



## **Image of the day - The Voyager**

Fishing vessel the Voyager leaves Lough Foyle yesterday for the North Atlantic seeking mainly herring and mackerel. Classed as the most powerful trawler in the world when launched in 2017 by the McCullough family from Kilkeel in Co Down. 86m long, crew of 13, and a tank of 3,200 cubic metres. Photography by Aerial Vision NI.

[WWW.NBSI.IE](http://WWW.NBSI.IE)



NATIONAL  
BIBLE SOCIETY  
— OF IRELAND —

# lifting the lid

*6 online sessions exploring  
God's heart for mental health*

**Starting Monday 22nd February  
at 7.30pm**

Facilitated by:

William Olhausen, Tommy Stewart, Vivienne Murtagh,  
Ana Mullen, Gillian Kingston & Julie McKinley.

**\*CLICK TO REGISTER\***

## **Lifting the Lid on Mental Health – Bible Society's Lenten Series**

The National Bible Society of Ireland, has begun a six week journey into a type of 'wilderness', where they offer the opportunity to engage and reflect on mental health.

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Starting this Monday (February 22) for six sessions they are using the 'Lifting the Lid' resource, put together using material from a joint initiative between 'Mind & Soul' and 'Livability' (for more, see <https://www.mindandsoulfoundation.org/>).

The NBSI aims to create a nurturing space where participants can thoughtfully engage with biblical text during the season of Lent, and conversationally explore key themes encountered on their inner and collective journey toward mental wholeness.

These sessions will cover: – **Valued:** Zacchaeus– **Cared for:** Elijah– **Listened to:** Emmaus– **Accepted:** Weeping woman– **Understood:** Jairus– **Beloved:** Prodigal Son  
In conjunction with the relevant biblical texts, each week will look at different dimensions of mental health, including questions around challenges to mental well-being, addiction, anxiety, disconnection or restoration.

There will be six facilitators – one for each session. Each facilitator is trained in either ministry, counselling, art therapy or biblical scholarship and brings a unique skill to the overall conversation of mental well-being.

They are conscious that the issues raised can be sensitive and deeply personal – the forum will not and does not seek to solve such issues. Rather, it seeks to gently draw attention to the reality that these are challenges faced by many each day.

The first time the word 'hope' is used in the Bible (in the Book of Joshua), it is translated as the word 'rope'. This

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presents a most interesting thought – that at times hope needs to be tangible, and with God there is something firm to grab hold of, something solid and life–giving. Hope gives options. Whether Elijah in the cave or Zacchaeus up the tree, everyone can experience moments when it feels they are hiding in a cave, or invisible, and are not sure which direction God’s heart is pointing towards.

The six sessions are intended therefore to offer a tangible piece of hope, while navigating the current wilderness in which we all find ourselves.

NBSI invites you to join them on a journey of discovery, where they will ‘Lift the Lid’ each Monday evening from 7.30–8.40pm during Lent, and reflect on six key areas that are important in nurturing and sustaining good mental health.

To register, simply click here – <https://www.nationalbiblesocietyofireland.ie/> or here – <https://bit.ly/3rXMhuW>, and fill out the short and easy registration form. A zoom link will arrive in your inbox. Any issues which arise with registration please contact [julia@nbsi.ie](mailto:julia@nbsi.ie).

## **Happy 100th to long-serving church organist Billy Adair**

**Many congratulations to Billy Adair, who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on Tuesday February 16.**

Billy, a lifelong parishioner of St George’s, Belfast, and well-known church organist, lives independently, and after a stay





St George's parishioner Billy Adair on 100th birthday on February 16.

in hospital and respite care due to post-Covid complications just after Christmas, he was back home to start his special day opening his birthday cards.

Billy's daughter Gill Adair said he had been thrilled to receive cards from Her Majesty the Queen, the Lord Lieutenant and the Bishop of Connor, Rt Rev George Davison. There were also cards from the Ulster Society of Organists and Choirmaster and one signed by former choir members of St James' Parish Church, now part of the

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United Parish of St Peter and St James, in Belfast's Antrim Road

Gill said the highlight of Billy's day had been a video call with his wife Dorothy, who is currently living in a care home. Although his heart is in St George's, St James' Church, which closed in 2008, is also very special to Billy, as he was organist and choirmaster there for more than 20 years. After the building closed for worship, Billy continued to play the organ in different churches including evening service in St Mark's, Dundela, until he was aged 94! Gill said he still enjoys writing articles for the St George's parish magazine.

Leaving school at 16, Billy worked all his life with the textile firm of William Ewart and Son. His relationship with music pre-dates even his business life. In an interview for *Connor Connections* in 2007, he explained how he came to play the organ. "When I was 15 I had a friend, Arthur Martin, who was a well-known teacher of organists and choristers at the Shankill Road Mission. I became his apprentice more or less by teaching myself the organ. I ended up doing most of the organ playing in those days and eventually decided I must have proper organ lessons."

He went to classes run by Capt CJ Brennan, organist at Belfast Cathedral, and his first church appointment was when he was 18, in St Michael's, Shankill Road. From there, Billy went to St Patrick's in Jordanstown, and later moved to St John's Parish, Malone, with its all-male choir, where he stayed 14 years.

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After a time in Lisburn Cathedral, he moved to St Mark's, Dundela, where he played at the 10am service voluntary basis for 15 years.

Soon after he retired from business in February 1986, Billy took on the job of organist at St James's.

“An organists' job is time consuming,” Billy said in 2007. “It takes a lot of thought and preparation for the music at each service. It requires tact as well as musicality in handling choir practices.”

Gill says Billy continues to enjoy good health after having a triple heart by-pass and a pacemaker fitted 22 years ago. Billy and Dorothy are parents to Gill and her brother Stephen, and grandparents to Aaron and Helen.

The Rev Brian Stewart, rector of St George's Parish Church, described Billy as 'a treasure.' “He is gentle, devout and a lovely man to have around the place,” said Brian.

## **Spring Issue of *Search***

**The spring issue of the Church of Ireland journal, *Search*, edited by Canon Ginnie Kennerley, should reach contributors next week.**

The first three articles in this issue reflect the continuing effects of the pandemic on current and future developments, styles and possibilities. Two clergy of Dublin diocese, the Revd Stephen Farrell, Rector of Zion, and the Revd Christopher West, Curate of Taney, consider how regular parish worship has adjusted and may continue to change

while Soline Humbert, a member of ‘We are Church Ireland’, looks at a radical online experiment in eucharistic worship.

But the pandemic overshadows more than worship and extends world-wide. From the USA, Richard K Fenn, Emeritus Professor of Christianity and Society at Princeton Theological Seminary, reflects on its malign effect on public life there, exposing the pernicious inter-racial fault-line in the American psyche. And from the UK Paul Ballard, Emeritus Professor of Theology at Cardiff, offers observations on the relation of faith to work in our troubled society today.

Existential anxiety has become a feature of our everyday lives. Will we and our loved ones still be here this time next week? And if not, where will we be? Some are more confident than others about a future existence and its conditions. In this context the Revd Andrew Campbell, Rector of Skerry in the Diocese of Connor, comes out strongly against nihilist objections that Heaven, if it exists, can only boring while TCD postgraduate, Katie Brown, looks extensively at what the Bible (rather than the Church) has to say about the ultimate destiny of those who commit suicide or embrace death to save others.

Looking to the future, this issue concludes with two articles which connect with the thinking behind the subject of the *Search* Colloquium, “Who is my Neighbour?” to be conducted on line on 17 April. This lies in the WCC document “Serving a Wounded World in Interreligious Solidarity” with its call to an extension of pandemic neighbourliness to the outsider – those of all faiths, races and cultures both giving and receiving. The first, by the Dean of Cloyne, the Very Revd Paul Draper, challenges us



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to eschew all “othering” and to embrace all those in need; the second by the Rt Revd Kenneth Kearon, Bishop of Limerick & Killaloe, reflects on how ‘first world’ gifts are used in the receiving communities, whose priorities may be more immediate than those of the donors.



## **C of E urged to use its own land for affordable homes**

**The Church of England should look at using its land to build affordable homes rather than to make a profit, a report commissioned by archbishops has found.**

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The research by the Commission of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on Housing, Church and Community said that the Church commissioners currently manage £8.7 billion of assets.

It argued that 6,000 of the 100,000 acres it owns, which is currently held as “strategic land”, could be used for affordable homes, and that the Church should “not simply be driven towards land sales at the highest price”.

The report added that “in Christian faith, resurrection and salvation only come after, and not without, the sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross.

“Lasting change does not come without sacrifice – the sacrifice of privilege, of power, and of potential profit.” Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, said: “A few people ... [are] always looking for an opportunity to say ‘Why doesn’t the Church stick to prayer and God?’ and the Government can do housing. It’s just a totally false view of what a human being is, and of what society is.”

Archbishop Welby told *The Sunday Times* that housing was “absolutely central to the teaching of the Bible”.

The new “Coming Home” report, released yesterday, warned that around eight million people live in “overcrowded, unaffordable, or unstable homes” and that this made it harder to maintain “stable communities”.

The Rt Rev Guli Francis-Dehqani, the Bishop of Loughborough, has now been appointed Bishop for Housing alongside an executive team who will “embed this vision”

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within the Church and make sure dioceses “use their land well”, the report added.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has also submitted a General Synod motion which recognises that “housing and communities are part of the mission and ministry of the Church of England”.

Graham Tomlin, the Bishop of Kensington, said: “The Grenfell Tower fire highlighted the urgency of the housing crisis in our nation, and was always in the back of our minds as a Commission as we have thought and prayed over the housing issue in the last two years.”

The Reverend Lynne Cullens, chair of the National Estate Churches Network, said: “Right across the country, churches are responding to local housing need by building, innovating, repurposing and advocating for those who are vulnerably housed... Together we can drive a spoke into the wheel of housing injustice.”

A Government spokesman said: “We welcome and encourage the practical steps that the Church is taking to make more of their land available for affordable housing.”

## **French Catholic women launch manifesto on feminine vocation in the Church**

**A group of Catholic women in France has launched a manifesto to underscore the “beauty of the women’s specific vocation.”**

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The idea for the manifesto arose right after the publication of Pope Francis' motu proprio *Spiritus Domini*. Issued on Jan. 10, 2021, the motu proprio changed Church law to permit women to exercise the lay ministries of lector and acolyte. In much of the world, women had already served the role of reading at Mass, although without being officially instituted in the "ministry" of lector.

The manifesto can be found on the [La Vocation du Feminines](#) website. As of Friday afternoon, it had attracted some 500 signatures.

The manifesto states that "the issue of the presence of the woman in the temple, and the obstinacy to back married priesthood or female priesthood are, to us, the symptoms of a grave liturgical crisis rooted in a deeper anthropological crisis which deals with the man/woman complementarity." The signatories stress that "every Catholic should be concerned about this deep malaise."

"While we are becoming aware of the danger of clericalism, we paradoxically forget that women are excluded from the Church hierarchy for the good of all the Church," it says, and underscores that "now more than ever, the vocation of women has been represented in such a cartoonish and impoverished way."

The text notes that "the tradition to leave women away from the altar is very ancient, present both in the Eastern and the Western tradition. However, Christianity has always taught that men and women are equal in dignity."

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The manifesto points to examples of influential women in the Church, like Catherine of Siena and Joan of Arc.

It also emphasizes that God “gave us his Son through the Virgin Mary,” and “in her, the love of God finds its irrevocable home,” and “we are all debtors with this feminine ‘yes.’”

“Young girls should not be encouraged to engage in a climate of struggle and demands,” the signatories say.

“They should be encouraged to grow and account for their own talents and charisms. They must receive the fact of being a woman, for what it means: a remarkable grace!” On the other hand, they say, boys must be educated to “the fear of God, the disinterested gift of themselves, and the



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admiration of the feminine and male human body.”

“As Catholic women, aware of our Marian privilege, we choose to put our energies and talents at the service of the effective complementarity of man and woman,” the document says.

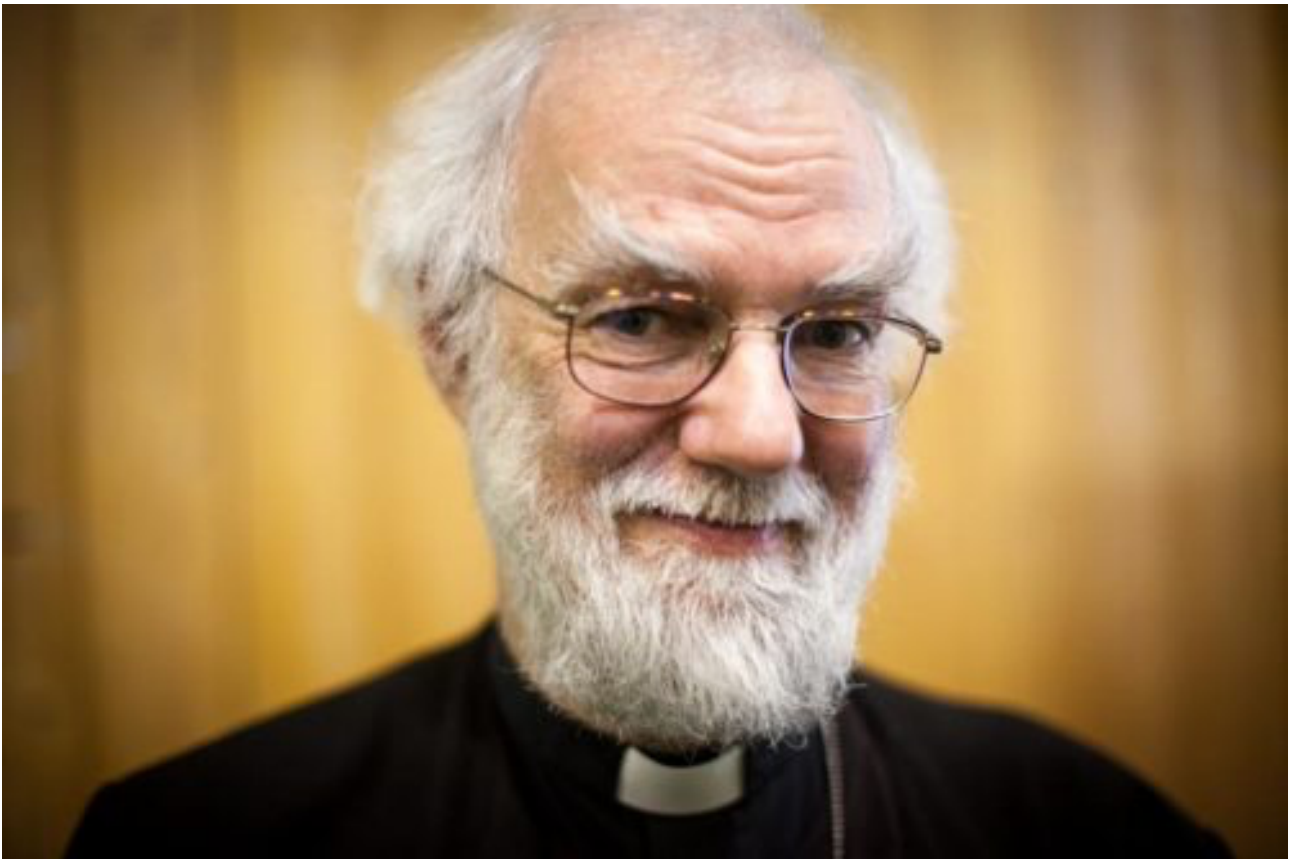
The manifesto ends with a tone of encouragement to Catholic bishops willing to stand up to the pressures of “gender ideology” within the Church.

“We are aware that our pastors, in order to be faithful to their evangelical call and to the biblical and ecclesial traditions, have to undergo pressure and that they will still have a lot to suffer. We assure them of our prayer and our fraternal affection, so that their celibacy offered and united to the One Sacrifice may always be more and more fruitful,” the signatories say.

## **Opinion - Rowan Williams on his debt to Catholics**

**Growing up in Wales in the 1950s, you still couldn't quite avoid the sense that Catholics were exotic and a bit frightening.**

People of my grandmother's generation from the Welsh valleys would occasionally resort to dark headshakings: Catholics were devoted to the suppression of natural feelings, freedom of thought and common honesty. Kingsley had won over Newman in this constituency at least. When we started attending the Anglican parish church in my early teens, a new world of Christian imagination opened up.



It was a moderately Anglo-Catholic church where the liturgy was celebrated with unfussy dignity and care. But the real blessing was a parish priest of extraordinary gifts – a man with a profound and informed enthusiasm for theology, poetry and drama, whose sermons I still recall as models of what preaching should be, and whose pastoral generosity was limitless. He talked about prayer and contemplation, and his concentration at the altar made it plain that this was more than words. And – like a good many Anglo-Catholics of his generation – he had a keen sense of the global Church. Curates went from the parish to foreign missions and came back with stirring accounts of the challenges of poverty and political struggle. We had the then very rare experience of a black preacher in the pulpit, an archdeacon from Botswana. And the same pulpit also hosted a Franciscan friar on one occasion.

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Odd as it may sound, Roman Catholicism seemed a long way away from all this, seldom talked about or worried about. I think it was probably when I was around 15 that a mixture of things began to stir my interest in the roots of Catholic spirituality. School studies contributed: reading Chaucer, and GK Chesterton's book on the poet, kindled a fascination with the Middle Ages. The Franciscan's visit was perhaps the first time I thought about the religious life, and whether my exploration of vocation ought to take stock of this. And the news trickling through about the Second Vatican Council presented a picture of the Roman Catholic Church as gathering its resources for genuine creative renewal.

I went up to Cambridge wrestling with all this. Was there a clear call to the religious life, and if so did that entail becoming a Roman Catholic?

Monasticism in the Anglican context was a reality, often an impressive one, but was it really rooted in the day-to-day practice of the Anglican Church?

Looking back now, what comes most clearly into focus is that the Roman Catholics with whom I discussed this never exerted the least pressure; and I think of them as setting out to help me be a better Christian rather than to secure a convert. Richard Incedon, who was the Catholic chaplain at Cambridge at that period, was one such, a priest of great integrity, by no means at ease in the ecclesiastical climate of the day, but having something of the sheer focus and sense of spiritual priorities that I recognised in my old parish priest. And when, in my third year, a friend invited me to spend some time with him at Quarr Abbey, my first meeting with Fr

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Joseph Warrilow, the sensation was the same. Fr Joe was to be my spiritual director for many years, up to and beyond my ordination in the Church of England, and my debt to him is beyond calculation.

These were people who were clear about their own commitment, but gentle with my hesitation. They reassured me that trying to maintain intellectual integrity was a proper spiritual concern. But they pressed hard on the need now for disciplined prayer: not putting off the hard work of discipleship until a decision had been reached.

The Anglican I am today is who he is because of those uncomfortable years of exploration and because of the sensitivity of the Catholic guides who so generously accompanied, encouraged, warned and inspired. We're probably all prone to degrees of confessional self-sufficiency; at the very least this experience put paid to that, and I can only be deeply thankful for it.

*Rowan Williams is a theologian, poet and former Archbishop of Canterbury*

## **Pointers for prayer**

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,

I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord; no tender voice like thine can peace afford. I need thee every hour; stay thou nearby; temptations lose their power when thou art nigh. Amen. ~ Annie Sherwood Hawks

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in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Pray for the launches of new Church Army centres of mission in Rochdale, Gwent Valley, North Sutton and Ipswich; that these will launch as planned and new staff will find ways to engage with their communities when they are appointed.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of



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the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop.  
Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.

Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.

We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Lord Jesus, you prayed that we would all be united together so the world would believe and experience your love. Help us to put aside that which keeps us apart and work together to share your love through our actions and our lives.

Holy God,  
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:

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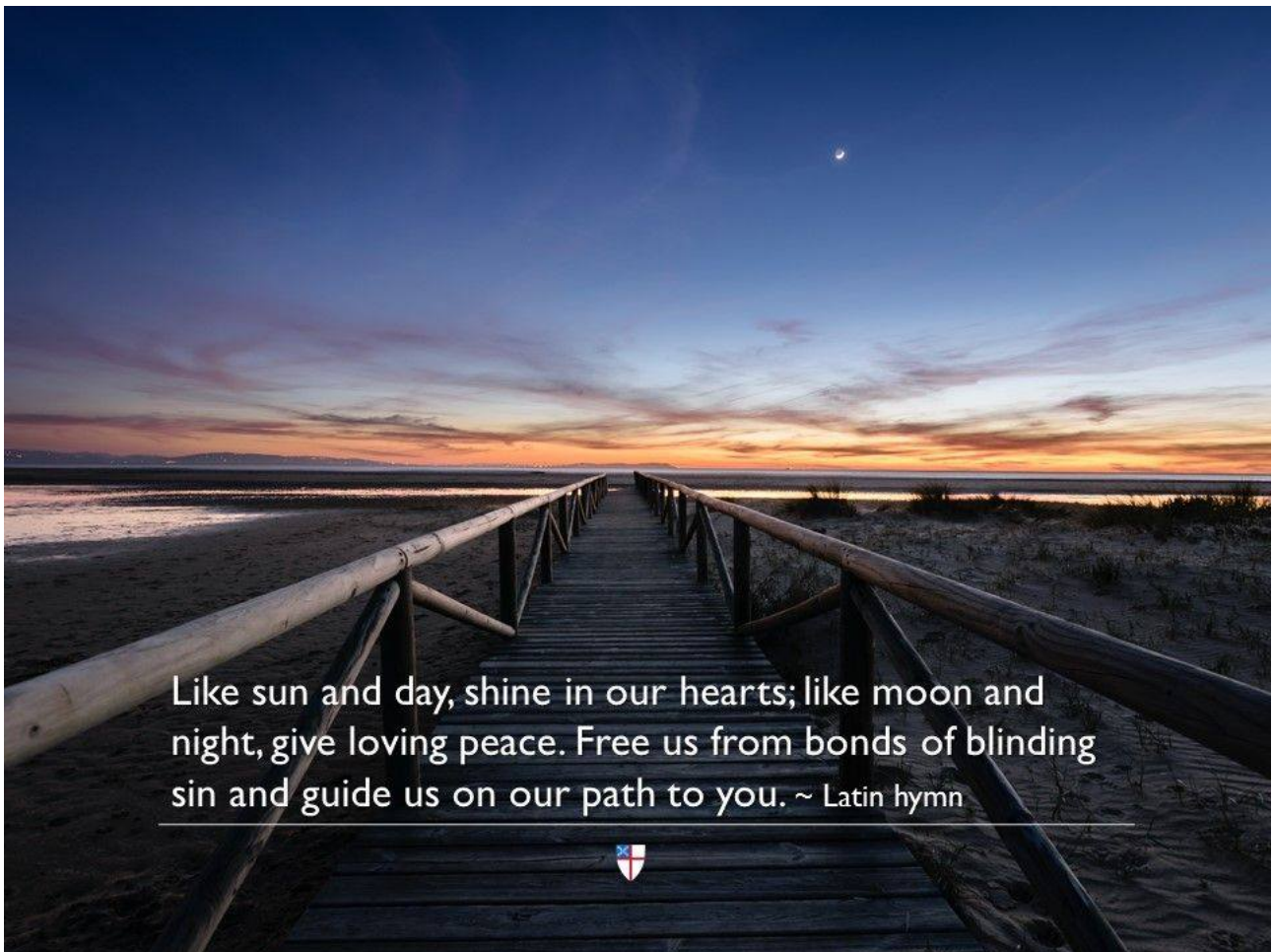
set straight our crooked hearts,  
and bend our wills to love your goodness  
and your glory  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,  
you have created the heavens and the earth  
and made us in your own image:  
teach us to discern your hand in all your works  
and your likeness in all your children;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all  
things,  
now and for ever.

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you hate nothing that you have made  
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:  
create and make in us new and contrite hearts  
that we, worthily lamenting our sins  
and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness;  
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.

## **Speaking to the Soul**

Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly with you, and our hearts are open to you. There is no lack of love on our part, but you have withheld your love from us. I am



Like sun and day, shine in our hearts; like moon and night, give loving peace. Free us from bonds of blinding sin and guide us on our path to you. ~ Latin hymn



asking you to respond as if you were my own children. Open your hearts to us!

## 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 NLT

It's possible for our relationship with other people to be incredibly superficial. Our words can often be a way of pushing other people away rather than revealing anything significant about ourselves. A friendly, smiling face and a warm greeting can easily be used to mask deep sadness and confusion. This can happen as easily in churches as anywhere else. We can skate over the surface without ever really getting to know one another.

Paul, in typical robust style, pierces through such superficiality and says exactly what he thinks! He has opened his heart to the Corinthians and they have done

exactly the opposite to him. He appeals to them to open their hearts to him as if they were his children. Paul had established the church in Corinth so it isn't surprising that he looked at them with a father's love, and he is desperate to have a strong relationship with them.

It's so important for us to have people with whom we can open our hearts. This is what true fellowship is all about. It is only as we get to know one another deeply that we can truly be the church and live as the body of Christ, giving and receiving love and spiritual gifts. Being vulnerable in this way isn't easy but there is no other way to discover strong and vibrant relationships. Behind Paul's words there is very clearly a sense of hurt. He loves the Corinthians so much that he longs to receive their love in return. His honest words are a helpful reminder that churches are not made up of perfect people and at times fellowship can be agonizingly disappointing. But, like Paul, we need to go on loving people and longing for our Christian brothers and sisters to open their hearts to us and to one another.

## QUESTION

With whom are you able to open your heart?

## PRAYER

Loving Lord, thank you that you have opened your heart to us. Help me to be increasingly willing to open my heart to my Christian brothers and sisters. Amen.



