St Francis Weekly News for The Sixth Sunday of Easter [Rogation Sunday] 17th May 2020

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WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

VE DAY CELEBRATIONS [CONT'D]

Following on from last weeks news of the celebrations in St Francis and around the Heartsease I received a few photos that I thought were worthy of sharing.

First off, it would seem that Basil Brush got 'In the Mood' [let readers of a certain age understand...] and joined in the fun as this delightful picture sent to me by his friend Diana Cooper shows.



Diana is another of our 'behind the scenes' team who is involved in all manner of activities – not least those associated with being one of our Churchwardens.

Diana is also the driving force behind the printing and stapling of the weekly newsletter – thank you Diana. A vital job and not always a simple one, especially when not only grappling with our beautiful 'state of the art'printer copier, but also coping beautifully with the Vicar who is not always the easiest of people to work with [keeps changing her mind...]

So, it was good to see that she and Basil took some time to relax together and enjoy the VE Celebrations.

And on that same note of enjoying the celebrations another picture or two sent to me by the Bowler family – fantastic decorations folks – and many thanks for your kind support and encouragement re my bellringing efforts over the past weeks!





The Bowlers celebrate VE Day

A TRIM & TIDY UP!

What's this? I hear you ask, we thought the hairdressers and barbers were all closed.... Well indeed they are; and my hair is getting longer almost to the point of obscuring my vision! Peering through my shaggy hairstyle [another reference for those old enough to remember...] I had noticed that St Francis garden was also looking a little straggly and windswept. The area is generally kept spick and span with the help of volunteers from the Assist Trust overseen by Don Nichols and Danny Lowe, but because of the lockdown no work has been able to take place.

However! Just the other day I heard a sound in the distance that was either a giant hairclippers [I'm dreaming of hearing them again...] or an electric hover mower. And indeed it turned out to be the latter – driven very ably by Don, who had kindly decided to take matters into his own hands and tidy up the area.

So thanks to Don, It is now beautifully trimmed and manicured – and is once more looking as it should.

For those who have loved ones memorialised there it is a lovely place to visit, and it is also ready and waiting for the day when the children can come back to play.



There are some gorgeous May flowers blooming in St Francis garden, it's well worth coming to have a look as part of a daily walk.



ST FRANCIS HEARTSEASE FREE FOOD

It has been another busy week for the St Francis Free Food and once again many thanks to all involved in collecting, organising, packing and delivering.

It is a surprisingly time consuming enterprise and there are always at least two of us on duty every day Monday to Friday 10am – 12.30pm; with me receiving the weekend deliveries and taking care of any emergency requests for food. [It's very handy living on site!]

Throughout the week there are deliveries to sort, orders to pack and food stocks to rotate according to date and condition.

As the orders come in it is generally apparent that some goods are not suitable for sending out in food parcels [enormous quantities of bread and bread products; surplus packed veg such as cut spring cabbage etc] This surplus, and anything else that needs to be shifted, is piled onto table outside the church, and accompanied by a notice that says: 'Free Food, Please help yourself – Remember to maintain social distancing'. From then on it's almost magical; *everything* vanishes almost in the twinkling of an eye!

I have lost count of the number of people who have spoken to me to express their amazement and their thanks for the food that is offered to the community this way. It is indeed much appreciated – and I think a real boost to many who now come on the lookout for a little freebie to lift their day.



It is a rare day when the table isn't put out – more usually it looks something like this, although it has been known for there to be four tables...

PASTORAL CARE

As promised last week, below is a photo of Eleanor Laming, our Pastoral Visiting Team Coordinator, who is also very heavily involved in St Francis Free Food.

Eleanor's expertise in pastoral care and her enthusiasm in getting stuck into any task is a real asset to St Francis – and being a very hands on person, Eleanor is happily undertaking deliveries of not only food parcels but the newsletters as well.

If you happen to see her out and about, Eleanor is always happy to chat – and she is just the person to approach if you need some support or assistance with anything that might be concerning you at the moment.

This particular photo opportunity was too good to miss – the One Stop lorry might be big; but it's nowhere near as efficient on the Heartsease as Eleanor on her bike!

Eleanor's contact number is : 07840 206716



Please Don't Forget...

In times of stress and anxiety it's always good to know that help and support is always available.

This is just a gentle reminder that we are always ready to listen if you need to talk.

Revd Janet [07990 576118] Eleanor [07840 206716]



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

In these difficult times someone might just need one of them...

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247

[If you hear a neighbour in distress please do not hesitate to call this number or 999; you could save a life]

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565

St Francis Free Food: 07990 576118

WORSHIP & PRAYER

ZOOM BCP COMMUNION

Each Sunday at 10.30am I have been celebrating Holy Communion using the Book of Common Prayer service. For those who have the necessary technology this is available to watch on Zoom.

If you would like to join the Zoom Room, please contact Sarah Housden who will be happy to enable that to happen. <u>sarahj.housden@gmail.com</u>

This week we are hoping to be joined by the residents of Woodside House who have been very much missing the weekly visits made to them by the Pastoral Visiting Team and clergy. We would usually offer Holy Communion to the Woodside residents at least once a month and generally these services were very well attended – it is a joy to be able to take up our ministry with them once more. THY KINGDOM COME - Global Wave of Prayer 2020

David Lechmere writes -

'Thy Kingdom Come'. Many of you will recognize this as a phrase from the Lord's Prayer. A number may also have wondered what on earth it means. Quite simply it is a prayer that God will make himself known and bring about his rule of love, peace and justice in the world he has created.

In 2016 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York invited Christians to use the 10-day period between Ascension Day and Pentecost to make a special effort to pray for their friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues to come to know Jesus for themselves and to be part of his kingdom. The invitation captured the imagination of Christians worldwide and in 2019 Christians of many denominations in 172 countries joined in the movement.

Thy Kingdom Come 2020 starts on Thursday 21st May and continues until Sunday 31st May. We invite all in St. Francis and all who read this newsletter to join with us in praying for their family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

For those who can the best way is probably to use the free app available for mobile phones and tablets. The app is called "DP for TKC" and can be found either in the Google Play app store or the Apple store. It offers resources for prayer and reflection up to four times a day.

There are all sorts of other resources available from the TKC website which can be found at <u>https://www.thykingdomcome.global/</u>.

For those with families there is a special interactive prayer map. There are also resources for a wide variety of prayer styles.

For those who prefer to have paper in their hands we have ordered copies of the TKC booklet which Janet can provide – please contact her if you would like a copy.

Also, if you are near St. Francis there is the opportunity to use the prayer stations on the field behind the church should you wish to do so. We do hope that many will join us in praying "Thy kingdom come" for our Heartsease community.



PRAYER AND 'THY KINGDOM COME'

Eleanor writes -

Next week sees the beginning of 'Thy Kingdom Come' the annual global wave of prayer movement, which runs from Ascension Day to Pentecost (21st – 31st May) every year. As you will have discovered there are many ways to get involved, but at St Francis we have a few more ways available. Over the past couple of weeks several people have begun to follow a Prayer Course together online, and we have also started holding a weekly Zoom Prayer meeting.

Prayer is at the heart of our relationship with God. It may sound difficult or complicated but it's all about finding ways of talking to and listening to God. Whether we have a faith or not, many people pray as a natural response to events which we feel we have little control over. When we have a faith in God, we want to learn more about prayer and how powerful it can be. Even the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, and in response he gave us the Lord's Prayer, which is a very good place to start.

The Prayer Course is led by the Christian author Pete Grieg and can be found online (just do a search for "The Prayer Course").



There are 8 short videos to watch which cover different aspects of prayer. It is easy to understand but raises some good questions and is well worth following. We have learned so far that there are many tools in prayer. In prayer we might thank God for creation and for things in our lives, ask God for things to happen, pray for other people and spend time listening to God. Some people fast, or go on a pilgrimage or find creative ways of engaging with God through art or music. We are all different and it would be expected that we pray in different ways. The main thing to remember about prayer is:

Keep it simple, keep it real and keep it up!

There is no need to use special formulas in prayer – God knows us and knows what we need, so don't let this put you off.

If you find it hard to pray alone, pray with other people. St Francis has a weekly online prayer group and you are very welcome to join us if you wish. This is organised by Sarah Housden using our church Zoom account and if you would like to be included then please email Sarah on <u>sarahj.housden@gmail.com</u> and she will send you the link.

A WORD FROM THE VICAR

So, a very busy week coming up! Beginning with Rogation Sunday on 17th May [Rogationtide, the time when we traditionally ask for God's blessing on the land, lasts from 17th to 20th May]; Ascension Day and the 'Thy Kingdom Come' Global Wave of Prayer starting on 21st May, there are lots of opportunities to get involved in praying for ourselves and for our world.

I recently saw a cartoon that depicted the devil talking to God. 'Well', said the Devil 'I've managed to close all your churches!' 'Hmmmm' replied God 'Think you'll find I've opened one up in every home...'

And how true that is proving to be! Many people I speak with are telling me that they have never had so many opportunities to engage with their local church and have access to so many online services and Christian resources. I am also hearing that a great number of people are really enjoying exploring prayer and the Christian faith as they start to come to terms with all that is happening in their lives and in the world.

In the midst of all the sadness and the anxiety of these times it is so good to see God's hand of love so clearly at work among us. And good too that we are coming together as community, drawing together in love as God's family.

This coming together is such a precious gift, and one that we must nurture. In our togetherness we will overcome all adversities, together we will find a way to make the world the kingdom of love and peace God made it to be.

In these dark days tiny shoots of beautiful things are appearing; and in this season of Rogationtide how fitting is that?



God's peace and blessing be with you and yours

Revd Janet

FOR OUR PRAYERS

We pray for those who are in acute need of prayer at this time: David, Rob, David B, Paula, Gill, Karen, Maegan, John R & Bee, Colin, Pete, Lauren, Fr Brian, David and Hazel L.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Alma, Rosemary, Sheila, John, Joy, Shirley.

We remember with love Molly Gunton, Edith Cotton [Minn], Margaret Lemmon and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends

A PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light; through him who suffered alone on the cross, but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Church of St Francis Heartsease

Heavenly Father We ask your blessing upon us. Hold the Heartsease Community, and all the world, in your arms of love. Be with us. Give us your strength, peace, and healing grace. Watch over us, protect us from harm; and keep in safety all those who care for the sick and attend to our needs, in Jesus name we pray. Amen

PRAYERS FOR SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

God our redeemer,

you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; 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. Amen Risen Christ,

by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples: help your Church to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love, to the glory of God the Father. Amen

God our Father,

whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life: may we thirst for you, the spring of life and source of goodness, through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen



READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

GENESIS 8: 20 - 9: 17

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelt the pleasing odour, the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.'



God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.

Whoever sheds the blood of a human,

by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his own image

God made humankind.

And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it.'

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.'



God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.'

God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

PSALM 66: 8 - 20

Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard,

who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip.

For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.

You brought us into the net; you laid burdens on our backs;

you let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

I will come into your house with burnt-offerings; I will pay you my vows,

those that my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.

I will offer to you burnt-offerings of fatlings, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me.

I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with my tongue.

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart the Lord would not have listened.

But truly God has listened; he has given heed to the words of my prayer.

Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me.

Acts 17:22-31



The Areopagus as viewedEngraved plaque containin St Paul'sfrom the AcropolisAreopagus sermon



The Acropolis as viewed from the Areopagus

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, 'Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said,

"For we too are his offspring."

Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

1 PETER 3: 13 - end

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water.



And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you — not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

JOHN 14:15 - 21

Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever.

This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.



'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'



REFLECTION FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

In former days, when our crowded public transport system was unthinkingly a part of everyday life, the following announcement was once heard ringing out over the heads of commuters -

'The train due to arrive at platform four is a bus'

This apparently caused considerable amusement and, when I heard the story, it made me smile as well. But I wonder quite what the passengers thought as they wearily made their way out of the train station to take their seat on that unexpected bus.

I suspect they were not all that thrilled – after all, this was not what they were expecting at all.

A bit like the mood of the disciples as they listen to Jesus explaining that he is about to leave them; nothing to laugh or smile about here.

This is harrowing news – this is something that is way beyond their understanding. And even if Jesus is speaking to them plainly; the miracle that is about to unfold around them is of such awesome, out of this world proportions, that it is just too big for them to grasp

From our side of the resurrection it is a simple matter for us to read Jesus' words and understand most of what it is he is promising. We know the story – we know how it all turns out.

But for those few men sitting with Jesus that night before he died, how could they understand?

But then – it's not so much that they needed to understand; more that Jesus needed to reassure and strengthen them for what was about to happen.

'Yes, I am leaving' says Jesus, 'but ultimately you will never be left on your own, because I will send another one, just like me, to be with you'

Jesus promises them an advocate – which literally means 'someone called to walk alongside'. But surely, never ever, even in their wildest imaginings, could they have dreamed of what that meant.

But that is how it is with Jesus – we must learn to expect the unexpected.

Which is very much what Paul was saying as he addressed the people of Athens at the Areopagus. High above the city, this rocky outcrop was the meeting place for the rich, powerful and academic elite of the time

Here was a people and a culture that acknowledged life was precarious; so – not one God for them – but

a teeming multitude of Gods. Gods who were either distant and aloof, or cruel and punishing.

The Greek's Gods were generally believed to be disinterested in humankind or, depending on what you believed, unpredictable and dangerous; much as a cat is with a mouse.

These were Gods to be persuaded and placated through offerings, sacrifices, and ritual; and every God had elaborate Temples, shrines, and altars that teemed with desperate supplicants who went from God to God in the hope that at least one would hear, relent and have mercy on them.

Here indeed was a cynical pick and mix people and culture who were always ready to listen, but not so inclined to believe anything that did not please their ear or ease their life.

Paul knew that the people who gave him a hearing that day were ready to dismiss him as a babbler and a crackpot – but he persevered, and, drawing upon the knowledge that the Greeks held their 'Unknown God' in very high esteem, he makes the unknown God known.

Paul proclaims Jesus Christ and the great, unexpected good news of the resurrection. And some sat up, listened, believed and followed. Who would have expected that in Athens that day?

And thinking of the unexpected, Thursday sees us celebrating Ascension Day – the day when the disciples witnessed something absolutely unexpected - Jesus being lifted into heaven, returned to that place from which he had come

But not before he had given them their clear instructions, Wait, he had said, Wait, and I will send you someone to help you. Someone who will walk alongside you wherever you go, who will be with you always and for ever – to comfort, guide, strengthen and inspire you.

They waited, and... well, maybe we'll wait till next week to continue on with the story, but, suffice it to say the Apostles Paul and Peter could not have spoken as they did if Jesus had not kept his promise.

As Jesus prepared his disciples for all that was to come, he speaks about a world that does not recognise the truth, and, very sadly, his words still speak into the world we live in today.

Just like the ancient Greeks we live in a pick and mix culture where people are ready to listen but not so inclined to believe anything that does not please their ear or ease their life. Indeed, anything is accepted if it makes life easier.

That's why following Jesus isn't popular discipleship calls us into a deep relationship with reality and the truth. Jesus asks us to look at the world and speak out against all that is not as God would have it be.

And the trouble with that is speaking those truths does not make for an easy life.

Nor does admitting that we, humankind, are not in control and that we do not have all the answers – saying this into a culture where control, power knowledge and authority are prizes to be won at any cost is definitely not easy.

No wonder we need help – and thank God that it has been given through the one that Jesus promised, the one who is with us always. For those who seek Jesus and his way, his life and his truth – through the Holy Spirit he will come and dwell within us - and it is that indwelling that binds us together as a family and a church.

A people who can look into the world and speak the truth; work for the kingdom and deal with the unexpected with strength, dignity and good humour - be it a pandemic or a train that is a bus.

In the midst of all that we are living through one thing that has been apparent is our love of laughter – and I have to say that I'm pretty sure it's the Holy Spirit at work when rather than grumble, we have a good laugh. And given some of the hairdos around at the moment [mine included] it seems that God has a great sense of humour

Amen

The Revd Janet Wyer May 2020



One day, Jesus said to his disciples, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Although I am going away in a little while, I will not leave you on your own. I am going to ask God the Father to send an Advocate, his Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of truth and it will stay with you for ever.' He continued, 'The world is not ready for the Holy Spirit, because it does not see or know God's Spirit. But you will know the Holy Spirit because it will live in you.'

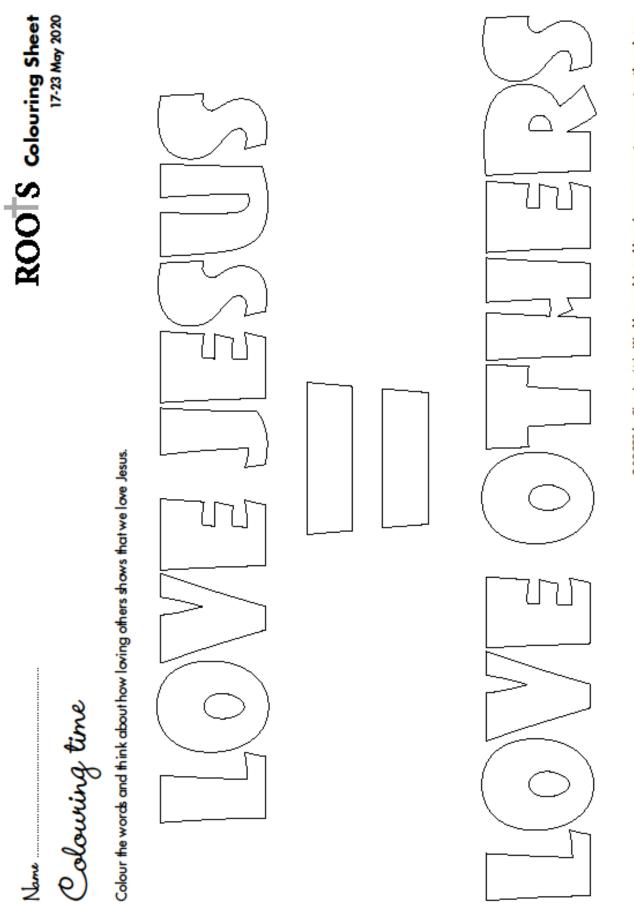
Jesus said, 'The world will not see me once I have gone away. But you will see me. On that day you will know that I have returned to my Father. And you will know that I live through you and you live through me.

'There are other people,' he added, 'who also love me and keep my commandments. They are loved by both me and my Father and I will show myself to them.'

Glossary

commandments rules to follow in life, given by God **Advocate** the Holy Spirit who speaks for God.

ROOTS children's Sheet	Fit the right words into the summary of today's Bible passage.	Jesus low Holy Spirit friends commandments work	told his friends that if they loved him, they would follow him by	sus' bigg	commandment was to other	to his to help them love others.	When the Holy Spirit lives in us, and	we love other people, they see Jesus at		© ROOTS for Churches Ltd Weekly worship and learning resources at www.rootsontheweb.com
Lotivity time 🧢	Colour in every section that has a dot, to				<mark>マネアイント</mark> Puzzle two immostant mission words from	today's Bible passage.	Icaal	If you me, you	will keep mig	© ROOTS for Churches Ltd
Name 11 Iohn 14.15-21	Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us for ever.				Tamily time	Talk Why does Jesus say that we show we love him by doing what he asks? Do Malessonething tool and doe it to	someone who lives on their own, to show that they are loved.	Pray Jesus, thank you that you love us. We want to show that we love you	by doing what you ask and loving other people Holy Spirit, thank you that you are always with us. Help us to love other	people. Amen.



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