**Home Worship – for the 25th October 2020**

**Call to Worship**

Love divine

We come as we are,

With our joys, our sorrows, our gifts and our trembling hearts.

And we ask that God’s presence visits us this morning as we worship. Amen

**Hymn: From Singing the Faith 372. Come down oh Love divine** or listen here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLjaslOT8TA

**Prayers (drawing on material from The Vine)**

Creator God, we praise and glorify your name. For you loved us. Enough to send your son, to die for us. We thank you that we have loved ones. Our friends, our family, our church and our community. We come, however, with the knowledge that we sometimes fail to open our hearts to those around us; those who we find difficult, those whose backgrounds and cultures we do not know or understand, people who see things differently to the way we do, who perhaps have hurt us, or someone we love. Forgive us for not loving as you love us.

In confessing, may we know we are washed clean by the blood of Christ. Help us in our journeying towards loving others with open hearts.

**Read: Psalm 1**

**To think about: -**

* If you were to be asked what the most important aspect of the Christian faith is – what answer would you give?
* What do you do to feed and water your soul? What helps to strengthen your faith and your witness?

**Hymn Singing the Faith 544:** ‘As the Deer Pants for the water’ - Listen and/or sing along if you have web access - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pySVFzxoloA

**Read: Matthew 22 v 34-40**

**Reflection: How do we show love?**

My sister has recently acquired a cat. They had wanted one for a while and finally the time came to do something about it. Battersea was contacted and the family ventured forth into the outskirts of London to pick him up. At only 8 months he is already unusually very, very long, and with a big bushy tail. He is going to be a big beast and neighbouring cats best watch out! Janet and Roy have quickly become absolutely besotted. I receive pictures and texts telling me what Jasper is up to and how he has completely taken over the house. He has commandeered in the best chair for his morning nap, whilst post lunch, he can be found curled up asleep on their bed. Early evening sees a mad dash around the house causing havoc and if he is not getting the attention he wants, he has developed a habit of sitting in front of the TV! It sounds like they have a new child in the house.

Before I had children I was always astonished at how, on the arrival of a child, otherwise seemingly sensible people, cancel subscriptions to the likes of Homes and Gardens, and happily abandon any hope of a tidy home, positively revelling in the tsunami of garish, brightly coloured objects that take up residence alongside said baby.

Trite examples these may be but those who experience loving know that real love is a game changer. It makes room for the loved one. It’s more than giving of our selves – our talents, our energies, our resources. It makes us move over, share and cohabit, even throwing everything out of the window like the merchant who wanted to buy a precious pearl. However generous our gifts, love makes us want to make room for another in ways we would never have dreamed possible.

#### This month is Black History month. This year’s theme is ‘dig deeper, look closer, think bigger’. The death of George Floyd earlier in the year, and the public’s reaction, shows an increasing awareness and understanding of the history of our country. As Boris himself points out ‘For countless generations people of African and Caribbean descent have been shaping our nation’s story, making a huge difference to our national and cultural life and helping to make Britain a better place to be’[[1]](#footnote-1). None of us need reminding of the contribution people from these communities make today - frontline workers: doctors, nurses, researchers, utility workers and care staff, tirelessly working throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Really loving our neighbours means delighting in sharing space, sharing resources, sharing privileges. But sometimes when we are hard pressed economically, emotionally or mentally, it’s difficult to be aware of white privilege. White people need to look closer. Pope Francis said recently ‘If everything is connected, it is hard to imagine that this global disaster is unrelated to our way of approaching reality, our claim to be absolute masters of our own lives and of all that exists’[[2]](#footnote-2). Black History months aims to challenge our way of approaching the reality of life here in the UK today, asking us to dig deeper into what is really going on. For example, what is going on that the Right Reverend and Right Honourable John Sentamu is not to be in the House of Lords?

In Matthew Jesus raises the importance of loving your neighbour to the same status as the first commandment. I suggest one way of assessing how much we love, albeit a rather challenging one, is to think about how much we are prepared to move over for our neighbours.

Loving of course makes us vulnerable. The more we love the more we feel hurt and pain, or the hurt and pain of another when something difficult happens. So the second part of Jesus’s commandment ‘love your neighbour **as yourself’** not only picks up the idea of treating others as you would be treated, but also the idea of loving yourself, looking after yourself, feeding yourself, valuing your God given self. It’s about rooting ourselves Christ, drinking in living water, drawing on the grace of God daily, routinely, like eating breakfast, so we grow steadfast and more and more like Jesus, more able to love and love well, more able to deliver real fruit.

Going back to Jasper – my sister’s energised voice laughing at herself as she lets a cat rule the roost, tells me they have gained much more then they lost in making space for a large troublesome cat. I wonder whether we willing take the risk of really making space in our lives for our neighbours, near and far? Let’s pray that God nudges us and supports us as we allow ourselves to bend towards his will.

Amen

**Prayers of intercession (drawing on material from The Vine)**

We pray for our brothers and sisters in faith. We pray that they are safe and respected, whatever their faith.

We pray for our country. For political divides and differences, and for communities ripped apart by conflict.

We pray for marginalised communities who have been overlooked, taken for granted and who receive hostile, violent and prejudicial treatment.

We pray for people in other countries, suffering from war, the effects of climate change, from unjust economic policy and we pray for the organisations seeking to support them and bring justice.

We pray for our church, for when it has not been a welcoming and safe space for all.

Creator God, help us to love with open hearts. Help us rediscover the real meaning of being church and show us how to express your love to those around us each and every day.

**Hymn 409: Let us build a house where love can dwell** – listen and join in if you have web access - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPrzP67jRts>

**Concluding Prayer**

As you walk though this week with a God of love

May you feel her love, see her presence, copy her actions

And allow yourself to be challenged and changed

both to love yourself as God loves you

and to love others likewise

Amen

*Revd Sue Baker-Maher*

1. See Black History month website - https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)