

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 26th September 2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

‘You must have the qualities of salt among yourselves and live in peace with each other.’

(Mark 9: 50)

My correspondence with you this week is dominated by a letter emanating from the Diocese of Winchester, which I have reprinted for you here in full. Equally important is a reflection from our gifted LLM, Charlotte Nash, showing us how the Holy Spirit is always ahead of us – lighting our path and guiding our steps into the way of truth; helping us to keep the salt of Christ’s love alive. Given the content of the letter from Diocese, Charlotte’s reflection seems all the more important – a lightbulb moment for Christians, showing us the diverse ways in which God’s love remains steadfast in our lives, even when the institution of the church itself becomes blighted by darkness.

In the passage from Mark’s Gospel, Jesus uses the image, texture and taste of salt to help us experience at a deeply personal level what it means for each of us to live out the divine values He brings to us from God. If that doesn’t make sense to you, go and put a grain of salt on your tongue and *taste* what Jesus is saying to you!



Source: [foodsplainer.com](https://www.foodsplainer.com)

First, Jesus uses salt as a reference which points us back to God's first covenant with the people of the Old Testament: *'Season all your grain offerings with salt to remind you of God's eternal covenant.'* (Leviticus 2: 13) Salt mingled with the harvest grain sacrifices reminded the faithful that their sustenance was provided by He who created them. More than that, the salt reminded them they owed their lives to God; that they were brought alive by God. In these tribal times, the potency of salt was used as a powerful contractual bond, in much the same way as a toast of whiskey or champagne might seal a business deal between two parties in today's world. Just as salt was used as a potent preservative agent in ancient times, so salt signified God's purifying power in the world.



'Font Montjuic, Barcelona' Source: [GLOOK](https://www.klook.com)

More than that, Jesus' words that we should '*have the qualities of salt among yourselves and live in peace with each other,*' represent an understanding of the people's need to become salt themselves in God's name – as they worked to purify and preserve the world against the powers of sin and darkness. Mirrored in Matthew's Gospel at Chapter 5, the reference to salt and light is suggestive of the idea that if our foods have no flavour they are of little value – both to our palate and our stomachs.

It speaks of our need as Christians to be full of righteous flavour, not bland or dulled by the sapping energies of sinful behaviour which would make us as worthless before God. Those of us who have ever lost our sense of taste during an illness will know only too well how difficult it is to enjoy food, however beautifully cooked and presented, if it doesn't taste of anything to us. We all know what bland, flavourless food tastes like!

Jesus is asking us here, when people who look in on our Christian faith from the outside, whether they experience the vibrancy and passion of our faith lived to the full ... or do we come across to them as grey, dull and lifeless examples of perfunctory religion by rote?



'You are Salt' by Mike Moyers

Bringing us to the present day, Jesus' illuminating use of salt as an illustration of how best to live our lives in His love, focusses our attention on how we should strive to avoid being caught in the thrall of those whose own vested interests threaten the stability and peace of others. Our

diocese would do well to value this sentiment, seeking to salt our people with the message of Christ's love, as ought we.

Yours, seeking the saltiness of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Online Worship – Charlotte Nash



Truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

(Matthew 18:20)

Over the last eighteen months I expect many of us have felt confined to our homes, our gardens and our 'bubbles'. But reflecting on those months, God has not been confined. He has been very much at work, and one of those ways is through Online Church. The pandemic has motivated the church to take a huge leap to go online that might otherwise have taken many years to happen. Technology allows us to attend church using Zoom, YouTube and Facebook. We now have a choice as to which 'virtual church' we go to - it might be our local church, or it could be anywhere in the world. The pandemic has presented opportunities for us to 'do' church in new ways!

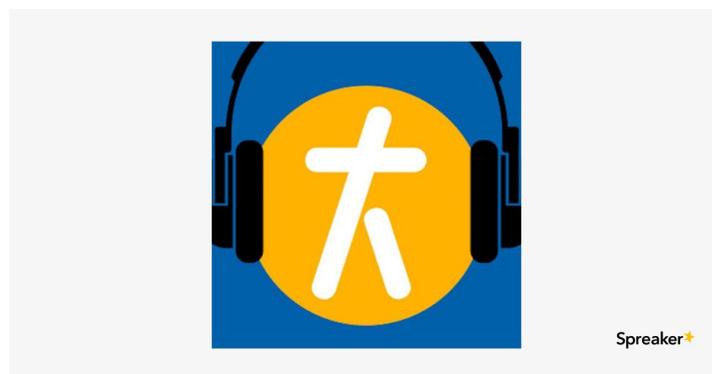
What has amazed so many people is that when we meet online, God meets with us. His Spirit is not confined to the four walls of a church building or to Sunday worship. Maybe we should not be surprised that God can do this. If death could not confine Jesus and He had the power to rise to life, why should God be constrained by the internet?

My first experience of online worship was Easter 2020. The backdrop was a church leader's home. The service was on YouTube; we couldn't see each other but we were able to communicate through the 'chat' function. We could say 'hello' to one another and at one point we were asked to share what the Cross meant to us, and to share prayer requests for the intercessions. We were made to feel involved in the service and God was powerfully present.

God meets with us, wherever we are and however we are meeting.

As Jesus says, *'Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them'*.

(Matthew 18:20)



Online worship looks like it's here to stay. Many churches are now investing in technology to broadcast their Sunday services 'live' and these services are often made available online for viewing at any time.

The church is opening its doors to a new world. Online worship is a huge benefit to people who are unable to get to church on a Sunday. One great sadness of my ministry is when I meet people who have been regular church-goers but who, because of old age or sickness, are unable to get there anymore. One of the things my elderly parents valued was being able to attend church on Zoom on a Sunday morning during Lockdown: they could see their friends, they felt involved in the service. It meant a

huge amount to them - they were being cared for spiritually and they were being remembered.

It occurs to me that as 'younger' older people, most of whom are familiar with technology, online church will become more important and a way for them to connect with the church when they are no longer physically able to attend a service. But we also realise that online services cannot be the complete answer because we all need human contact; we need touch. We need to share Holy Communion and The Peace together. Online church can never replace gathering together in person to worship. Rather, it is an opportunity to be church. For example, on Tuesday mornings as our Benefice meets for Morning Prayer on Zoom, it is a means of outreach to those who are curious to find out about faith in Jesus but who aren't ready to walk through a church door - and it is a way of caring spiritually for those who are unable to get to church.

Jesus tells us, '*I am with you to the very end of the age.*' (Matthew 28: 20). Surely that means embracing technology, moving with the times, taking every opportunity we can to reach out to a spiritually hungry world and always asking his Holy Spirit to guide us.

If you are interested in coming to Morning Prayer on Zoom, even if only to get a taste, please contact the Benefice Office.

Charlotte

Charlotte Nash, LLM

Collect Prayer for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



Mark 9: 38-50 - Using the Name of Jesus

John said to Jesus, 'Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn't in our group.'

'Don't stop him!' Jesus said. 'No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us. If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.'

But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better to enter eternal life with only one hand than to go into the unquenchable fires of hell with two hands. If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better to enter eternal life with only one foot than to be thrown into hell with two feet. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. It's better to enter the Kingdom of God with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out.

For everyone will be tested with fire. Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavour, how do you make it salty again? You must have the qualities of salt among yourselves and live in peace with each other.'

Top Tips from Austen Hooker



This week, Austen is itching to encourage all gardeners to get planting spring bulbs! Garden Centres and supermarkets are full of them – from bright yellow daffodils and the purest of white snowdrops to the richest red and darkest of black-purple tulips, there are bulbs to suit every planting scheme and pocket. Whether we are planting bulbs around established trees, in garden borders, along hedgerows, in containers or on balconies, bulbs are amongst the easiest and most rewarding plants to grow!

Spring flowering bulbs need to be planted by the last weeks of September and early October. Our endeavours in finding time to plant an array of bulbs at this time of year will reap dividends - bringing the hope of new life after the bleak and barren landscape of winter; brightening up those short, dark days of very early spring.

It is often a joy to find the fruits of an altruistic, community-minded bulb planter, whose gift in planting in more public spaces as well as in their own private gardens, brings unexpected pleasure to others – especially to those who are unable to dig and to those who have no outdoor spaces to tend. As Christians, planting bulbs might be a way of our connecting with the earth and sharing the hope of new life in creation - helping to spread God's abundant riches to all who have eyes to see and noses to smell the fragrant perfume of His loving and merciful grace. So, let's get planting!



[Bible Society Psalm 23 Garden at Chelsea Flower Show](#)

The Psalm 23 Garden at Chelsea Flower Show is joy for Christian gardeners everywhere, and for those seeking inspiration in their prayer lives. More than that, it is inspiring people to create community gardens all across the country. More about that next week, but for now, here is a link to view images of the garden from home:

[See Bible Society: The Psalm 23 Show Garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2021 / RHS Gardening](#)



Dear Friends,
20 September 2021

Together, we want to update you on recent discussions at Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod, as we continue to reflect upon events of the last few months. While this remains a period of uncertainty, we want to address openly any questions and outline the steps we are taking in response. We are all eager to look to the future, with hope and certainty.

We are aware that many of you do not know why Bishop Tim decided to step back and to retire. In May, DBF trustees learned of the possibility of a vote of no confidence in Bishop Tim's leadership, and spoke to him

about this. The planned motion addressed four specific areas: his visibility in the Diocese; his leadership style and culture; the Channel Islands; and governance. +Tim announced he would step back from his role, allowing for facilitated conversations to take place, addressing these concerns in depth. Ultimately, the conversations did not run their course; +Tim felt he could no longer be a focus for unity within the Diocese and announced his retirement shortly afterwards.

Bishop's Council and Synod are now continuing to scrutinise the areas of concern. At the recent informal gathering of Synod, we spoke about what had happened. Questions were raised and we answered these as best we could. There was a time in breakout groups to think about how Synod wanted to work going forward and what the priorities for the next triennium should be. These will be circulated ahead of the next formal meeting of Synod, to inform our discussions. Bishop's Council has also been meeting more regularly over the summer and will continue to do so during the autumn to provide stability and direction.

Many of us are still feeling the pain of what has happened. Our commitment to you is to work together to rebuild a renewed culture of trust and honesty. Bishop Debbie's leadership of the Diocese at this time is being well-supported by Bishop David, Bishop of Basingstoke, and Bishop Richard Frith, formerly Bishop of Hereford.

There will be challenges ahead. Our whole nation is looking at the winter months with increasing trepidation and concern about the potential impact of the pandemic for the vulnerable and for the NHS. We take comfort from our faith in a faithful God, who promises to be with us and who encourages us to love one another. We are encouraged by your faith, and by your faithful witness and service in our parishes and communities.

Thank you for our partnership, and for all, you do for our Diocese. Please continue to pray for healing, for unity, and for the flourishing of the Church in Winchester Diocese.

With prayers,

The Rt Revd Debbie Sellin, Bishop of Southampton
Alison Coulter, Chair of the House of Laity
Revd Andrew Micklefield, Chair of the House of Clergy

Schedule of Services

This schedule is correct at this time but may be subject to future alterations – please check on our website for the most up-to-date information.

All services start at 10am, unless marked differently on the table below

Please could you continue to book to attend services by contacting the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Please would you also continue to wear masks until we are advised otherwise.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ch</i>	<i>Cr</i>	<i>Li</i>	<i>Sp</i>	<i>Wh</i>
<i>26th Sept</i>		Harvest Service			Harvest Festival
<i>3rd Oct</i>	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	4pm - Café Church		6pm – Autumn Meditation Series – William Tyndale
<i>10th Oct</i>			Holy Communion		Morning Prayer
<i>17th Oct</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Prayer		8am - Holy Communion	
<i>24th Oct</i>			Morning Prayer	Harvest Festival	8am - Holy Communion
<i>27th Oct (Wed)</i>			Holy Communion		
<i>31st Oct</i>	<i>With Wh</i>	All Souls Service		6pm – All Souls Service	3pm – All Souls Service <i>PLUS</i> 6pm – Autumn Meditation Series – Thomas à Becket