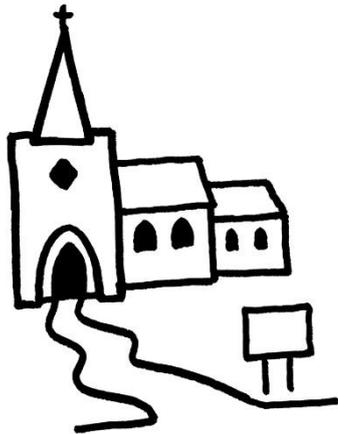




Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.



Isaiah 58: 13-14 'The Importance of Keeping the Sabbath'

¹³ If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;
if you call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the Lord honourable;
if you honour it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs;
¹⁴ then you shall take delight in the Lord,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

As I write this, the first tentative steps have been taken to re-open churches. Some for private prayer, others for small services; all needing risk assessments and a great deal of planning. Considerable thought has already been devoted to the whole question of how worship will change and evolve once lockdown ends. We will appreciate Sundays as never before!

Sundays have changed a great deal of course. My own experience from childhood in South Wales may have been a little different from some of yours – but I suspect not too much. By and large, shops did not open; there was little or no sport; often public transport didn't run, and cinemas only opened for very limited hours. Even if people weren't churchgoers, most didn't go to work and kept it a quiet day for the family. I had friend whose parents wouldn't let any of the family play on a Sunday. In fact, they were so strict, they even took the swing out of the budgie's cage!

In Luke's Gospel, we find Jesus being criticised for healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath. (Luke 13:10-17). If the woman wasn't in danger of dying, why couldn't Jesus have waited until the next day? Jesus' reply was that love and compassion take precedence over rules and regulations. Far from being the wrong day to heal someone, it was, in fact, the *best* day! Sunday is not to be a burden. It's not to limit, dominate or to enslave – in the way that perhaps our ancestors allowed it to, but a day of celebrating that life in the Kingdom of God which Jesus made possible for us – a day of release, of freedom and joy.

It's a day when it's right to gather to worship God (though of course we can do that on other days as well) – not out of a sense of duty, but because it is our delight. Perhaps then, we should complain less about Sunday becoming like every other day, but work to make every other day more like Sunday.



Prayer: Gracious God,
we thank you for all the opportunities we have for sharing in worship.
Help us to be sensitive and creative in using all the resources and gifts
you have given us to praise you and to join in fellowship and love,
that our faith may be deepened and your name glorified,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**