

Collect, Readings and Sermon
Sunday 28th June 2026
The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Collect

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may so pass through things temporal
that we finally lose not the things eternal;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Jeremiah 28:5-9

The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the Lord; and the prophet Jeremiah said, 'Amen! May the Lord do so; may the Lord fulfil the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the exiles. But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet.'

Psalm 89

The response to the Psalm is:

Truly the Lord is our shield.

Romans 6:12-23

Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having

once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 10:40-42

‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.’

Post Communion

Eternal God,
comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken,
you have fed us at the table of life and hope:
teach us the ways of gentleness and peace,
that all the world may acknowledge
the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sermon

About 15 years ago, I had the opportunity to shadow a parish priest in South Africa. The Rev. Sharron Dinnie was – and is – no ordinary parish priest. I met her because the church I attended in Guildford had a link with her parish, which was on the east side of Johannesburg. Rev. Sharron was brought up in South Africa during the apartheid years and there is no doubt that this experience has shaped her ministry.

Close to the parish of St. Peter and St. Paul, Springs, where Rev. Sharron was then Rector, was an informal settlement. While apartheid officially ended in the early 1990s, its impact continues to be felt. One of the responses of the congregation of St. Peter and St. Paul was to start a pre-primary school for the children of the informal settlement. In a country where it was necessary to pay for education, the church also sponsored some of the children through their schooling, and offered homework support in the buildings used by the pre-primary school.

On a Sunday morning, there was the offer of minibus transport to church for children and families from the informal settlement and breakfast was provided. The worship started to include the different African languages, especially in the hymns and worship songs.

For me, what I saw in South Africa was a sign of what welcome can look like. I need to be clear. This was not perfect. We cannot for a moment think that racism – or indeed the impact of apartheid – has been eradicated. But what I saw were attempts being made to reach out and include others, who then shaped different aspects of what we might call “the way things are done around here.”

This morning’s reading is a very short part of the teaching that we have been following over the last few weeks from St. Matthew’s gospel. Very short, and at first glance really quite straightforward. It speaks about welcome. And we all know, don’t we, that we are supposed to be welcoming.

What I saw in the parish of St. Peter and St. Paul in Springs, though, was a reminder that actually welcome is far from straightforward. In fact, welcome is connected with aspects of the ways that we relate to one another that are both profound and complex. Bear with me as I try to explain something of what I mean.

Some decades ago, I was a volunteer speaker for Save the Children. This involved giving talks about the work of Save the Children in a variety of contexts, from groups like the Ladies' Circle and Mothers' Union to assemblies at school. The publicity materials that Save the Children was producing at the time focused on positive images of those they were supporting. Some of you may perhaps recall that during the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s the BBC footage showed devastating images of starving, emaciated children. While these images woke up the international community to the scale of suffering, which meant that there was an outpouring of support, not least financial, there was the risk of giving the impression of poor, weak black children being helped by generous, healthy white people.

By the time that I was giving talks about Save the Children, our understanding had moved on. Let me be clear, there will always be occasions that immediate aid is required. However, there is always a question about where the power lies, and how we understand our giving. At that time, Save the Children was seeking to move on from a model of the all-powerful, wealthy and wise western world stepping in to "save" those less fortunate, towards a recognition that those receiving aid need to be included in the decision-making, and empowered. As Christians one of the ways that the power imbalance is reduced is because there is always a sense that when we are giving our money, we are in fact not giving something that is ours by right, but rather something that we hold in stewardship for the good of all God's creation.

When it comes to welcome, our ideas will always be evolving because our ideas about how we relate to one another as human beings are always evolving.

Another example closer to home might be more familiar. Some of us were probably brought up having heard the Victorian idea that children should be seen and not heard. Perhaps you were brought to church as a child and knew that you had to behave in a certain way. It

wasn't that people were seeking to be unwelcoming – far from it. It was simply that society was different and the ways that we related one to another were also different. Things have changed in multiple ways. Our attitude towards children is different. Often we recognise how much we have to learn from them, as well as them from us. We are also far more aware of genuine conditions which actually make sitting still and being quiet almost impossible for some people. We have adapted our welcome as our understanding has changed. It can sometimes be so helpful when someone takes the time to explain their perspective, since that shapes our understanding of what welcome might look like for them.

Welcome will always be complex because it is relational and therefore changes according to the individuals and indeed the society in which we live. And yet making efforts will always be worthwhile, and there are plenty of encouragements. Have you been into a primary school recently that has a buddy bench? I remember being blown away by this idea when I first came across it. Basically there is a bench in the playground where you can go and sit if you are feeling a bit lonely. Obviously you can imagine the risk that it becomes another mechanism for bullying. But in fact the ways I have seen it used have not led to that at all. Older children, for example, are taught about their responsibility for younger children, so sometimes they will be the ones who befriend someone who is lonely. A great deal of effort is put into ensuring that this isn't about stigma, but rather the ways that we relate to and care about one another. One of the things that I have always found deeply humbling is the ways that younger children are quite likely to accept one another's differences. And so, with effort and thought, schools hopefully become more welcoming places.

Of course I recognise that I am largely preaching to the converted. More than that, in the three months that I have been here, I have experienced the most extraordinary welcome – and indeed seen the ways that you welcome others. So in a sense I am simply encouraging you to keep thinking about it and remembering its importance – and how it will always be in a state of change. Because then we will truly be responding to Jesus's call to each one of us to welcome others as we would welcome him.

Amen