

Dear all

I have been reading the speculation (and, as yet, it is no more than that) around when and how we might return to church as lockdown eases. I have no more information, other than the earliest date that is mooted for anything is currently 4th July... but this could change at a moment's notice. Meanwhile, a thought came into my mind as I went into church today to record the service. If anyone would like me to light a candle on their behalf in the church, please do let me know. Most days I am in twice, for Morning and Evening Prayer.

Tomorrow is Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday is infamously the Sunday when any incumbent with any sense turns to their curate and says "your turn to preach!". The concept of 'Trinity' is hardly referred to in scripture at all, and whenever one tries to explain it, one almost invariably ends up in heresy. Nevertheless, scripture does witness to Jesus as God (whatever some theologians might want to tell you!), and the Holy Spirit as God at work in us. A few years ago, one of the biggest selling books of the year – including in the New York Times bestseller list – was *The Shack* by William Paul Young. If you haven't read it, or seen the film, the basic premise is that a young girl goes missing at a beach, and the parents, needless to say, are distraught – their lives are changed irrevocably. The father, in the process of his forlorn search, ends up at a mysterious shack, and meets 3 characters who we find represent the Trinity – a black woman, a man and an Indian woman. So far, so controversial! I won't spoil it – you may want to read it yourself if you want your minds to be seriously stretched and challenged. It is not without its problems... but quite creative and enlightening in its own way.

Here is the YouTube link for the Trinity Sunday Holy Communion in church:

<https://youtu.be/YtJXq8hF4Yc>

As we are missing out on our wonderful choir, here are links to a few Trinity anthems to fill the gap:

Hymn to the Trinity – Tchaikovsky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jZqxxv1rIY>

Hymn to the Trinity – Kenneth Leighton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CD0IA3sPD38>

Benedicta sit Sancta Trinitas" – Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GquNDNvfZA>

Cherubic Hymn (No. 7) – Dmytri Stepanovych Bortniansky (1751– 1825)

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

And here is the latest reflection from St Paul's Cathedral:

Into the Light: When I Consider the Heavens. Specially-commissioned reflections by Brian Draper.

At a time when fixed bearings seem a relic of a bygone world, I've been so grateful for a few 'true' points in God's Creation, from which to gain direction.

I've regularly watched the sun rise, through these strange days. It's helped sustain my mental health, and reminds me spiritually of the constancy of God's mercies, new every morning. Sometimes it's instinctive to turn your face to the light; sometimes, it takes spiritual practice.

At mid-day, I've tried to look up. The sun's at its highest at noon, and always due south: a chance, then, to check bearings, to reorientate and reconnect with God. I've learned a new word - 'interfulgent' - which means 'to shine through', like sunlight through leaves; or like God's light and love within the fear and flux...

And at night, Polaris, the north star, pulses with the light of life's 'true north', and whispers of the blessing that my *own* constancy might yet be, to others, when times get dark. Jesus did say, after all, that "You are the light of the world." Which does not mean holding up a Bible after you've cleared a crowd with teargas, but surely radiating love, and a burning passion for justice and peace.

In the meantime, I've been so grateful for the church's ages-old liturgical rhythms, which have offered deeper meaning to this year of turbulence. We've journeyed through the ultimate stripped back Lent (and to think that all we might have wanted to give up was chocolate!), through the pain and promise of Easter and on (through so much cleaner air and birdsong) to Pentecost's in-breaking world. "Thy kingdom come", indeed, *indeed*.

But now, as we enter the liturgical lull of 'ordinary time', Creation sings of deeper time for us, again. How apt that we flow from Pentecost's flames into flaming June! "*Let there be light*," God spoke, electrically, back in the beginning; and the longest day offers such a brilliant, unchanging point in the year for us to anticipate, not dismiss, as we seek to walk - run, stumble, dance? - in the light, and savour it.

Even then, of course, it's easy enough to feel pangs of sadness at the prospect of our salad days drawing in, after June 21st, or as the sun starts to set gradually upon our very lives. So let's remember how, in Jewish thinking, day follows night: "There was evening, and there was morning, the first day." We can reach *through* darkness to light, in God's grace, overturning the order of death and life, dark and light, exquisitely, as we go.

And this weekend, the gift of a full moon, too - a luminescent presence which bathes us in the gentlest loving glow *within* the darkness. You can't look straight at the sun, but you can wonder at the moon all you like, just as King David did.

"When I consider your heavens, the moon and the stars," he marvelled, looking up: "What are human beings, that you *care* for them?" God cares, truly enough - and to this we *can* be true, as surely as day follows night.

This week, why not ...

Observe a sun rise or a sun set.

Set your alarm to pause at mid-day, to orientate yourself, and to pray for a few moments.

Step outside in the evening, to watch for the moon, and wonder!

Look for Polaris. (Join the two dots of the farthest edge of 'the Plough', then keep going until you get to the next star! While it looks small, Polaris is 50 times bigger than our own sun, and is roughly 400 light years away. Reflect on what your own 'North Star' is, and how *you* can be 'the light of the world' (Matthew 5.14-16)

Brian Draper works as a speaker, retreat guide, labyrinth curator and creative consultant, seeking to help people of all faiths and none to see the world from a creative and engaging spiritual perspective. His books include *Soulfulness: Deepening the Mindful Life* (2016) and *Soulful Nature* (2020). He is a regular contributor to BBC R4's *Thought for the Day*. <http://briandraper.org/>

Finally, yesterday's prayer from Nick Fawcett:

Reach out today, Lord, to all who are struggling to cope with the impact of coronavirus on their lives.

To those whose mental health is fragile, give support.

To those feeling isolated, give succour.

To those who are worried, give tranquillity.

To those who are desolate, give hope.

To those who are desperate, give peace.

To those who are feeling all at sea, give confidence.

To those who are vulnerable, give protection.

To those who are depressed, give happiness.

To those who are feeling lost, give direction.

To those who are unwell, give healing.

To those who mourn loved ones, give comfort.

Lord, reach out to all who feel they are going under, who wonder how much longer they will be able to cope.

Strengthen them, sustain them, and lift their heads above the water.

until they feel able to stay afloat, and to swim once more against the tide.

Amen.



Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark