Dear Friend
I enclose this week's virtual service.

'Take up thy cross', to Breslau, from Chet Valley churches:
https://youtu.be/OS3q4uTEAik

or a Namibian song on the same theme, with a gentle beat:
https://youtu.be/mPe4vUBFvGE

Chloe Dichoso sings David Haas' 'take up your cross':
https://youtu.be/KMqNLqjzW-M

For choristers, a chance to sing along to 'Lotti's Crucifixus', with the Sixteen:
https://youtu.be/8itDCBV-6wI

Finally, from Martin: 'Forever' by Chris Tomlin sung by Michael W Smith – Lyrics. Big worship song to invigorate and encourage us. A song of deep thanks. It's huge and strong, like God's love for us:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ks86XlVKaB8

With every good wish
Chris

VIRTUAL SERVICE 12.09.21
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. *(1 Cor 1.25)*

CONFESSION If we have worshipped you as a relic from the past, a theological concept, but not as a living God, if we have confused your will with our understanding of it, if we have heard stories of struggle, with no intention of sharing the burden or pain, if we have identified the misuse of power, but failed to prophesy against it, and refused to empower the weak, if we have sung songs in praise of your creation, while defiling the goodness of the earth, Lord, forgive us. *I will bring my people back to me. I will love them with all my heart. No longer am I angry with them. I will be to the people like rain in a dry land. This is the promise of God. (World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, adapted).*

COLLECT God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; 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 forever. *Amen*.

READINGS Isaiah 50.4-9a, Psalm 116.1-8, James 3.1-12, Mark 8.27-end.

REFLECTION "Who do you say that I am?" Challenged by Jesus, the disciples likened him to the great prophets (a view held by Muslims today). They were travelling in Gentile territory, in the region of Caesarea Philippi, where there was a cult of emperor worship. Perhaps this led Peter to blurt out that Jesus was the Messiah, thinking that he would be a new King David, restoring the nation of Israel. Jesus' teaching that he must undergo great suffering was too much for Peter, and he tried to put him right, to align him with his own agenda. The cross signified total rejection by Roman society, total degradation in human terms. Yet Jesus tells his followers, including us, to take up our cross and follow him. This does not imply seeking suffering or abuse for its own sake, but walking alongside Jesus, a journey of self-denial. For most of us it means prayerfully trying to serve others and articulating our faith as best we can. For some, our faith is still a dangerous business – worldwide over 4,000 Christians were killed last year for holding fast to their belief.

PRAYERS



Good Jesus, who bore the cross for me, what cross is it you will that I should bear for you? You know, Lord, that I am all weakness, teach me to bear my cross: bear it for me, bear it in me. *Edward Pusey.*

We pray for the many parts of the world where people are oppressed, are denied free speech and religious freedom, especially the people of Afghanistan. We pray for the work of relief organisations, for charities such as Open Doors and Christian Solidarity. We pray that we may welcome the refugee, support the dispossessed and the persecuted. Comfort and heal all who suffer physically or mentally, those who have chronic illness, including long Covid, those with chronic pain or anxiety. Especially we pray for…….. Lord, guard our tongues, that we may think before speaking. Forgive us when we speak for ourselves and not for you, when we distort your teaching for our own ends. Forgive us when we fail to speak up for what is right.

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

FINAL PRAYER Jesus our brother, you followed the necessary path and were broken on our behalf. May we neither cling to our pain where it is futile, nor refuse to embrace the cost when it is required us, that in losing our selves for your sake, we may be brought to new life. *Janet Morley*.