

Ninth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, 9th August 2020

faith
hope
love

Dear Friends,

As I am taking some Annual Leave this week and next, two members of our Lay Ministry Team have kindly agreed to offer a Christian reflection for us to draw from. Today, we hear from Colin Sheath at Chilbolton, who speaks into the powerful words of St Paul's letter to the people of Corinth.

As we come to the close of this week, I am sure you will all join me in lifting our prayers for the people of Lebanon, already coping with the ravages of Coronavirus, and now struggling to respond to the tragic consequences of the devastating explosion which has ripped apart the city of Beirut on Tuesday, killing hundreds and injuring many thousands more – and leaving over 300,000 people homeless and hungry. Colin's thoughts are apposite. Never more has our world needed faith, hope and love.



Image of aftermath of the Beirut explosion, courtesy of Reuters

Yours in the grace of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

Reflection by Colin Sheath on 1 Corinthians 13 verse 13



'Sunflowers on a theme of Vincent Van Gogh' by Gabrielle Gwilliam

My thoughts this weekend are focussed on our need to pause awhile - to give ourselves time to think about the Christian values of Faith and Hope, Positivity, Optimism, Kindness and Love.

As COVID-19 continues to dominate our lives, and changes our view of what is or what should be normal, or the *new normal*, we are often conflicted in our interpretation of which course we should follow - not least because we mostly want to do the right thing, and keep both ourselves and our loved ones safe while doing the right thing by others. We must all make our own decisions of what path to follow, whether it's a decision about the risks we are prepared to take with going to shops, cafés and restaurants, or our personal decisions about how we keep ourselves safe and fit, in both body and mind.

For those with a Christian faith, there is perhaps a focus for our thoughts. Faith, hope, positivity and optimism, kindness and love, all these, which others may find difficult to see and comprehend, are deep values which Jesus has taught us to embrace as we strive to follow Him and live our lives in the light of these values. Yet *even with* a faith, our minds will wander and challenge our ability to stay positive and cheerful. So, sometimes it's worth looking at what others have said, who have also had to find an uplifting thought to carry them through their own trials and experiences - and what they have said in this regard, helps us to refocus our minds on our faith and on Jesus, as we restore His love in our hearts and minds.

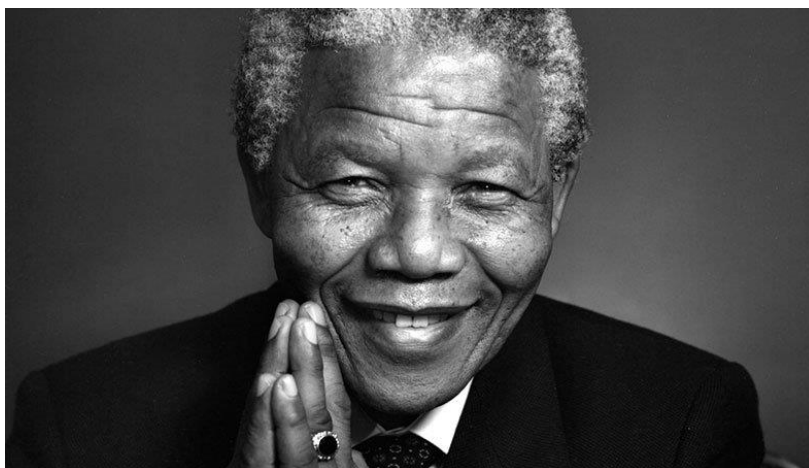


Portrait of Helen Keller in 1904 (i.ebayimg.com)

American author and political activist, Helen Keller talked powerfully about optimism, despite a childhood illness, possibly Scarlet Fever or Meningitis, which left her deaf and blind. She lived, as she recalled in her autobiography, 'at sea in a dense fog.' Despite this, Helen was determined to overcome the difficulties she faced in communicating with the outside world. Those who met her spoke of how she was filled with the joy that life gave her. In one of her lectures, Helen Keller said:

*'Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.'*

As Helen discovered, placing our faith in God will help with that focus, and through these difficult times where it's hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. When things may seem impossible – The author, Kobi Yamada, has said: *'Follow your Dreams, they know the way.'*



Nelson Mandela (westa.org/wp)

Nelson Mandela gave us some practical advice for when the mountains we face seem insurmountable. He said: *'It always seems impossible until it's done.'* So, like Mandela, we need to focus on the positives wherever we can.



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel with Dr Martin Luther King Jr at Arlington National Cemetery, February 6, 1968 (cdn.plough.com)

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was a Polish-born American, and one of the leading Jewish theologians and philosophers of the 20th century. He is famous for saying: *'When I was young, I used to admire intelligent people; as I grow older, I admire kind people.'* So, maybe a way forward for us is about being kind to ourselves and to others - and to let those kindnesses carry us through.



'Mallow' by Victor Ivanovich Zaretsky

The American novelist, Jack Kerouac once said: *'Practice kindness all day to everybody and you will realise you're already in heaven now.'* Now that sounds like a great place to be so - spread kindness and love. Love *ourselves* and show love to *others!*



Mother Theresa (www.cah.utexas.edu)

Mother Theresa lived her life in this conviction: 'Spread love everywhere you go.' For out of love comes kindness, kindness both to ourselves and to others. This surely must be an aim we should all strive to embrace at all times and particularly during these difficult times.

So finally we remember the words of 1 Corinthians 13 verse 13: '*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*' St Paul wrote these words to the people of Corinth as a strong rebuttal to the ways they were living their lives – quite the opposite from observing Jesus' teachings on love, they had become morally corrupt and had reduced their understanding of love to acts of self-serving lusts. Paul restored the meaning of love as the pinnacle of all spiritual gifts – even greater than acts of faith and sacrifice. Even these acts of selflessness, Paul says, are worthless without love. This whole chapter shows us how real love works – it is unselfish, and is impossible for us to attain unless we do as Jesus asks of us, putting God at the heart of everything we do. Only then as we let Jesus guide and shape us into the ways of selfless love, will we ever be able to live our lives in His perfect image.

Psalm 143: 7 - 8

Answer me quickly, Lord; my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me,
or I will be like those who go down to the pit.
Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.

With faith, hope and love,

Colin

Colin Sheath

Short-Term Schedule for the reintroduction of Sunday services.

Remember that our churches are open for daily prayer and for Sunday services - please see our website for more details at: <http://downsbenefice.org/>

All seats at our services need to be booked in advance. Please see the table below and book your seats by either calling or emailing the **Benefice Office** on **(01962) 880845** or office@downsbenefice.org.uk

Face coverings

The government has now determined that face covering should be worn in all places of worship in England. If you intend to come to church please therefore wear a mask or face covering while you are in the church building.

	9 th August	16 th August	23 rd August	30 th August
Chilbolton		MP 10am		
Crawley				
Littleton			HC 10am	
Sparsholt	MP 10am			
Wherwell			Closed	H C 10am

Box for Socks: Many thanks to each of you who has donated socks so far. For those

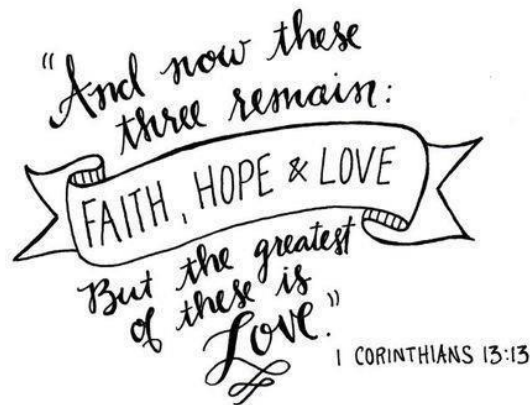


who haven't, don't forget there is a collection box in **St Catherine's Church porch** and at **each Sunday service** for you to donate **NEW** pairs of socks for men and women to be distributed to Winchester Nightshelter to support the 'Foot Health' programme for the hungry and homeless people on our streets.

Unfortunately, used socks cannot be accepted, only new ones. Any size welcome. Thank you!

Collect Prayer for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; 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.



1 Corinthians 13:1-13 – Love is the Greatest

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.