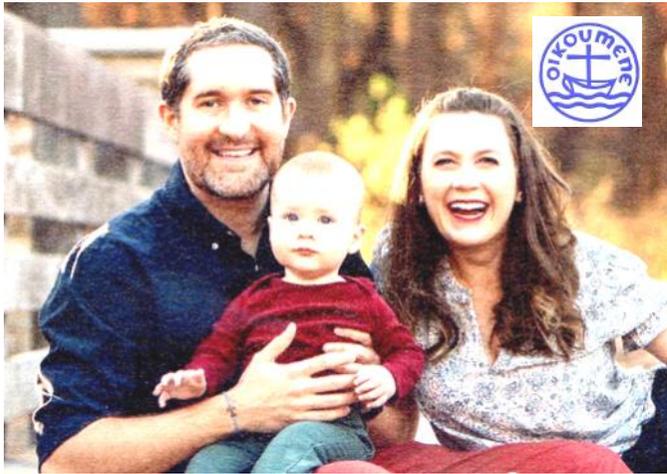




**ST JAMES' CHURCH, ISLINGTON N1 8PH**  
**24 January 2021 UNITY WEEK Year B 21/4**

Welcomers: Lockdown: Service of the Word  
 Readers: John Roden and Jane Falcioni  
 Interceder: Ken Thompson  
 Cantor: Ros Ford  
 AV editor: Adam Dickson  
 Hymns: CAHON163 Jesus Christ, the Man  
 AM497 Lord of the Church  
 AM321 Thou art the Christ, O Lord  
 CAHON72 Bind us together, Lord  
 Anthem: Love one another John Bell

**Collect: Heavenly Father, you have called us in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ to continue his work of reconciliation and reveal you to mankind. Forgive us the sins which tear us apart; give us the courage to overcome our fears and to seek that unity which is your gift and your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**



**INTER-CHURCH** We were so pleased to receive this rather belated Christmas Card from James and Megan (and Peter) Kloeit-Gill, formerly members of St James' and now resident in Illinois. Their wedding here in 2016 was a wonderful mix of British and American traditions, and Anglican and Roman Catholic spiritualities. But looking at their photograph, who would know who was from

which Church? And the same could be said of at least five other Inter-Church families within this congregation: how can you tell? As we pray today for the unity of Christ's family we ask the question: what difference does it make NOW which part of the Church we were brought up in? Is it possible to move from denomination to denomination and what are the cultural/heritage biases that we are likely to take with us wherever we go? With Joe Ammoun preaching for us, the 'Service of the Word' today promises to be ... interesting!

**ST JAMES' PCC** Meeting by zoom of course, the Church Council had a relatively short agenda to get through on Monday evening as so many regular services are currently on hold. From *Matters Arising* we discussed the possibility of a zoom *study course in Lent*, possibly with a bias towards understanding more about the Bible. We were sorry to report the cancellation of January's *Musical Vespers* while the Church was closed but heard a very positive 'thank you' passed on by Isabel from those she had met in St James' when closing up each night. They all wanted to say how much they appreciated the time and space to pray quietly. Susan's *Treasurer's Report* was in draft form as the books on 2020 hadn't yet been closed and Alastair Hume was still recovering from Covid. Overall, with a strict limit on spending, Susan hoped the loss for last year would not exceed £25k which is remarkable. Thanks to everyone who has maintained their stewardship giving to make this possible. Isabel reported on the next stage of the *Consistory Court*

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

hearing on the *Organ Project*, now due on March 4th 2021. We are now at the stage of calling expert witnesses to support the proposals and the objections. Neither side will be legally represented. The decision should be announced by March 19th. *Fees for the hire of the Church* (which raises over £9,000 in an ordinary year) will remain the same as in 2020. The PCC agreed to the postponement of the *Islington Proms* to September this year and looked forward to seeing how the new webcams would enable at least some of the concerts to be live streamed. These are due to be installed as from next week. This has also been a testing time for the *office equipment* which we all take for granted: the computer in the Parish Office (in the Vicarage basement) has needed a major overhaul and a new laptop for Church has had to be purchased. Thankfully we have been able to gain access to a charity supplying good quality



*Olive Murphy Sunday School craft*

refurbished equipment to schools/churches. Kerri is also to act as editor for a new *Instagram account* as so many young people no longer rely on Facebook for information. Sinead gave us an insight into the numbers of those logging into our services on *YouTube*. The average number for the last six services is 80! Who said we were a small Church?!

**THIS WEEK**

- Sun 24 **UNITY WEEK** Church services suspended until further notice.
- Mon CAVS begin the installation of the webcams
- Wed 6pm Grace Church, Alvin, Texas: zoom prayers.
- Thurs BT install Broadband into Church
- Sun 31 **CANDLEMASS** Church services suspended until further notice.

**Calendar and Daily Prayer themes**

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Sun 24 <b>UNITY WEEK</b>            | Alastair and Diane Hume; Kris Hyde                         |
| Mon 25 <b>DEL Epiphany 3</b>        | Matt, Nicole and Eve Jean-Baptiste                         |
| Tues 26 <b>SS Timothy and Titus</b> | Barry, Hayley, Theo and Freddie Jenkins                    |
| Wed 27 <b>Feria</b>                 | Grace and Elrose Joseph; Eva, Roy, Jerome and Zuri Kasella |
| Thurs 28 <b>St Thomas Aquinas</b>   | Charlotte, Josh, Olivia, Alfie Kennedy                     |
| Sat 30 <b>Feria</b>                 | Philip Kingston; Kingsley Lewis and Pauline McGovern       |
| Sun 31 <b>EPHANY 4</b>              | Beryl Lloyd; Kurt, Julia and Florence Maile                |

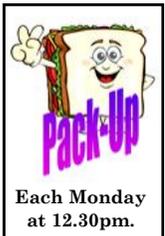
**PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome**

- BIRTHDAYS** Many Happy Returns on Wednesday to Joyce Harvey and to Eleanor Fryer who will be 1; on Thursday to our Organist and Administrator Adam Dickson and on Saturday to Condasy Greer who will be 21!
- SICK** Christopher Browne, Mariolina and Peter Freeth, Emily Grainger, Alastair and Diane Hume, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Vera Taggart, Lyn Thompson, Geoff Turner and Melanie Toogood.
- ANNIVERSARIES** 27th: John Evans (1993), Violet Bryant (2002); 30th: Edgar James (2000) and Cherolyn Daley (2000).
- INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS** In the US: Suzanne Smith, Rector of Grace Church, Alvin, Texas. Suzanne's husband Travis is Rector of Holy Comforter, Angleton, 14 miles away. In Japan: Fr Sebastian and Yuki Naniwa serving in Ehime near Hiroshima.
- PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE** Our prayers continue for **Nazanin Zaghari Radcliffe** in the hope that some kind of formula can allow her to return to the UK as soon as possible.



Streamed services on Facebook

You do not need to have your own Facebook account to be able to access our streamed services on the St James' Islington





SERVICE OF THE  
WORD  
for the Week of Prayer for  
Christian Unity  
Sunday January 24th 2021  
as streamed from  
St James' Church  
Islington N1

## SERVICE OF THE WORD FOR UNITY WEEK

Entry Hymn: **CAHON 163 Jesus Christ the man for others** [t. Abbot's Leigh]

*Jesus Christ, the man for others, we, your people make our prayer –  
help us love - as sisters, brothers - all whose burdens we can share,  
where your name binds us together you, Lord Jesus, will surely be;  
where no selfishness can sever there your love the world may see.*

*Holy Spirit, rushing, burning wind of flame of Pentecost,  
fire our hearts afresh with yearning to regain what we have lost.  
May your love unite our action, never more to speak alone:  
God, in us abolish faction, God, through us your love make known.*

(Words: Stewart Cross)

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

Welcome to St James' Church, Islington, for this special Service of the Word for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

I say 'special' for two reasons. The first is because this theme cuts into our usual pattern for the Epiphany season which carries us through January. But ever since 1958, Christian Unity week has been celebrated by all the main churches with a series of joint services and activities. Here in Islington we have established a tradition of joining with our local Roman Catholic parish of St John's in Duncan Terrace for a Saturday pilgrimage to a major Church in London including Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral and St Paul's. We are very sorry that this isn't possible in 2021 - for all the usual reasons. There, in joint prayers, we have tried to remain faithful to the call to pray for "the unity of the Church as Christ wills it, and in accordance with the means he wills." This is very much the theme of Joe Ammoun's sermon and we are delighted to welcome his contribution today.

There is, however, a second thread to our prayers for Christian Unity this week. Like many congregations we have members of other Christian traditions worshipping with us on a regular basis. Many of them are in relationships that straddle the divisions between the churches, in our case mostly Anglican and Roman Catholic.

Often called 'inter-Church families', parents and their children live with a different reality of Church life: of how love and family somehow overcome the divisions that have kept Christians apart for the better part of 450 years. Later in the service we will hear something of what it feels like to be in this situation. Each of our readers come from within this group at St James' too.

But before we begin, let us call to mind the presence of God - 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, starting with the Collect for Christian Unity Week.

### Collect

**Heavenly Father, you have called us in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ to continue his work of reconciliation and reveal you to mankind. Forgive us the sins which tear us apart; give us the courage to overcome our fears and to seek that unity which is your gift and your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### The Word of God

*1st Reading:* (Ezekiel 37: 15-22) The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it'; and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. And when your people say to you, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?' say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am about to take the stick of Joseph (which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it, and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand. When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms.  
This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Gradual:* **AM497 Lord of the Church**

[t Londonderry Air]

***Lord of the Church, we pray for our renewing:  
Christ over all, our undivided aim.  
Fire of the Spirit, burn for our enduring,  
wind of the Spirit, fan the living flame!  
We turn to Christ amid our fear of failing,  
the will that lacks the courage to be free,  
the weary labours, all but unavailing,  
to bring us nearer what a Church should be.***

***Lord of the Church, we long for our uniting,  
true to one calling, by one vision stirred;  
one cross proclaiming and one creed reciting,  
one in the truth of Jesus and his word.  
So lead us on; till toil and trouble ended,  
one Church triumphant one new song shall sing,  
to praise his glory, risen and ascended,  
Christ over all, the everlasting King!*** (Words: Timothy Dudley-Smith)

*2nd Reading:* (Ephesians 4: 1-6) I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

In an on-line webinar on Wednesday evening, three leading theologians were asking what shape the Church will be in once the pandemic has finally subsided. In particular they were reflecting on what it has felt like not being able to go - physically - to Church; not being able to receive Communion.

Gemma Simmons spoke about the way the way the Eucharist has always been thought of as the greatest way to 'bind us together in love'.

But now? Now she realised that, while that is still true, the closing of churches encourages us to find other ways of coping with our need for the support and love of one another. Instead of heading for Church where Communion was always available 'on demand', we see how that sacred fellowship with other people is being offered to us in a range of alternative ways. She said that the Thursday evening banging of saucepans had opened her eyes to find communion with perfect strangers - of all faiths and none - as all shivered in the cold, expressing their support for the NHS.

And for her, two great things flowed from that. The first was that such 'communion' neatly side-stepped all the rules that would have kept members of one Church from eating alongside one another: rules on who can take Holy Communion are among the strictest in Church life.

But the other bonus was that this open form of communion allowed us to draw in all kinds of people who might otherwise be excluded - the 8000 Honduran refugees fleeing hunger and violence as they trek northwards, the plight of political prisoners in Iran, the peoples in so many countries being torn apart by war and poverty, and those excluded by walls of every sort. This new communion revealed what of course has always been true: that being human means caring for one another - whoever they are. The greatest expression of the Eucharist right now is probably the food bank.

## Gospel Acclamation

**Alleluia. Alleluia There is one body and one Spirit; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Alleluia**

## Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

(St Matthew 16: 13-20) Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Song: *Love one another* John Bell

*Love one another for love is of God.  
Those who live in love, live in God and God lives in them.*

*Those who show love are the children of God;  
father and mother is God to them.*

*Love has no place for the menace of fear;  
fear is abandoned where perfect love is found.*

*Love has its purpose in God's holy will;  
we learn to love the one who love us first.*

## Sermon

Joe Ammoun, student on placement

*May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable to you, O Lord. Amen.*

Well, good morning St James'. My name is Joe. I'm an ordinand training to be a Vicar, sometimes on placement with you. If we've met, thank you for your warm welcome. And if we haven't, I hope we'll be able to meet soon.

Now, did you catch any of Joe Biden's inauguration as U.S President on Wednesday? He spoke passionately about a renewed unity between all Americans. But he spoke with 25,000 troops on standby for violence. At a time when most Americans believe the biggest threat to their country is other Americans. We wish him well. But that division makes the U.S motto 'Out of Many, One' look like an out of reach aspiration.

And division isn't only a problem somewhere else. The last few years have seen bitter words fly between Brexiteers and Remainers. And more recently between Covid Shielders and Covid Sceptics. I've personally experienced the relational strain these divisions can cause. You may have too. Our culture longs for unity but isn't confident it can create it.

Is Christian Unity any different?

For eight days every year churches across the world pray for tangible unity to grow between all those who claim the name of Christ. For a unity our world could look at and go: "Their commitment to each other can only be a work of God." That's a deeply attractive vision! Especially if our lives straddle more than one denomination. Or if - like me - our families have included Christians from more than one communion.

But can that Christian Unity exist? And how can we further that unity? God speaks into those questions in today's readings. Because when we trust God has already created unity through faith in Christ, we can pursue unity around faith in Christ. With members of other denominations and within our own congregation.

But *has* God already created that unity? When we say the creed, we declare our faith in God. But we also declare faith in the Church! 'We believe in one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church' And the sceptical part of me wonders: could that be the hardest thing in the creed to believe? Because I don't expect to see God. But I might expect to see this one Church. And instead, I see over 33,000 denominations. Is it realistic to believe there's unity between a Roman Catholic from the Congo and a Trump-voting Baptist from Texas? And between both of them and us in Islington?

But God does unite very unlikely people. We heard that in our Old Testament reading. The prophet Ezekiel is with Jewish exiles far from Jerusalem. And the Lord tells him to do some street theatre. Take two sticks and join them together so they become one in his hand. Sticks representing Judah and Ephraim -or Israel. Two peoples alienated from each other, unable to overcome their divisions. But God promises he'll make them one nation. Unity depends on what God does.

I have three school-age kids. Florence, Aliza, and Johnathan. And home schooling is really showing us just how different they are from each other! And yet -through no decision of their own- there's a bond between them. They've been given common parents. And God promised he'd permanently unite divided people by giving them a common king.

That street-theatre prophecy didn't come true immediately - it was pointing to a unity under a king that extends to us in Islington today. In our Gospel reading we come to Jesus' disciples, faced with life's key question. Jesus asks: '*Who do you say that I am?*' And Peter steps forward and answers: '*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*' "You're God's chosen king. We encounter God through you."

Peter was the first with this faith in Christ. Pointing us to the same faith. A faith filled out by what Jesus went on to do. Dying the death we deserve to bring us into the friendship with God only he deserves.

And all who share Peter's faith are part of the one church Jesus promised to build. Not an institution, but a family of believers joined across time and space by faith in Christ.

Two summers ago, the Tate Modern asked visitors to build futuristic structures with a tonne of white Lego bricks. It looked a mess! Each person engrossed in their own little structure. But from the artist's perspective, it was one united city. And from God's perspective -despite the mess of visible disagreement- there's one united Church. So, when we think about the difficult person who usually sits in the next pew, or the Congolese Roman Catholic, or the Trump-voting Baptist. Can we appreciate our shared family likeness? Faith in Christ.

But families can struggle to get along, can't they? The world-wide church has often been that kind of family. But as our New Testament reading reminds us: To live as a member of God's family, means pursuing loving unity around faith in Christ. '*Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit.*'

And like the effort needed for an early morning run, pursuing loving unity requires self-denial. Putting aside our comfort for others. Otherwise, church families divide into competing clubs built around competing tastes. Contemplative vs. kid friendly services. Traditional vs. modern language. And similarly, without self-denial, denominations behave like endangered cultures: terrified that getting closer to each other might mean losing distinctive practices.

But when we focus on faith in Christ, we begin to reflect his loving self-denial in the way we treat other Christians. Like our New Testament reading encourages, we approach others with humility and gentleness. Patiently enduring those who aggravate us -just as God is patient in forgiving us. Loving others by always seeking their best -just as Christ loved us and sacrificed himself for us.

Unity isn't primarily pursued through structures -though they're important. Its pursued by believers focusing on faith in Christ, and so treating each other with self-denying love.

When I was at university, I had a friend aptly called Christian. We were from very different denominations, but I remember our conversations with warmth because we began with who Christ was to each of us. We tried to assume the best of each other. And we were able to pray for each other. There remained real differences. But that approach was more fruitful than if we'd only focused on our distinctive beliefs. It meant the unity we did experience was rooted in the highest common denominator - Jesus.

Discovering with other Christians what the fullest possible expression of unity can be, is worth it. Some of our convictions may prevent structural unity. But here's the test: if we ever talk about our differences, would a non-church-going friend listening in be able to say: "Okay - Christians don't always agree. But I can see Jesus is more than just a word to them. And the care they show for each other is a million miles from the contempt shown on Twitter."

And in lockdown, maybe this week of prayer for Christian Unity can prompt us to pray. For me, I'm currently praying for a Christian I find it hard to be patient with. And for a denomination I personally feel distant from.

Because we may not be able to leave home more than once a day. But we can go anywhere in prayer. As often as we like.

God has created unity through shared faith in Jesus. We pursue that unity with self-denying love. Where might that pursuit take us this week?

*In the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Hymn: **AM321 Thou art the Christ, O Lord**

{t Love Unknown}

***Thou art the Christ, O Lord, the Son of God most high:  
whose name is now adored in earth and sea and sky.  
Though hope be lost and strength shall fail  
our trust in Christ shall ere prevail.***

***O bright triumphant faith, O courage void of fears,  
a love that fears not death nor heartbreak, pain and tears!  
By these, Lord, keep us lest we fall,  
and make us go where thou shalt call.***

(Words: William Walsham How ed JB)

## Affirmation of Faith

**We believe that in the beginning was the Word,  
and that the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.**

**Through him all things were made;  
without him nothing was made that has been made.  
In him is life and that life is the light for us all.**

**The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us;  
we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son  
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

## Confession

**Lord our God, in our sins we have avoided your call.  
Our love for you in like the morning cloud,  
like the dew that goes away early.  
Have mercy upon us; deliver us from judgement;  
bind up our wounds and revive us;  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from all our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Inter-Church experience

Marrying someone from another Church community used to be very difficult. There was great suspicion that this would lead to a loss of commitment, a muddling or watering-down of what someone believed and, worse of all, the possibility that any children would not be brought up in 'the true faith'. There were lots of forms to fill in and promises to be made; the wedding service might even be rather less public than other ceremonies.

Then there were the cultural differences - the hymns, the way a Church looked, in the preparation for the sacraments especially for First Holy Communion, in attitudes to post-life issues and prayers for the dead, the use of a Rosary, celebrations like Harvest and Remembrance Day.

Thankfully almost all of those suspicions have disappeared and the needs of families have taken priority over the almost tribal affiliations of the past. Clergy from both churches often work side by side with inter-Church families and baptisms continue to be recognised by all. So what does it feel like to live the Christian life in partnership with someone from another Church?

Video: The experience of being an Inter-Church family today

## Prayers of Intercession

Ken Thompson

In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we remember especially all the Inter-Church families in our congregation. Echoing our collect we pray: Heavenly Father help us to continue Christ's work of reconciliation and forgive us the sins which separate us. Give us courage to overcome our fears and prejudices, and make us able to accept your gift of unity, understanding and love.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the work of those who hold office in our church, including the PCC, and its efforts to resolve problems, such as the renovation of the organ and the loss of funding due to the Corona virus. We pray for those who miss the support offered by meeting together in church but also all who share in worship via the Internet.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who are sick: Christopher Browne, Mariolina and Peter Freeth, Emily Grainger, Alastair and Diane Hume, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Vera Taggart, Lyn Thompson, Geoff Turner and Melanie Toogood.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

We remember all those who have died and whose anniversaries fall at this time: John Evans, Violet Bryant, Edgar James and Cherolyn Daley. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

We pray for all those who are captive or imprisoned, remembering especially Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe.

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

## Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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.**

## Notices

## Blessing

Go forth into the world in peace;  
be of good courage;  
hold fast to that which is good;  
Render to no one evil for evil;  
Strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak;  
Help the afflicted; honour everyone;  
love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;  
and so may the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with us, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Final Hymn: **CAHON72 Bind us together, Lord**

***Bind us together, Lord, bind us together  
with cords that cannot be broken.  
Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord,  
bind us together in love.***

***There is only one God,  
there is only one King.  
There is only one Body,  
that is why we sing: Bind us...***

***Fit for the glory of God,  
purchased by his precious blood,  
born with the right to be free:  
Jesus the victory has won. Bind us...***

***We are the family of God,  
we are his promise divine,  
we are his chosen desire,  
we are the glorious new wine. Bind us...*** (Words: Bob Gillman)



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.

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