

31st May 2020

## ***Hearsall at Home***

Hello, and welcome to Hearsall at Home.

We hope that you listen to this service either on a Sunday morning, or at another time, and you will worship, sing, pray and reflect on the scriptures along with all of us.

A written copy of the service is also available as a download on our website, so if you know anyone who would like that please let us know.

If you can get online you'll find me in my Whereby room after the service: Bring your cup of coffee to [whereby.com/sutcliffechat](https://whereby.com/sutcliffechat) and see who's there. There's room for 12 and we only had five last week!

So sit down, be still, and prepare yourself to worship God with us.

Order of service 31 5 2020  
**All things bright and beautiful?**

Invitation to Worship

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

Great Father, we open our hearts again to Jesus, who loves us with a love that began before time itself. We receive again the gift of your Holy Spirit and we ask that your breath of love comes to refresh, reshape and restore us as your people. Amen.

We sing, *O, breath of love, some breathe within us!*

Hymn (BPW 293)

O breath of love, come breathe within us,  
renewing thought and will and heart;  
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,  
revive your church in every part!

O wind of God, come bend us, break us  
till humbly we confess our need;  
then, in your tenderness remake us,  
revive, restore, for this we plead.

O, breath of life, some sweeping through us,  
revive your Church with life and power;  
O breath of life, some cleanse, renew us  
and fit your church to meet this hour.

When I walked recently in my local Whoberley woods, I noticed that the tips of many branches had been blown to the ground by recent strong winds, so there was a carpet of bright green leaves under my feet. As the Holy Spirit is compared to a powerful wind, we do ask God to bend us, even to break us, the better to be fit for this hour. And so we share the Lord's Prayer together. If you can remember the actions we sometimes make to this prayer, you might like to do them at home together today as we pray this prayer mindfully, and carefully and slowly.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name!  
Your Kingdom come!  
Your will be done  
on earth  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread

*hands raised upward to heaven*

*waving fingers downward*

*palms down to earth*

*palms up to heaven*

*make food bowl with hands*

And forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kingdom  
The power and the glory  
Now  
And always  
Amen.

*brush left arm with right hand  
brush right arm with left hand  
one arm across chest  
other arm across chest  
palms up, shoulder height  
palms gradually rising up  
point to wristwatch  
hands spin round each other  
thumbs up*

### Psalm

Psalm 104: 18 - 30

You might like to speak the words of this Psalm along with me:

The high mountains belong to the wild goats;  
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.  
He made the moon to mark the seasons,  
and the sun knows when to go down.  
You bring darkness, it becomes night,  
and all the beasts of the forest prowl.  
The lions roar for their prey  
and seek their food from God.  
The sun rises, and they steal away;  
they return and lie down in their dens.  
Then people go out to their work,  
to their labour until evening.

How many are your works, Lord!  
In wisdom you made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.  
There is the sea, vast and spacious,  
teeming with creatures beyond number –  
living things both large and small.  
There the ships go to and fro,  
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

All creatures look to you  
to give them their food at the proper time.  
When you give it to them,  
they gather it up;  
when you open your hand,  
they are satisfied with good things.  
When you hide your face,  
they are terrified;  
when you take away their breath,  
they die and return to the dust.  
When you send your Spirit,

they are created,  
and you renew the face of the ground.

Apparently a hyrax is a small, thickset, herbivorous mammal, by the way. I wonder what creatures you have spotted during lockdown. The interesting theological point the Psalm makes is that God's Spirit is essential for animal life, too. Time to sing *All things bright and beautiful*, I think...

#### Hymn 116

*All things bright and beautiful,  
all creatures great and small,  
all things wise and wonderful:  
the Lord God made them all!*

Each little flow'r that opens,  
each little bird that sings,  
he made their glowing colors,  
he made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountains,  
the river running by,  
the sunset and the morning  
that brightens up the sky.

the cold wind in the winter,  
the pleasant summer sun,  
the ripe fruits in the garden,  
he made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them,  
and lips that we might tell  
how great is God Almighty,  
who has made all things well.

For Behind Closed Doors this week we go out into the countryside of Braunston and hear from our good friends Roger and Angela. How many animals and birds can you spot in their piece?

#### Behind Closed Doors

Roger and Angela Bull

Welcome from distant, sunny Braunston from Angela and Roger. We would like to wish you all a very good morning and also take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed and made these services happen. We find them really uplifting and have loved hearing the voices of our friends, picturing them as they speak or sing. Also we would thank all who have contacted us during this time it is so lovely to hear from you.

Now if are you sitting comfortably then I'll begin. We thought about calling our slot "the birds and the bees" but on reflection it doesn't cover all our wildlife experiences that we have had during this period of lockdown. It could be called "the birds, bees, badgers and bats".

As with most people we have adapted our routine to accommodate this step change during this period of isolation. The alarm still goes off at 7am, at least I think it does, but we don't seem to get up straight away. In fact it is often quite a bit later. Our first task after breakfast is to walk Jess our dog. During this period we have been able to walk Jess together as, often in the past one of us has had to dash off to help with the school run. During these walks and with more time on our hands it has been a good time for reflection. Reflection brings different emotions. Sadness in not being able to hug our family and thinking of those families who've lost family members to the virus. Then happiness in our memories of our good times together.

Thinking of our parents, family, friends and interests we realise the great value and richness that they have brought to our lives. During our walks we see the fields of buttercups that my mother used to love so much and my father's beloved horse chestnut blossom. We think of our parents enjoying their gardens, their love of growing vegetables, and the great family values that hopefully they have passed on to us. We discuss the many wonderful family holidays that we have had and shared over the years. Such happy memories. In our wanderings and discussions we lose ourselves and forget about the dreadful virus that has impinged so significantly on our daily lives. My mother loved poetry and Angela and I have been trying to learn Wordsworth's poem 'Daffodils' which we both love. Between us we get to the second verse but then our minds go blank. It's probably just an age thing.

Thankfully we have been able to link with family and friends using new visual technology. I contacted my sister this week using WhatsApp as it would have been my father's 100th birthday, we toasted his memory on what would have been an amazing day and achievement. It was good to actually see her on the screen as we spoke.

We have actually been able to stand at the bottom of Alan and Jackie's garden whilst exchanging vegetable plants and have a shouting match with them. I think it is a draw so far, but we claim victory as the away team.

Now for close encounters of a different kind. We had a walk the other evening at dusk just through the fields along by the canal. Suddenly Angela said stop and we froze like statues. There was a badger ahead of us about 20 yards away that stood and looked at us, sniffing the air. After a few seconds he returned to snuffling about in the grass and then slowly ambled along directly towards us. When he got to about 4 yards away I panicked and said we will have to move. The badger obviously heard me and scuttled off back along the hedgerow. We scuttled on very excited at our encounter. We continued our walk and saw numerous bats fluttering around the fields and hedges as we made for home in the twilight. We see peregrine falcons regularly as they nest on a nearby church spire. There have been butterflies and damselflies to marvel at. Red kites and buzzards, swallows and willow warblers. It is certainly quite good for wildlife here in this quieter time.

It's been good to have a quieter time together too and the chance for getting jobs done, but we miss hugs with our family, going to church and meeting with friends.

Anyway less of my ramblings. We do hope you are all keeping well, staying safe, we think of you all.

Best wishes and Love from Angela and Roger in far away Braunston.

Thanks so much Rog and Ang. Badgers, bats, falcons, damselflies, red kites, buzzards, swallows, willow warblers, Jess the dog; what amazing creatures we share life with on this planet! Well now, a prayer based on observations of a beaver, with some reference to the Holy Spirit!...

Prayer (Carmen Bernos de Gasztold)

*The Beaver*

To build,  
Lord,  
that is a vocation!  
I speak of my passion,  
architecture.  
Of course  
one should build on a rock,  
but what fillip is there  
in doing anything so easy?  
Tell me  
to build a safe and steady house  
on the moving stream  
of a river -  
moving as life does, swiftly -  
what an adventure!  
My element  
is to struggle -  
it is water that allures -  
with patience and ingenuity  
one can do anything.  
But I am one  
who loves to swim against the current,  
to build  
something lasting  
- and all my own work -  
at the very core of my life.  
Oh yes, Lord,  
if You could give me  
some of your living water.  
I would build paradise for You.

Well after mountain goats, lions, hyraxes, badgers, bats, falcons, damselflies, red kites, buzzards, swallows, willow warblers and beavers, I thought we should add in butterflies, robins, fish, kangaroos, worms, octopuses, goats, and bears. Don't be shy, stand up and release your inner animal as we sing *If I were a butterfly!* Share photos on whatsapp please!

### Song (WT 203)

If I were a butterfly,  
I'd thank you, Lord, for giving me wings.  
And if I were a robin in a tree,  
I'd thank you, Lord, that I could sing.  
And if I were a fish in the sea,  
I'd wiggle my tail and I'd giggle with glee;  
But I just thank you, Father,  
For making me 'me'.

*For you gave me a heart  
And you gave me a smile,  
You gave me Jesus  
And you made me your child,  
And I just thank you, Father,  
For making me 'me'.*

If I were an elephant,  
I'd thank you, Lord, by raising my trunk,  
And if I were a kangaroo,  
You know I'd hop right up to you.  
And if I were an octopus,  
I'd thank you, Lord, for my fine looks;  
But I just thank you, Father,  
For making me 'me'.

If I were a wiggly worm,  
I'd thank you, Lord, that I could squirm.  
And if I were a billy goat,  
I'd thank you, Lord, for my strong throat.  
And if I were a fuzzy-wuzzy bear,  
I'd thank you, Lord, for my fuzzy-wuzzy hair;  
But I just thank you, Father,  
For making me 'me'.

Our prayers of intercession today are prepared and read by Cynthia Baker.

### Intercessions

Heavenly Father

We come to you once again, in our separate homes yet bound together with the love you have for each one of us. We are all trying our best to cope and live our lives in a different way, keeping distanced from our families and friends, the very opposite of the love and care

we would usually give to each other. We thank you for modern technology that, in a variety of ways, can connect us one to another. Father, we think of the many people who are really lonely and have no one to connect to – we pray that their loneliness might be lifted from a kindness shown or a cheery wave and smile from a passerby in the street.

Although these times are very scary and difficult, we have so much to thank you for. For the huge strong and loving care shown and given by everyone working in our hospitals and care homes, and we pray especially for those working in the Coved 19 wards that they will be protected from the virus. We thank you for fire, police, teachers' and those working in food stores and shops, refuse collectors and many more. We give thanks for the hundreds of scientists who are working hard to find a vaccine and medicines to fight this virus. We ask that you will be with those in government as they make decisions trying to work towards some normality in the months ahead. Give us all calm and patience and a willingness to play our part in helping to end this pandemic.

Father, through all this difficult time we are surrounded by the absolute beauty and wonder of nature. We have heard birds sing, spotted animals and birds we may not have seen before, and the night sky has been clearer enabling us to see many more stars in the heavens. All of this shouts that you are there with us, and that like nature, we will come through to more settled times.

We ask that you be with those known to each one of us who is in need of your healing power, strength and hope. Help us all never to forget to be loving, kind, non-judgemental and forgiving in our day to day living.

Thank you Father for this wonderful new day.  
Amen

And we thank Cynthia for those lovely prayers.

### The Offering

Lord for all your generous gifts we give you our praise and we thank you for the joy we find in reflecting your heart by giving to others. Receive our gifts to our church and use them to bless our world. Amen.

### Readings

Acts 2: 1 - 21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’ 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20 The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

1 Corinthians 12: 3 - 13

3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The gift of the Holy Spirit brings such great things into our lives. But don't leave that gift unopened like a pretty present forgotten under a Christmas tree. Instead, open it, and put the good things of God to use in your life: let peace, joy and love bring a riot of colour into your days. We sing, *Peace like a river!*

Song (WT 345)

Peace like a river,  
love like a mountain;  
the wind of your Spirit  
is blowing everywhere!  
Joy like a fountain;  
healing spring of life!  
Come, Holy Spirit  
let Your fire fall!

Lord God for the gift of your beautiful Spirit and for the gift of our beautiful world, we thank you. Help us now to hear your voice as we reflect on the Scriptures together. Amen.

Sermon

*All things bright and beautiful?*  
All things bright and beautiful?

Last week I mentioned three things that were coming from lockdown that we might long to keep in our lives:

a slower rhythm,  
a connection with nature,  
a deeper care for one another

These would underpin a renewed sense of God's presence.

I was not suggesting these were mere convenient spin-offs from a crisis, but that aspects of life that were consistent with the kingdom of God were being deliberately offered by God, now. If we wanted them we needed to repent - to turn away from what is false. And we had to have an attitude of trust that God was bringing something positive to the world. Today I want to develop the second of these thoughts on this, Pentecost Day, namely, a connection with nature.

In 1870, in Warrensburg, Missouri, a farmer's dog, Old Drum, had been shot, and the farmer wanted reparation. He hired legal representative George Graham Vest who pursued the dog-killer in court for damages. Vest's closing argument to the jury was simply a speech in praise of dogs. Here are some of his words:

Gentlemen of the jury: The best friend a man has in this world may turn against him and become his enemy. His son or daughter that he has reared with loving care may prove ungrateful. Those who are nearest and dearest to us, those whom we trust with our happiness and our good name, may become traitors to their faith. The money that a man has, he may lose. It flies away from him, perhaps when he needs it the most. A man's reputation may be sacrificed in a moment of ill-considered action. The people who are prone to fall on their knees to do us honour when success is with us may be the first to throw the stone of malice when failure settles its cloud upon our heads. The one absolutely unselfish friend that a man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him and the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous is his dog.

Gentlemen of the jury: A man's dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground, where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master's side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer, he will lick the wounds and sores that come in encounters with the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens.

If fortune drives the master forth an outcast in the world, friendless and homeless, the faithful dog asks no higher privilege than that of accompanying him to guard against danger, to fight against his enemies, and when the last scene of all comes, and death takes the master in its embrace and his body is laid away in the cold ground, no matter if all other friends pursue their way, there by his graveside will the noble dog be found, his head between his paws, his eyes sad but open in alert watchfulness, faithful and true even to death.

Vest won the case (the jury awarded \$50 to the dog's owner) and also won its appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court.

Many of my listeners today love animals. As a dog faithfully follows its master, so we should be loyal to our God, following him wherever he leads.

Well you may be thinking, dogs are all very well. We have a special connection with dogs. But what of other animals? The old saying says, Dogs believe they are human. Cats believe they are God. And yet I know many of my loyal listeners also love their cats without ascribing divinity to them. I hope Orlando, Knotty, Evil Edna and all the Hearsall cats are listening this morning.

This week's Behind Closed Doors included encounters with a badger, some bats and some bees. Many of our contributors have reported a joy in hearing the birds sing. But why do we find such delight in encounters with nature?

Our Psalm, Psalm 104, links the existence of every animal with the presence of God's breath, or Spirit. When God sends his Spirit, they are created. When God withdraws the breath, they die. The beast, it would seem, has something of God within it, and of course was created by God in the first place.

Is it too far fetched to say we find something of God in the animal kingdom? Well, after all, God made all these creatures so perhaps it's not so surprising.

I met a great deer hound in War Memorial Park this week. The huge dog rubbed its snout heavily against my stomach. It was a strange encounter. But if this dog had not been with its owner, I would have been nervous. Dogs can be our loyal friends, but some dogs are naturally aggressive. Many creatures we'd be well advised to steer clear of.

So the animal world also reminds us of our frailty, our vulnerability. Humans eat many of these creatures. But some of these creatures would eat us back, given half a chance.

So to say that God's Spirit is in every creature is not to be sentimental. God's breath is in both the fox and in the rabbit it kills for food. God's Spirit animates both the hunter and the hunted. This is the natural order.

This pushes things deeper into our present crisis. For is a virus a part of God's creation? If we assert that the badger and the labrador are within God's design, well what of the virus that might kill us? At the very least, the mechanism that allows viruses to develop is a natural consequence of the way God has set up the world.

Or is it? What if the coronavirus that gives us covid-19 is actually a result of the human mismanagement of creation? Far from being faithful stewards of creation, have we manipulated the living world unnaturally, and in doing so created our own downfall?

Our reading from Acts 2 begins with natural imagery. The Spirit coming sounds like a violent wind and looks like tongues of fire. This language of the wild expresses the strange power of a new spiritual experience.

Now, like the animals, the people in this story must always have had the Spirit of God within them, or they would not be alive. Something quite extraordinary occurs now, and these ordinary people get a sense of being filled up by this Spirit of God.

We know the surprising result. They suddenly are able to speak in other languages. The visitors from all over the known world in Jerusalem for the festival hear God's praises being declared in their own native tongues.

The scene must have been very noisy and excited, because some accuse these people of being drunk. But some ask the pertinent question: What does this mean?

And their answer comes in a quote from the prophet Joel. It's a new phase of history called The Last Days. During these Last Days God's Spirit would come to overwhelm every person, great and small, servants and masters. Everyone will have the opportunity to contribute in sharing the message of God's saving power. And everyone who calls on the Lord's name will be OK.

Our reading from Corinthians continues this almost democratic theme. In the church, everyone has a voice, everyone has a role. These roles vary from person to person, but as

everyone plays their part, the whole body functions as a healthy unit. If the church is a body, then the Spirit is not only in the brain or the heart but in all the body's functions.

So, where have we got to? God's Spirit is in every creature, including human creatures. This unites us with the animal world. But all Christians receive a super-charge of this same Spirit, regardless of their human status. This could give us a sense of superiority over the animal world: We have more Spirit than they.

Yet a moment's reflection tells us this should not be so. For a start, the fact that the servants and the common folk get the Spirit shows us this is not a badge of superiority. But anyway, if we have a deeper connection with God's Spirit, should that not also give us an affinity with any creature, which, after all, also has God's Spirit? To put it another way, would you trust the spiritual claims of a person who was cruel to an animal? Being filled with the Spirit of God therefore draws us back into nature, where God's Spirit also dwells, and allows us to commune not only with other Christians, but with all the creatures God has made.

But, as we have seen, the animal world is itself cruel. Every moment, some poor creature falls prey to another. We must not look at the world through pink glasses.

God's Spirit was given to everyone, regardless of status. Also in Corinthians, we read that the most excellent way is not the way of speaking in tongues or moving mountains with faith, but is love.

The time of the vole, hunted by the owl, will come. The time of the field mouse, caught by the cat, will arrive. We are all of us here for a short while and then fall to sickness, accident, violence or sheer old age.

This does not mean God's Spirit is absent. God is present in all these creatures. Like us, they live and they die within this perplexing world of slaughterhouses, covid19, and hunter-eating-hunted.

And yet this is the world in which we sit and hear the birds sing. This is the world in which we walk our dogs and feed our cats. This is the world of forests and trees, rivers and mountains we sense we belong to.

But for the honest believer, the sense of peace in nature is not some twee sentimental idea of the heroism of animals. It is found in accepting our part in this natural world. We have the Spirit, But so do those bluetits who spend all day feeding their chicks.

Watch birds doing that for an afternoon, as one of my spiritual directees did last week. Just sit and watch them all afternoon. You and they live in this beautiful and confusing world. You and they have the Spirit of God within you. But we have a super-charged portion, so our job is to care for this world, to promote its harmony and diversity, to cherish its finely-balanced eco-systems and to accept our finite place within it, until God calls us to our forever home.

And will your dogs and your cats be there too? I, for one, would like to think it is so!

So as church grows and develops after this current crisis can we retain the wisdom to rest and live and belong to the natural world? To care for it, to learn for it, to find God within it, and to bring God to it?

### Song

When your pure light shines  
so brightly in our world  
I see the colours change  
from greyness into glory.  
Our hearts like coloured glass  
that were so dark and dusty  
turn radiant and lovely  
in the glory of your light.

*Shine within my heart!*  
*Shine within your church!*  
*Shine ever brighter in your world!*

The broken and the lonely  
are welcome in your church;  
the hungry ones are fed  
and migrants treated kindly;  
slaves at last are freed,  
the unemployed find work,  
and mourners relearn gladness  
in the family of God.

### The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
the love of God;  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all  
now and always. Amen.

### Sung blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you  
wherever he may send you;  
may he guide you through the wilderness,  
protect you through the storm;  
may he bring you home rejoicing  
at the wonders he has shown you;  
may he bring you home rejoicing  
once again into our doors.