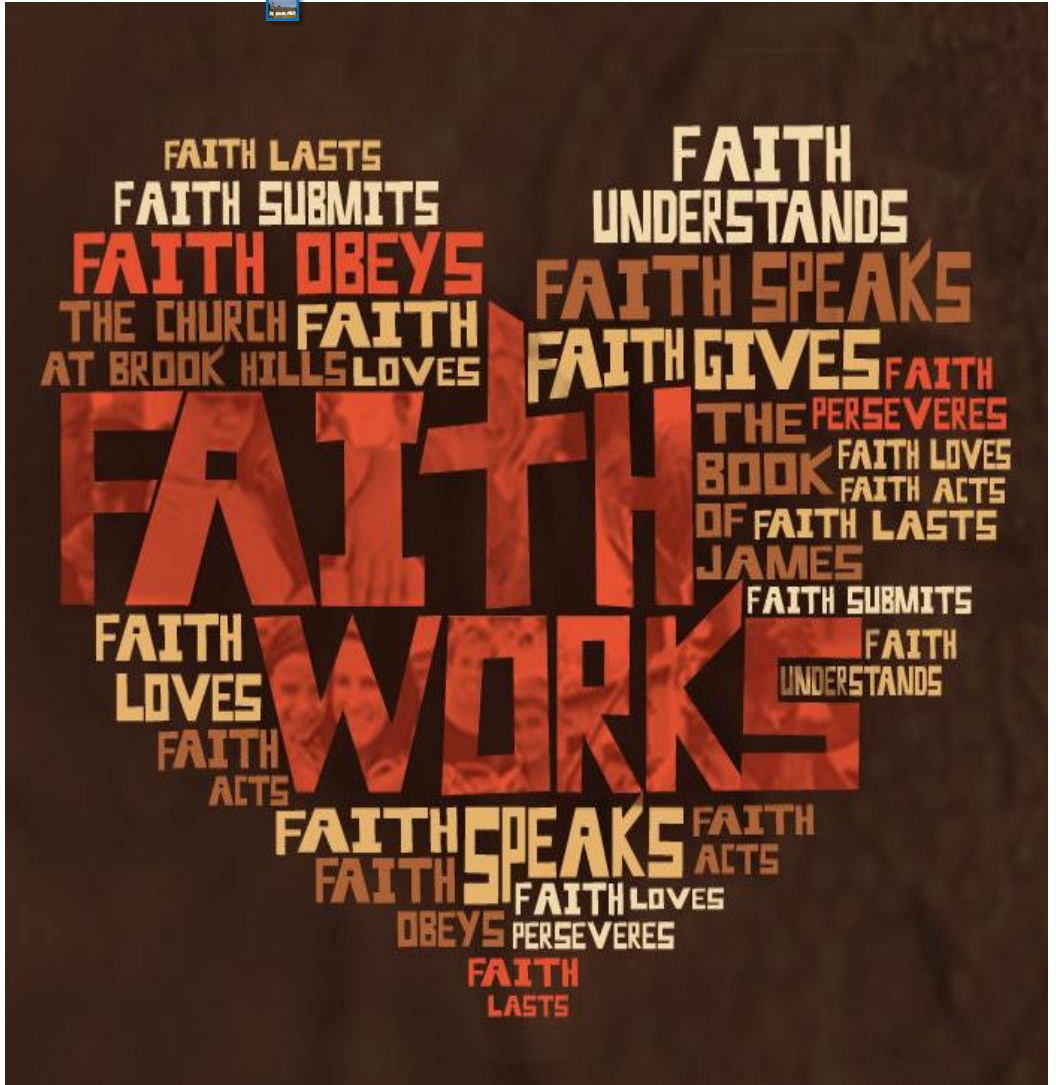




Chet Valley Churches



Informal Communion

for 14th Sunday after Trinity

5th September 2021

Welcome & Gathering

♪ *Opening Hymn: Praise My Soul the King of Heaven*

**Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.**

Who like me his praise should sing?

Alleluia. Alleluia. Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour to our fathers in distress;

Praise him still the same as ever,

Slow to chide, and swift to bless.

Alleluia. Alleluia. Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like he tends and spares us;

Well our feeble frame he knows;

In his hands he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes.

Alleluia. Alleluia. Widely as his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him; ye behold him face to face;

Sun and moon bow down before him,

Dwellers all in time and space.

Alleluia. Alleluia. Praise with us the God of grace!

We gather to worship because we share a common faith:

God the Father created us. God the Son, Jesus Christ, makes us whole;

God the Holy Spirit strengthens us.

As Jesus taught his disciples to pray so we say:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

📖 *The Epistle: James 2:1-17*

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here,

please', while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet', have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, 'You shall not commit adultery', also said, 'You shall not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

For the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The Gospel: Mark 7:24-37

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were

opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

For the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

♪ Hymn: *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*

**I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast:'
I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.**

**I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one; stoop down, and drink, and live:
I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.**

**I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright:'
I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk 'til travelling days are done.**

Reflection [Rev David]

As a vicar one gets used to the age-old comment that, "Vicars only work one day a week." One has to be careful not to get too defensive about it and to treat it as the joke it is—usually—meant to be. However, sadly for many people it would also seem to be a truism of their general perception of their faith. It's not something that's recent either, as it would appear to have been the case for generations. For example, in his hymn "King of glory, King of peace", George Herbert in the seventeenth century feels the necessity of writing these words: "Sev'n whole days, not one in sev'n, I will praise thee"—a reminder, if ever one was needed, that the life of faith is for every day of the week not just for the hour or so spent in church worship!

Perhaps as some people seem to think, faith is an insurance policy to prevent the bad and nasty things of life happening to us. A subtle irony there. One or the other. I recall many years ago, as I began my working life after college, being interviewed for a job in the grand surroundings of the Royal Exchange building in London. On my application form under interests I'd included my involvement in church life and I vividly recall being asked by the interviewer how I equated my Christian faith with wanting to be involved in the insurance profession. Whatever I said then was accepted and I was appointed. Commentators have used the

analogy of faith linked with insurance when looking at this passage from James's letter. Faith it would appear is being used by the recipients of this letter as an insurance policy to keep bad things at bay. A nice feeling of keeping God on your side. People prefer to mingle and associate with the rich rather than the poor, with the clean rather than with the dirty, those who are well rather than the sick—because we all do, don't we? James' response to this is that God doesn't!

Faith according to James changes all this. It changes the way we live and how we see others. Faith is a commitment to a changed way of life which involves us acting differently not just for an hour or so on a Sunday (perhaps) but as reminded by George Herbert for every hour of every day of every week of the year. God cares for all and as Teresa of Avila has reminded us over the centuries: Christ has no body now on earth but ours, no hands, no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes with which Christ looks out with compassion to the world. Ours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Ours are the hands with which he is to bless us now. Because of this we are to show no partiality since God has no favourites.

This is also shown in the account from Mark's gospel where we see Jesus coming to terms with the expansion of God's love to those beyond the fringe—being a light to the gentiles as wise old Simeon had noted all those years earlier. There is sufficient bread to go round. God's love changes us. Our faith changes us. Are we prepared to be changed?

Prayer of Confession

Let us confess our sins to God and before each other.

Almighty God, we are often foolish and not honest with you, with each other, or with ourselves. We confess to you now that we have been selfish and sometimes we have hurt others. We are sorry. We seek forgiveness. We seek new life.

After a time of silence

God forgives us, lifts the burdens from our shoulders, and gives us strength to change our lives.

Let us forgive each other and love one another, for love is of God.
May the peace of God be with us.

Hymn: Beauty for Brokenness

**Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair.
Lord, in the suffering, this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace.
Sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase!**



**Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills.
Work for the craftsman, trade for their skills.
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak.
Voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.**

**God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray.
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain,
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.**

**Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear.
Cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green.
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.**

**Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams.
Plundered and poisoned, Our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed.
Make us content with the things that we need.**

**Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame
Until your justice burns brightly again.
Until the nations learn of your ways;
Seek your salvation and bring you their praise.**



Prayers of Request & Thanksgiving

Today we have been thinking about the letter of James, and what it means for our faith as something that is active and changing. Change can be scary or it can be exciting—so let's think about change as we pray.

In my place, and probably in yours, one of the scary changes is in the world's climate. We feel helpless in the face of the need for global willingness to make radical changes in how we live. Yet we are all capable of doing something towards making things better. Let's pray for the will, and possibly also the courage, to do what we can for our beautiful world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Thinking of big issues that affect all of us, let's pray for decision-makers – whether they are working in government, commerce or care. Let's pray for those who make difficult decisions that will affect the lives of many people, and for those who respond to those decisions. We pray for wisdom, fairness and compassion. We pray too for the courage to challenge decisions that result in fear, hardship or oppression.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

The letter of James tells us that faith is a commitment to a changed way of life. Let's pray for the church—where we are and worldwide—that those who are part of it may accept that commitment in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We've prayed for some big situations, some of which make us feel very small. Let's change direction and pray for things that matter to us in our own situation: family... friends... the place we live... people who are ill... people who are facing life-changing problems. Let's bring all these things to God.

Remembering the challenge to bring about change, and knowing that God loves us and wants the best for us, we say:

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

We offer bread and wine.

**Lord accept these offerings as tokens of all the good things
that you give us. We give thanks to you for your whole creation.
We give thanks for Jesus, born into a human family.
He shared our suffering and was cruelly killed by his fellow men.**

He told us to remember his death and his rising from the dead, which gives us life.

**We remember his death and his rising from the dead. Our lives
are changed by the knowledge that he is alive and with us.**

On the night Jesus was betrayed he had supper with his friends. He took bread and gave you thanks and broke it in pieces. He shared it with them and said:

'This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup of wine and shared it with them, saying:

**'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant,
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'**

As we share this bread and wine, may we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, also share in the life of Jesus and receive freedom and strength.

The gifts of God shared with us.

Though we may be scattered,
we are one body because we can share in the one bread.

The Communion

Post-Communion Prayer



We say together:

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for all the benefits you have won for us, for all the pains and insults you have borne for us. Most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly day by day. Amen.

♪ Hymn: *O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

**O for a thousand tongues, to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!**

**Jesus! the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.**

**He speaks; and, listening to his voice, new life the dead receive,
The mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.**

**Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold the Saviour come; and leap, ye lame, for joy!**

**My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim
And spread through all the earth abroad the honours of thy name.**

Blessing & Dismissal

Christ our King make us faithful and strong to do his will,
that we may reign with him in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be
with us, and those whom we love, now and always. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ.

We go in the name of Christ. Amen!