

**St Augustine of Canterbury, North
Springfield
Anglican, Methodist and Free
Church Community
22 March 2020**

Collect

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful: watch over us and hold us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: 1 Samuel 2:20-28

Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home. And the LORD took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

Now Eli was very old. He heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. He said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people. No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear the people of the LORD spreading abroad. If one person sins against another, someone can intercede for the sinner with the LORD; but if someone sins against the LORD, who can make intercession?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the LORD to kill them.

Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favour with the LORD and with the people.

A man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus the LORD has said, 'I revealed myself to the family of your ancestor in Egypt when they were slaves to the house of Pharaoh. I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to offer incense, to wear an ephod before me; and I gave to the family of your ancestor all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel.'

John 19:25b-27

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says church services "must be put on hold" in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Archbishop Justin Welby and the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, say it is now necessary to suspend public worship until further notice, and to live-stream services where possible.

In a joint letter issued today, they said the Church of England must face the challenge by becoming a radically "different sort of church" rooted in prayer and serving others.

It comes after the government announced unprecedented peacetime measures to try to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus, with restrictions on public gatherings, transport and working.

The Archbishops said that, where possible, church buildings should remain open as places of prayer for the community, observing social distancing recommendations.

They also invited clergy to maintain daily prayers - live streaming their worship if resources allow. They urged congregations to be in the forefront of providing practical care and support for the most poor and the most vulnerable during the crisis. "This is a defining moment for the Church of England..."

They wrote: "Being a part of the Church of England is going to look very different in the days ahead. "Our life is going to be less characterised by attendance at church on Sunday, and more characterised by the prayer and service we offer each day.

"We may not be able to pray with people in the ways that we are used to, but we can certainly pray for people. And we can certainly offer practical care and support.

"This is a defining moment for the Church of England. Are we truly are a church for all, or just the church for ourselves.

"We urge you sisters and brothers to become a different sort of church in these coming months: hopeful and rooted in the offering of prayer and praise and overflowing in service to the world."