Dear friend

I am pleased to enclose a service sheet for Sunday (Bible Sunday).

We start with the meditative hymn, ‘Be still for the presence of the Lord’, by David J Evans. I am grateful to Martin for this version with words provided:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U

Another hymn sung by the talented Acapeldridge one-man quartet, ‘Our God, He is alive’, which emphasises our dependence on God:

https://youtu.be/8ZOycliNiTk

This week’s verses from Psalm 119 (Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes) are used as the offertory for Quinquagesima. Here is the Latin version, Benedictus es Domine, intoned in plainchant by ensemble Giles Binchois:

https://youtu.be/kasnoK7xDdo

A jubilant setting by the American composer Larry King; Glory to you (Benedictus es Domine) sung by the choir of Trinity church, Wall Street, New York (where he was organist and choirmaster for 21 years). I don't think his music has travelled much beyond this church, which is a shame (I'm very happy to be proved wrong):

https://youtu.be/d2Vm4BXHSJI

An unaccompanied setting of ‘Blessed art thou’ by the remarkable American composer and writer Ned Rorem, sung by North Dakota State University choir. Ned Rorem has written some particularly fine song settings, as well as symphonies and chamber works. He celebrated his 97th birthday recently and is still going strong!

https://youtu.be/g-QPk96qFIM

Finally, a worship song from Martin:

‘You Never Let Go’, by Matt Redman, the British hymn writer with words of encouragement for all with anxiety or fear. "If my God is with me, whom then shall I fear?"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b61wsBdqrKM

With every blessing
Chris

VIRTUAL SERVICE 25.10.20 (**BIBLE SUNDAY**).
Our Lord God, thank you for your guidance through the Scriptures. Help us to regularly search your word to gain more insight as to who you are and more understanding of your will for each one of us. Give us an increasing desire to read, obey, and find nourishment through the Bible. *Bible Society*.

CONFESSION. Forgive us, Lord, for the things we have failed to do, for the opportunities we missed to help others, for the times when we are too busy with mundane things to pray to you and to listen to your word.
Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes. *Psalm 119 v12*.

COLLECT. Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and forever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READINGS. Nehemiah 8.1-4a,8-12, Psalm119vv 9-16, Colossians 3.12-17, Matthew 24.30-35.

REFLECTION. The people of Israel had returned to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile in Babylon; they had lost their sense of identity and their faith had become stale. Nehemiah lead a group of them to rebuild the city walls and then, together with the priest Ezra, started rebuilding their community. In today's passage we read how Ezra led a marathon public reading from the Torah, the book of Moses. The people listened and the Levites explained the meaning of the texts; the audience were moved to tears of grief and, perhaps, in part, relief after the struggles of exile. However, Nehemiah and Ezra encouraged them to celebrate with a party, "for the joy of the Lord is your strength".
We can all gain from listening to, or reading, God's word and gaining help in wrestling with difficult passages. The study of scripture begins as an intellectual process, but it also generates an emotional response and leads to a change in behaviour. If we "meditate on God's precepts" and receive his word, it will transform us. The Bible is a constant in our unsettled and disturbing world. Jesus teaches us that "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt 24.35).

PRAYERS. Lord, we give you thanks for the revelation of your word in scripture. We pray for all who seek to make it known throughout the world, for those who translate it into different languages and those who distribute bibles, sometimes at great personal risk. We pray for those who research and teach the scriptures. We pray for ourselves, that your Holy Spirit may enlighten our personal study.

We pray for the many troubled nations of the world, for areas torn apart by conflict. Guide the world's leaders, that they may serve their peoples with justice and with compassion. Grant your strength to those who strive for peace between warring factions.

Comfort and heal those who suffer in mind, body or spirit. We pray for those awaiting surgery or investigations, for the anxious, for those who mourn loved ones. Especially we bring before you those known to us……

We pray for those facing financial and other restrictions because of lockdown, for those shielding and unable to visit those dear to them, for those in fear of losing their jobs.

Lord, take my lips and speak through them; take my mind and think through it; take my heart and set it on fire. *WH Aitken*.

We say the **LORD'S PRAYER**.
We share the **GRACE**.

FINAL PRAYER. All – seeing Father of Christ, hear these prayers. Let your servant hear the wonderful song of Scripture. Guide my feet along God's path, and may the royal Christ, who wards off ills from mortal man, lead me to the Father's will. *Gregory of Naziansus*.