Dear Friends, I enclose this week's virtual service.

To warm up, Charles Wesley's hymn based on the passage from Ephesians, 'Soldiers of Christ arise', sung to Naylor's rousing tune "From strength to strength". Words provided:
https://youtu.be/HIov_jAo2uo

Reflecting on the passage from John's gospel, the hymn Bread of the world in mercy broken, prayerfully sung to "Rendez a Dieu" by Cantus Choro:
https://youtu.be/8382PrTBOVY

'If ye love me, keep my commandments', by Thomas Tallis, sung by the lay clerks in the cavernous acoustic of Ely Cathedral, followed by other recordings at different pitches:
https://youtu.be/5WSe0kv6lCU

The first, more upbeat, part of Psalm 34, sung by the Brooklyn tabernacle choir:
https://youtu.be/DfW2mkkMTAg

Vaughan Williams' setting of verse 8 of psalm 34, sung by Bath Spa choir under Francis Faux at the opening of the 2016 Bath festival:
https://youtu.be/VFM2IkZQSJE

Finally, 'Come let us praise the Lord', by Roger Jones, words by Timothy Dudley Smith:
https://youtu.be/-Sl4luwrCIU

With every good wish
Chris

VIRTUAL SERVICE 22.08.21

I believe that, by my own understanding or strength, I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith.
Martin Luther, trans. TJ Wengert.

CONFESSION Jesus, each of us is both the thief who blasphemes and the one who believes. I have faith, Lord, help my lack of faith. I am nailed to death, there is nothing I can do but cry out "Jesus, remember me when you come with your kingdom!"
Glory and praise to you, you who welcome not the healthy but the sick, you whose unexpected friend is a criminal cut off by the justice of men. Already you are going down to hell and setting free those who cry out to you; "Remember us, Lord, when you come with your kingdom!" Patriarch Bartholomew.

COLLECT Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve: pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

READINGS Joshua 24.1-2a,14-18, Psalm 34.15-end, Ephesians 6.10-20, John 6.56-69.

REFLECTION Nearing the end of his life, Joshua summoned the Israelites to Schechem and challenged them to renew their covenant vows, their relationship to God. Only a few years previously the chosen people of God had been miraculously freed from their slavery in Egypt; they were enjoying relative prosperity. Yet they had slipped back into their old ways, worshipping the fertility gods of neighbouring countries. The people happily agree once again to serve God, but Joshua (later in the chapter) challenges their commitment and offers them the choice of following other gods. Similarly, in the passage from John's Gospel, Jesus gives his followers the chance to turn away when they find his teaching difficult. Many slope off, leaving him with the Twelve. Perhaps they, too, were tempted to leave him for an easier life, but they had caught a glimpse of God in Jesus. As Peter put it, "To whom can we go? *You* have the words of eternal life".

PRAYERS Forgive us, Lord, when we fit you into our lives when it suits us, rather than committing our lives to you. Forgive us when we grumble at the difficulties of life. We pray that your Holy Spirit will inspire and guide us, that we may partake of the living bread.

We bring before you the many troubled regions of the world, especially the women and all who fear for their life and liberty in Afghanistan, the Middle East and other war-torn areas, the victims of earthquake, fire and flood.

We hold in our prayers all who are sick or suffering, and those who care for them, those awaiting test results or undergoing surgery or chemotherapy, those who are lonely or feel rejected, and those who mourn. Especially we remember…..Comfort and heal them, O Lord.

We pray for our church communities, that we may not be disheartened when numbers seem small, or when things become difficult. Empower us to fight the good fight, with weapons of peace and love, strengthened by your Holy Spirit.

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

FINAL THOUGHT It's strange, but I feel as if I can stop talking *to* you and simply be *with* you. I want to be quite empty, quite still, and then you can come slowly, gently, filling me with yourself.
Come then, now – the words end here.
Simon Bailey