sunday. The issue is this: if we bought new equipment to improve the quality and to make these broadcasts easier to produce, can we really justify the costs involved?

*St James' Islington: discovering how to live like Jesus in the 21st century*



**SORRY TO SEE YOU GO** We have often talked about the revolving door at St James' As people join us (Welcome!) so others leave. This week we say a sad goodbye to Kerry, Chris and Ben Sabine who leave Baring Street for Wanstead. Kerry was, you will remember, a brilliant PCC secretary but was also married here, made her First Communion here and brought Ben for baptism. Also on the move Brian and Oscar Yeats who leave New North Road for Edinburgh. They sadly lost Caroline at the beginning of 2020. We

wish them all every blessing and the hope they will still keep in touch with St James'. **SUNDAY SCHOOL** Thanks to those who have 'opted in' to the process of receiving Sunday School materials at home. At the moment we have 16 children requesting this for the duration of the present lock-down which we are still assuming will end on December 2nd. We will do all we can to meet demand!

**PACK-UP** Although there are fewer members of the street community using the service at the moment (they really miss not being able to sit down) our volunteers are continuing to offer a hot lunch each week. This Christmas they will also be sharing presents among the guests. As before, Toni Parker would welcome gifts of toiletries etc. Do help if you can.

**THIS WEEK**  
 Sun 15 *2nd SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT* On-line Service of the Word available.  
 Mon 12.30pm Pack-Up take-away service only.  
 Tues No 8.30am Morning Prayer or 9am Mass.  
 Wed No 10am Mass.  
 Thurs No 6pm Evening Prayer and Office session.  
 Sun 22 *CHRIST THE KING* On-line Service of the Word available from 10am.

**Calendar and Daily Prayer themes**  
 Sun 15 *2nd SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT* Sam, Joe, Charlie and Isla Seabrook  
 Mon 16 *DEL Wk 33* Nick, Isabelle, Maxwell and Leon Sharples  
 Tues 17 *St Hugh* Susan and Eric Sorensen; Claire, Alex, Kaitlin and Oliver Suksiri  
 Wed 18 *Feria* Vera Taggart; Fr Stephen Taylor; Ken and Margaret Thompson  
 Thurs 19 *St Hilda* Sergio Villicana and Cecilia Son-Vicente; Fr Victor de Waal  
 Fri 20 *St Edmund* Belle Williams, Tom, Poppy, Pearl and Bow Wheatley  
 Sat 21 *Feria* Tim Willis; Jay, Lucy, Ava, Ivy and Bella Wilson  
 Sun 22 *CHRIST THE KING* Chris Wright; Brian, Oscar and Kate Yeats

**PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome**

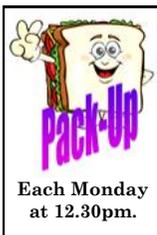
**BIRTHDAYS** Happy Birthday ton Tuesday to Tayah Phillips who will be 12 and on Wednesday to Belle Williams, mother to Poppy, Pearl and Bow.

**SICK** Christopher Browne, Emily Grainger, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Kingsley Lewis, John Roden, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Vera Taggart and Melanie Toogood.

**ANNIVERSARIES** 16th: William Saunders (1943); 17th: Emma Falshaw (1992), Frederick William Porter, architect of St James' (1901).

**INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS** In the US: Suzanne Smith, Grace Church, Alvin. Suzanne's husband Travis is Rector of Holy Comforter, Angleton, 14 miles away. In Japan: Fr Sebastian and Yuki Naniwa, serving in a parish in Ehime near Hiroshima.

**PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE** **Nazanin Zaghari-Radcliffe's** second trial has been postponed. It is impossible to imagine what she is going through. The news about **Kylie Moore-Gilbert** (left) is equally difficult. She is in the notorious Qarchak prison. Unable to be in regular contact with her family she admits to being 'in a very bad place'. She has been held since September 2018.



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 Churchwardens: Hilary Roden and Isabel Nisbet | Hall Bookings: hallatstjames@gmail.com



PARISH MASS  
for the  
2nd Sunday before Advent

as streamed from  
St James' Church,  
Prebend Street  
London N1

SERVICE OF THE WORD  
FOR 2nd SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT 2020

1st Hymn: **AM522 We cannot measure how you heal** [t Ye banks and braes]

*We cannot measure how you heal  
or answer every sufferer's prayer,  
yet we believe your grace responds  
where faith and doubt unite to care.  
But present too is love that tends  
the hurt we never hoped to find,  
the private agonies inside,  
the memories that haunt the mind.*

*So some have come who need your help,  
and some have come to make amends:  
your hands which shaped and saved the world  
are present in the touch of friends.  
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here  
to mend the body, mind and soul,  
to disentangle peace from pain  
and make your broken people whole.* (Words: John Bell and Graham Maule)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**  
Peace be with you!

Welcome to St James', Islington, for this Service of the Word. During this period of lockdown we are delighted to be joined by friends and family not just in London and in other parts of the UK but also in North America, in France, Cyprus and in Japan. Wherever you are, welcome!

Last Sunday we took the theme of 'the Lonely Soldier' as we marked Remembrance Sunday together. In a strange way the theme for today also has as its backdrop, the feelings of isolation, loneliness and exclusion.

It was back in 2017 when the Church of England started a formal conversation about social attitudes to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. Aware that there are hugely painful divisions in our society as well as in the Church, the aim has been to set up a proper dialogue that would enable views to be honestly expressed - and properly and graciously listened to.

Of course there was a great deal of scepticism when the idea was first mooted. Understanding who we are and who others are, is fraught with difficulties.

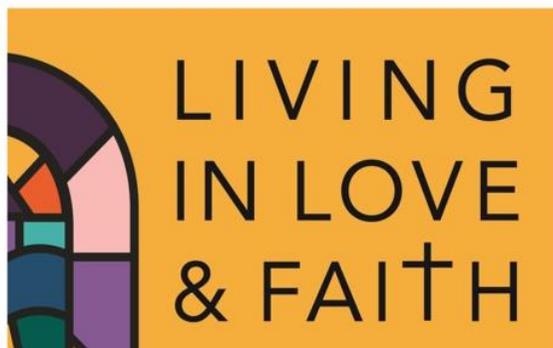
But if the Good News of Jesus Christ is to mean anything we have to learn how to engage with each other at the deepest level so that we grow in our knowledge of the way God is at work among each and every member of his creation. whatever their sexual orientation.

It is founded on the words of Jesus 'I have come so that you may have life, life in all its fulness.' (St John 10: 10).

The resources for this dialogue come under the title 'Living in Love and Faith' (LLF). As the Archbishops say in their introduction: *This process is an opportunity to understand where we are in God's story, how we hear God and how we can learn from each other. We hope that through engaging with the materials now available, people will be inspired by Scripture's glorious vision of God's intention for human life and, more than ever, to see Christ in one another.*

So we begin by watching a short introductory video released as a taster for the conversations which we hope will follow. The parish will buy copies of the key book and also make available the 'Living in Love and Faith' course booklet. Both of these have background videos, podcasts and also some recommendations for further reading.

We may be in lockdown but we can still carry on trying to see where God is leading us and what he is already doing...



So the scene is set but we cannot pray through any of these things unless we ask the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts, to still our minds and to be with us now - wherever we are - thanking him for all that he has given us this week; thanking him too for the fellowship of the Church which links us not just with other members of St James' but also with our fellow Christians around the world. We start with our Collect for the 2nd Sunday before Advent:

### Collect

**Gracious God, you have richly blessed all creation with your own gifts and skills; encourage us to use our talents generously so that, remaining faithful to your vision on earth, we may finally inherit your glory in the world to come. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Reading:* (1 Thessalonians 5: 4-11 CEV) For you, my friends, should not be living under a cloud. You will not be caught unawares at the end of time because you are all children of light not children of the dark.

But take care not to be complacent. Live your life with faith and with love. Hold on to the vision that God has given you and to the hope of salvation. For God has not condemned us to rejection but intends that we should receive the glorious promise of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, whoever we are, we may live with him.

From now on, do all in your power to encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*2nd Hymn:* **WS93 We will lay our burden down**

[t Laying down]

*We will lay our burden down,  
we will lay our burden down,  
we will lay our burden down  
in the hands of the risen Lord.*

*We will share both hurt and hope,  
we will share both hurt and hope,  
we will share both hurt and hope  
with the hands of the risen Lord.*

*We will walk the paths of peace,  
we will walk the paths of peace,  
we will walk the paths of peace  
hand in hand with the risen Lord.*

(Words: John Bell and Graham Maule, ed)

*Gospel Acclamation:*

**Alleluia. Alleluia. Make your home in me, as I make mine in you; whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty. Alleluia.**

*Gospel:* (St John 10: 1-10) Jesus said, 'I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for them and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.

Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheepfold. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.

I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out to find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON FOR 2nd SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT | 08.11.2020**

I Thessalonians 5: 4-11; St John 10: 1-10

What do you think we will remember about the year 2020 in five years time?! No doubt we will still be talking about the way we coped with the Covid pandemic, maybe still thinking about the final outcome of the US elections and whether the 'Black Lives Matter' movement in 2020 was when BAME issues were properly integrated into our national, British, psyche.

And one more: in the Church of England, will the recent initiative '*Living in Love and Faith*' still be remembered in 2025? Will we look back and say: that was the year when we began (at last) to talk openly together about personal identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage - without all the old barriers going up?

Because no one can be in any doubt that each of these are every bit as contentious as the way we handled Covid, how the US could regain its sense of unity after four years of Donald Trump and how we could value the experience of the BAME community.

And yet, up to now, we haven't managed to do it. Not that the Church hasn't tried: way back in 1979 the bishops asked for time to explore these matters in '*Homosexual relationships*'. In 1991 there was a major discussion under the heading '*Issues in Human sexuality*'. In 2003 there was a further educational initiative under the title '*Some issues in human sexuality*' and the bishops produced yet another document '*Human sexuality*' in 2013.

And how many of those reports and initiatives have you ever heard of? None?! But if I mention Peter Ball the former Bishop of Gloucester, or Jimmy Saville or more recently Jean Vanier – or any number of stories in the tabloid press, you know precisely what territory we are in. Forget the theological study, some would say, the subject is already out there every time we hear about abuse cases against children or sordid attacks on women. It isn't theology we need but more stringent attention to safeguarding. Didn't the Independent Enquiry into Child and Sexual Abuse (IICSA) conclude that the Church of England *had failed to protect children and young people from sexual predators within the Church*. In the public mind there is, all too often, only one issue that really matters: the safety of the vulnerable.

So with such an emotional backdrop, what space is there for those who feel that the Church has never really accepted them or thought it was possible to be both holy and gay? Who is listening to those who say they that all they hear are the seven 'clobber texts' in the Old Testament and in St Paul which have resulted in years of prejudice and homophobia? When is there going to be a recognition of modern science's insights, more attention to theories of fluid gender identities, especially among the under thirties?

If these two entrenched positions are our starting point, then it is likely that we will continue to only have 'megaphone debates'.

There may be two reasons for this. The first is do with authority. By tradition, it has long been held that it is the role of the bishops to do their homework, to pray and then to 'declare the truth' as they understand it. I listed some of the reports on sexuality that they have issued since the 1970s.

But what if the bishops 'don't get it', if they haven't really engaged with the breadth and depth and height that these issues demand? What if, as has been said of Cardinal Vincent Nicholls, they were all too anxious to preserve the reputation of the Church rather than to listen with all ears to those whose experience of identity is very different from theirs? How willing are the bishops to really engage with the Bible in a way that leaves space for Scripture to speak to this generation?

Then from the other end of the debate there is a second reason why a megaphone debate may be happening. That is because, for some in the LGBTI community, the starting point here has to be full recognition of same sex marriage - in Church - not just as a 'human right' but as a sign of the way God loves all his children. Never mind that there may be truths to be gleaned and upheld from at least some of those 'clobber texts': for many 'equal marriage' is just a matter of justice.

Although he is not from my wing of the Church, I have a great deal of time for Andrew Goddard, one of those 'thinking evangelicals' who really are striving for a new way forward. In one of his blogs he admits that the report *Living in Faith and Love* will disappoint many because it does not come to any definitive conclusion and offers no final destination for the Church today.

And that is because, Andrew says – despite all those reports and all those former attempts to discover a new way forward – it is actually too early to make judgements about identity and relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> century... until a good deal more listening has taken place.

That, he says, is the key to the *Living in Love and Faith* process. Yes, there are quite detailed analyses of the current arguments – but there are also lots and lots of stories, short videos and longer transcripts which enable those taking part in the course to actually feel the pain and engage with the arguments being put forward by people with very different outlooks.

Looking down our congregational list I know perfectly well that we have people from almost every walk of life, social background, educational attainment – and sexual orientation: heterosexual, gay, non-binary and transgender. And the best thing would be to get all of us into a room to discuss some of the issues I have quickly referred to already, to actually hear what others feel.

But sadly that isn't going to happen – well, not anytime soon anyway. So what these resources offer is the chance to listen to ideas and feelings which are outside our own experience, and to be enabled to identify what the real questions are 'for us' and what difference they make to our understanding of affirming love.

This isn't 'being told what to do' by bishops; nor is it an excuse to take a shortcut to support the prejudices that each of us has in this area. It is, instead, an invitation to explore our day to day experiences and feelings and then to test them out in a safe space, guided by those who have already walked the walk and who might be able to offer insights that have so far passed us by.

Like Andrew Goddard, Colin Coward has also been blogging very actively recently about *Living in Love and Faith*. But his feelings about the process are much more sceptical; he thinks that all this is just 'more of the same' – it is all talk while the LGBTI community continues to suffer massive discrimination in the Church – good people overlooked for top jobs and others simply ignored. Sadly I think Colin suffers from very honourable but sometimes rather inflexible and negative 'anti-establishmentarianism'. That is to say, he just doesn't trust bishops!

Tempting though it is to cry 'foul', I think that on balance, *Living in Faith and Love* is a genuine attempt to do what should have been done years ago: to get people together to explore the vast differences in the understanding of human sexuality and marriage as it exists in society – and therefore in the Church – today.

And while I am quite happy to accept what Colin says about the very real gulf between what the bishops have traditionally taught and what people in the pews have come to accept and practice among themselves, that can hardly be healthy. I want, too, to take seriously the bishops' admission that *the Church has caused and continues to cause, hurt and unnecessary suffering, and that for such acts we should be deeply ashamed.*

But there has to be realism too. *There will probably never be a time*, the preface to *Living in Love and Faith* says, *when we all agree exactly what a new vision of the Church looks like but our prayer is that, collectively, we demonstrate the same love for one another that each of us has experienced from God, the grace that includes everyone whom Jesus Christ is calling to follow him, the holiness that changes the world and the unity that calls others to faith in Christ.*

When Jesus talks in today's Gospel about *having life, and having it abundantly*, it wasn't some throw-away line. He knew that his vision was bound to involve looking at all the complex ways in which we express our identities, the ways we relate to one another - as well as the formal contracts which bind us together.

But see how I have used the plural, the ways not 'the way'. If we, the members of this diverse sheepfold, are to understand the pain and the hurt felt by those of different sexual orientations as they try to hear the voice of Jesus - we have to face up to the fact that, as yet, we haven't been willing to engage deeply enough with a huge swathe of our fellow sheep. Like most people I thought I knew enough about both biology and the Bible to be able to steer myself through this very complex series of challenges. In reality I have barely scratched the surface.

So if we are to be faithful to the first reading Jack shared with us from I Thessalonians, we have serious work to do on our opinions, our biases and - yes - on our prejudices too, before we can claim to be *building up one another in faith and in love.*

Is 2020 the year we seriously begin to wrestle with these things?

3rd Hymn: **SP175 Here in this place**

[t Gather us in]

***Here in this place a new light is streaming,  
now is the darkness vanished away;  
see in this space our fears and our dreamings  
brought here to you in the light of the day.  
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,  
gather us in, the blind and the lame:  
call to us now and we shall awaken,  
we shall arise at the sound of your name.***

***We are the young, our lives are a mystery;  
we are the old who yearn for your face;  
we have been sung throughout all of history,  
called to be light to the whole human race.  
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,  
gather us in, the proud and the strong:  
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,  
give us the courage to enter the song.***

*Not in the dark of buildings confining,  
not in some haven light-years away,  
but here in this place the new light is shining,  
now is the kingdom, and now is the day.  
Gather us in and hold us for ever,  
gather us in and make us your own,  
gather us in, all people together –  
fire of your love in our flesh and our bone.*

(Words: Marty Haugan)

### Creed

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us with power from on high.  
We believe in one God:  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

### Confession

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you,  
through our own fault, in thought, and word, and deed,  
and in what we have left undone.**

**We are heartily sorry and repent of all our sins.  
For your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,  
forgive us all that is past;  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Almighty God, who forgives all those who truly repent,  
Have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all our sins,  
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,  
and keep us life in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God be in my head and in my understanding,  
God be in my eyes and in my looking,  
God be in my mouth and in my speaking,  
God be in my tongue and in my tasting,  
God be on my lips and in my greeting.

God be in my nose and in my smelling,  
God in my ears and in my hearing,  
God be in my neck and in my humbling,  
God be in my shoulders and in my bearing,  
God be in my back and in my standing.

God be in my arms and in my reaching,  
God be in my hands and in my working,  
God be in my legs and in my walking,  
God be in my feet and in my grounding,  
God be in my joints and in my relating.

God be in my veins and in my feeling,  
God be in my breath and in my forgiving,  
God be in my palms and in my giving,  
God be in my fingers and in my soothing,  
God be in my heart and in my loving.

God be in my skin and in my touching,  
God be in my flesh and in my laughing,  
God be in my blood and in my living,  
God be in my bones and in my dying,  
God be at my end - and at my reviving.

(Jim Cotter, adapted)

God of grace, your nurture us with a love deeper than we know,  
and your will for us is joy, peace and happiness:  
**We praise and we thank you, O God.**

God of love you enter into our lives, our pain and our brokenness,  
and you stretch out your healing hands to us wherever we are:  
**We praise and we thank you, O God.**

God of strength, you fill us with your presence  
and send us out to love and care for all those whom we meet:  
**We praise and we thank you, O God.**

Touch and heal our bodies suffering from sickness, injury and disability  
and make us whole again:  
**Hear us, Lord we pray.**

Clear our minds of every evil thought, from all confusion and doubt and fill us with your light.

**Hear us, Lord we pray.**

Touch and heal those areas of our lives which carry the burdens of guilt, anguish and isolation, and set us free by your love:

**Hear us, Lord we pray.**

Give us freedom from old hurts and painful memories, from misunderstandings and broken friendships:

**Hear us, Lord we pray.**

Bless all those who have a gift for reconciliation and encouragement, and renew all those who seek your grace, your compassion and strength:

**Hear us, Lord we pray.**

In a moment of quiet we pray for all those who need you today:

**Hear us, Lord we pray.**

We lift before you the names of all who have died, remembering especially William Saunders, Emma Falshaw, and Frederick William Porter, architect of this Church, whose anniversaries fall this week. Receive them more and more into your joyful presence.

Rejoicing in our communion of Mary the Mother of God, St James, St Peter and all the holy men and women who have gone before us, we entrust ourselves and one another, into your never failing friendship.

Merciful Father,

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

As part of the great family of God our Father, we say together the prayer that Jesus 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.**

May God the Father,  
from whom every family in earth and heaven receives its name  
strengthen you with his Spirit in your inner being  
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.  
and that by knowing his love you may be filled with the fulness of God;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Final Hymn:* **AM265 There's a spirit in the air** [t Lauds]

*There's a spirit in the air,  
telling Christians everywhere:  
'Praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working, in our world!'*

*Still the Spirit gives us light,  
seeing wrong and setting right:  
God in Christ has come to stay:  
live tomorrow's life today!*

*When a stranger's not alone,  
where the lover finds a home,  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working, in our world.*

*May the Spirit fill our praise,  
guide our thoughts and change our ways.  
God in Christ has come to stay.  
Live tomorrow's life today!*

(Words: Brian Wren, ed)



May God bless every £1 we give so that St James' will be here, not just for today and for tomorrow, but for the future he wants to create.