

Sermon for Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at Holy Trinity Geneva

*Texts: Acts 2.42-end; John 10.1-10*

## **Abundant Life**

'I came that they might have life and have it abundantly' (John 10.10). I'm reflecting on these words of Jesus on this my final Sunday as Chaplain of Holy Trinity Geneva both as I look back and look forwards with you today.

In some ways the last five years here seem to have flown past. Yet, as I reflect back, so much has happened in that time, from my arrival in the midst of the Covid pandemic in April 2021 up to now.

When I arrived, we were conducting all the services online. I was trying rather ineffectively to set up an altar on a rickety ironing board covered with a sheet in my study, whilst Mark was doing heroic weekly efforts to compile individual recordings from choir members into a weekly anthem. We gradually resumed all our services in church later that year, masked up and observing social distancing. It was quite a shock at the end of that year, when we could finally lay off our masks to find out what everyone actually looked like!

From there we moved swiftly into the implementation of *Building Tomorrow*, dividing the church into two with a plastic sheet so that work could start at the back of church whilst we worshipped in the front half. Despite privations, not least when dust from the back flew over the top of the sheet and alighted on the chairs in front and some howling gales whilst we were worshipping at the back of church and the front door couldn't be shut, we managed and grew together as a truly peripatetic and pilgrim people.

Over the past two years, with the completion of phase I, it has been wonderful to worship in our beautifully re-ordered church. At the same time, it's also been good to see the church opening up once more as a place of welcome for our many visitors, as a centre for community events and concerts and as a core for the many different aspects of our ministry here at Holy Trinity.

But the building however beautiful and historic, is the shell which contains the real heart of our church which is you – the body of Christ gathered together here and in those of our congregation who join us online. It has a been both a privilege and a delight to minister both to and with you over the past five years.

During that period, we've experienced times of difficulty and privation particularly with covid and aspects of our building programme and times of sorrow including early this year as we mourned the victims of the Crans Montana disaster together. But we've also shared joy in so many areas including our worship and its music, in our growing number of young people and their contribution to our ministry, in those we've been able to welcome as newcomers and our pastoral and social outreach and care.

Now today we look ahead, in my case to returning to the UK and a new phase of life there, and for Holy Trinity, to a time of transition during the interregnum and looking ahead to a new chaplain. In both our cases, today is the time for us to give thanks for all that has been, to take a deep breath and to ask God to guide us for all that lies ahead.

So, I would like to say an enormous thank you now. Thank you to God for all that He has made possible during the time I have been here. And thank you to each one of you for your love, support and great contribution in so many ways to our church and community of Holy Trinity. Ministry is a collective exercise, a working together of clergy and laity in a common calling to praise and serve God and to make the love of Christ a visible and experienced reality in the community we serve.

As we take these first steps of looking forward to the new phase, it can feel scary. With the scariness of the unknown, we can feel tempted to cling together and look inwards, keen to hold onto that of which we are certain, keeping our resources for ourselves and being resistant to change. This is all the more tempting in the face of the current challenges and breakdown of so much we once held to be certain, particularly because of the war in the Middle East.

But today we also remember that Christ has promised that he has come that we might have life in all its fullness. This is a promise for us and also a sacred calling to us, his followers, that we do all in our power to make this happen for other people.

It's here also that Jesus' image of himself as the gate through which his sheep enter for sanctuary and pass out to the pasture is helpful. For it reminds us that Jesus holds us and is the gate leading us safely into the future. It also gives us a model of how we as a Christian community here in Geneva, may help others to find that abundant life in Christ.

So, in faith and with that calling in mind, let me share with you briefly my hopes of the kind of gate which Holy Trinity will be.

I pray it will be a gate which will keep out fear, intolerance, hardness of heart, meanness and resistance to change. And I pray that Holy Trinity will be the gate through which all who come here or are touched by our ministry in any way, may truly experience that fullness of life which Christ promises us all.

I pray that Holy Trinity continues and grows as a place of welcome for all. That it is a community which embraces diversity of every kind, rejoicing in the gift of our international community drawn from so many parts of the world. That is a place of generosity, as we reflect on that wonderful example given to us today of early Christian communities caring for and sharing with each other so that the needs of all those who were suffering were met.

I pray that Holy Trinity will be a place of healing where all who are suffering or wounded in any way may find healing. That it is a place of forgiveness, where we as God's sheep who so richly and undeservedly receive His forgiveness, may in turn, forgive and review forgiveness from one another. I pray that it may be a place where

all find community, friendship and love and a community which stands up as a powerful advocate for those suffering discrimination, injustice or neglect.

Change can be scary but it's also an opportunity – a time which shakes us a bit, forcing us to think about our priorities, of what we do and why and to consider what we really desire. In a way, change is like someone opening a window in a warm, comfortable, perhaps slightly stuffy room in winter. Gusts of cold wind pour in, papers fly in the air, we are startled into wakefulness and start to think more clearly about what we are doing.

An interregnum is little like this, and it is a time of opportunity. A time to experience from the various locum clergy who will take services and provide pastoral support, new insights of God's love and how we can make this visible.

It's also an opportunity to use the gifts we have to rally together, supporting the churchwardens to help keep the worshipping, pastoral, social and outreach ministries of Holy Trinity not just going but also flourishing during the interregnum. I have been immensely encouraged in recent weeks through hearing of those who are already offering their time and talents to train and help with our work with young people and those who welcome newcomers. It's also been wonderful to witness ways in which our young people are taking responsibility in leadership, not least in leading part of our Good Friday worship. I hope that they will be supported and encouraged to develop this.

So I would urge you to have a go and not to be afraid for it is by using and sharing our time and talents that we are able to be a community that can truly share God's love.

Finally, the very good news is that that is not all up to us – in fact quite the reverse. This is God's church and it is His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the gate leading us to salvation in him and sending us to minister in the pastures of this world. God has guided Holy Trinity throughout all the phases of its existence and will continue to lead you in future in the vision and plans which He has for it. It is in that faith, that we entrust ourselves to God's love and mercy this day.

May Christ, the good shepherd, who is the gate to life, guide you into abundant life, may God the Father, watch over you and bless you and may the Holy Spirit dwell richly in your hearts and inspire you.

**Amen**

**Canon Daphne Green**