

Dear all

Our service for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter, as recorded in the church, should be found at [https://youtu.be/Zux\\_RCWWIOU](https://youtu.be/Zux_RCWWIOU) (when it has uploaded).

I would like to make a tentative suggestion as you watch the communion service. The Church of England does not have a theology of consecration by extension, or by video. You might want to take some bread and wine, and eat or drink at the appropriate part of the communion service. By doing this, you can be fulfilling the command “do this in remembrance of me”. However, please be clear, in CofE theology, you are not eating consecrated bread and wine – it is not to be considered as the body and blood of Christ.

I omitted to make any mention of the hymns when IU was recording it.

Attached is an [order of service](#) with hymn links included (please note that the verses on the YouTube links might not always exactly match the words published. These would happen at the start, between the 2 readings and the gospel, at the offertory after the Peace, and at the end before the blessing.

The first song is [‘Be still, for the presence of the Lord’](#). We will be singing it along with Erin (accompanied by Jo Astle). This is also attached to this email as an audio file.

Hopefully all will be OK for a live Facebook link tomorrow morning, 10.00am as usual. I hope it goes OK, as our ‘sound engineer’ has now left us. It took me ages to get it sorted for the recording, but I think it’s OK now.

One of my favourite Christian writers is Philip Yancey. (I think all Christians should read his book “What’s so amazing about Grace?”). He has tackled the question of suffering in quite a few books and articles – one of which I posted in an earlier letter.

Here is his post on Facebook today:

*I’ve been writing about pain and suffering for four decades. In view of the COVID-19 crisis, I’m posting a few relevant excerpts from my books:*

*“Where is God when it hurts?” We know one answer because God came to earth and showed us. You need only follow Jesus around and note how he responded to the tragedies of his day: large-scale tragedies such as an act of government terrorism in the temple or a tower collapsing on eighteen innocent bystanders; as well as small tragedies, such as a widow who has lost her only son or even a Roman soldier whose servant has fallen ill. At moments like these Jesus never delivered sermons about judgment or the need to accept God’s mysterious providence. Instead, he responded with compassion—a word from Latin which simply means “to suffer with”—and comfort and healing. God stands on the side of those who suffer.*

*I wish I could answer other questions this morning. I would like to give an answer to the question, Why? I cannot give you an answer, and I encourage you to resist anyone who offers you one with confidence. God did not answer that question for Job, who deserved an answer as much as anyone who has lived. Nor did Jesus attempt an answer to the Why questions swirling around those who died from accidents and terrorism. We have hints and partial explanations, but no one knows the full answer.*

*What we do know with certainty is how God feels. We know because God gave us a face, one streaked with tears. Three times that we know of, Jesus wept: when his friend Lazarus died, when he looked out over the*

*doomed city of Jerusalem, when he faced his own ordeal of suffering. "The tears of God are the meaning of history," concluded the philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, disconsolate after losing his son.*

*Not everyone will find that answer sufficient. We want a more decisive, satisfying answer. When we hurt, sometimes we want revenge. One of my favorite authors, Frederick Buechner, said, "I am not the Almighty God, but if I were, maybe I would in mercy either heal the unutterable pain of the world or in mercy kick the world to pieces in its pain." God did neither. Rather, God sent Jesus, joining our world with all its unutterable pain in order to set in motion a slower, less dramatic solution—one that crucially involves us.*

*~Adapted from "What Good Is God?"*

<https://bit.ly/PYWhatGood>

It's lovely to have received a few contributions of various sorts over the last couple of days.

The service for Sunday morning includes a performance of 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' by Erin, accompanied by Jo Astle. I have attached it to this email for those who don't log onto the live broadcast.

Terry Noble sends me occasional links of interesting performances. The way that people come together, often totally unexpectedly, is one positive feature of the current situation – though the coming together has to be under new ways of doing things! Something similar can be seen very clearly in the phenomenon of 'flashmob', where a group of people turn up 'out of nowhere' to perform. They are joyous occasions, enjoyed by those surprised by them. Sadly current restrictions have put a stop to them – except in the balcony performances seen for example in Italy. Here is one that Terry sent. It may be unseasonal – but perhaps it will give us something to look forward to later this year!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH8FvERQHtM>

Another link Terry sent – again, sadly not possible under current restrictions, unless they are of the same household! – flute as you have probably never seen before!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkJ03vm8FJk>



Finally, here is some artwork Sylvie (left) & George (right), 2 members of our Children's Church, did for their school worship tasks this week, on Jesus' ascension into heaven.



Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark

