



Parish of
St Peter Woking
St Peter's · St Mark's · All Souls'



Sunday 16th August

The Gathering

Leader Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
All and also with you.

Welcome

Hymn **321 I'm accepted, I'm forgiven**

I'm accepted, I'm forgiven
I am fathered by the true and living God
I'm accepted, no condemnation
I am loved by the true and living God

There's no guilt or fear as I draw near
To the Saviour and creator of the world
There Is joy and peace
As I release my worship to you, Oh Lord

Opening activity *(Things in common quiz)*

Confession

All God our Father, long-suffering, full of grace and truth,
you create us from nothing and give us life.
You give your faithful people new life in the water of baptism.
You do not turn your face from us, nor cast us aside.
We confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbour.
We have wounded your love and marred your image in us.
Restore us for the sake of your Son,
and bring us to heavenly joy, in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Absolution

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse *us* from *our* sins,
and restore *us* in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Collect (*Prayer for the day*)

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught His disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

'This time @holiday'

The Johnson Family ~ In Wales

Hymn **Our God is a great big God**

*Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
And He holds us in His hands*

He's higher than a skyscraper
He's deeper than a submarine

He's wider than the universe
And beyond my wildest dreams
He's known me and He's loved me
Since before the world began
How wonderful to be a part of
God's amazing plan

Bible readings

Matthew 28.16-20 ~ Jenny Jones

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."



Acts 18.1-4, 18-26 ~ Caroline Harvey

¹After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴Every Sabbath he reasoned in

the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

¹⁸Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. ¹⁹They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²²When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

²³After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and travelled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

²⁴Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Sermon Rev Jonathan Thomas

Priscilla and Aquila - Acts 18

If people had to describe you in a word or phrase what would it be?
Pause to think about it and write it down.

In our sermon series on "the ordinary and the extraordinary" we have been looking at various lesser known characters in the book of Acts, who mostly only have a few lines written about them. From what I have learnt about them here are the phrases I would use to describe each of them:

- The seven – spirit filled & wise
- Ananias and Sapphira – deceivers
- Simon the sorcerer – power hungry
- Ananias of Damascus – obedient
- Tabitha – helper of the poor
- Barnabas – encourager
- Mary and Rhoda – prayerful
- Judas and Silas – trustmates
- Lydia – generous
- The jailer – joyfully caring

Who do you most identify with from this group?

Today we are meeting Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple, who became great friends with the apostle Paul and once we get to know them a bit I'd like you to think about what phrase you would use to describe them before I tell you mine.



Aquila was originally from Pontus an area of what is now north-east

Turkey by the Black Sea. We don't know anything about Priscilla's background, but it is possible that she was from quite a high-ranking Roman family as her name is nearly always mentioned first – Priscilla and Aquila. It was very unusual in that culture to have a woman named before her husband, but she might have been if she was from the family of a higher social rank in Roman society than her husband.

They were Jewish Christians who lived in Rome until the emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome, possibly for anti-Semitic reasons or possibly because many were becoming Christians and causing trouble as they boldly preached the gospel. They fled to Corinth in Greece where they had their own business as tentmakers. It is likely that as well as making tents (which were not for holiday camping, but for military and industrial use) they would have made other types of leather goods as well.

In Corinth they came across the apostle Paul, who was also a tentmaker by trade and was settling down in Corinth for a while where he was ministering to the local church and proclaiming this gospel in that city. Being there for some time (over a year it turned out) he needed to support himself and have somewhere to live, so Priscilla and Aquila invited

Paul to work with them and live with them. As we saw in our opening activity having things in common is a way God so often brings people together for his purposes and clearly this is the case for Priscilla and Aquila with Paul. They generously provided what he needed to enable his ministry in Corinth, became good friends and shared in his ministry in the local church.

They then joined Paul when he left Corinth to go to Ephesus, in western Turkey, for his next phase of ministry. After Paul left Ephesus to go further east, Priscilla and Aquila stayed on to minister to the church there. It was while they were in Ephesus that they met Apollos, a Christian Jew who had come from Alexandria in northern Egypt and was preaching the gospel. We are going to find out more about Apollos next week, but for now we need to know that although he was a fervent evangelist who spoke accurately about Jesus, he didn't have the full picture. Acts 18 says he had only received the baptism of John, which probably meant he hadn't received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a similar issue to the one Paul addressed in the next chapter of Acts.

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit was a crucial part of the life and ministry of the early church, as it should be today, turning the ordinary into the extraordinary, because the Holy Spirit was the power behind the gospel they were preaching and the healing and miracles that accompanied it.

With Paul not in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila took it upon themselves to disciple Apollos who was probably a new, enthusiastic Christian. They didn't want him to miss out on an important aspect of faith or to preach a partial gospel, so they invited him into their home and instructed him in the fulness of the Christian life. As we shall see next week it bore fruit as Apollos became a powerful evangelist.

Whilst we don't hear any more about them in Acts they are mentioned in the greetings at the end of three of Paul's letters where we discover more. The most interesting is in Romans 16 v3 where Paul asks the church in Rome to greet Priscilla and Aquila. This is interesting because it shows they returned to Rome, probably after emperor Claudius had died when his edict would have been revoked, and became part of the church there. They clearly followed in Paul's footsteps, not only as tent-makers, but as missionaries travelling around preaching the gospel, starting and encouraging churches as they went.

Paul goes on to say in Romans 16 v4 how they risked their lives for him and how all the gentile churches are grateful to them, though we don't know what they did to earn this accolade. However, they clearly made an impact wherever they went and were really supportive of Paul and the early gentile church which had many challenges in the early years of the Christian faith.

In 2 Timothy 4 v19 Paul asks his mentee Timothy to greet Priscilla and Aquila, so they were clearly with him at that time supporting his ministry. And then in 1 Corinthians 16 v19 Paul sends greetings from Priscilla and Aquila who were with him wherever he wrote the letter (probably in Ephesus) and greetings from the church that meets in their house, as they would have remembered them from their time in Corinth.

So how would you sum up Priscilla and Aquila in a word or phrase? I found it really hard, because they had so many outstanding characteristics, as we have seen. They were very hospitable taking in Paul and Apollos into their homes and like a mentor to Apollos and I suspect many others. They were clearly very reliable and respected by Paul, and many churches, especially the gentile ones. They were risk-takers, as Paul described them, which we see in the way they travelled around much of the Roman Empire as missionaries, passionate about sharing the good news of Jesus. They come across to me as a great team who were mature leaders. Probably not showy or forceful, but the sort of people every church would love to have in their ministry team or congregation.

So I have decided to describe them as “all-rounders”. When you think of all-rounders your first thought may well be (well mine was!) of the great English cricket all-rounders like Ben Stokes (pictured here), Andrew Flintoff or Ian



Botham, cricketers who were great batsmen, bowlers and fielders, the first name on the team sheet because they contribute to the team in so many ways. And that's how I see Priscilla and Aquila, a couple you want on your team, in your ministry, in your church. Hospitable, wise, dependable, passionate for Jesus, respected and mature.

How about us? Are the descriptions we think people give of us ones we are happy with as Christians? We don't have to be all-rounders like Priscilla and Aquila who had so many outstanding qualities, but I hope that through the power of the Holy Spirit in us we are all developing those aspects of character that, however ordinary we feel we are, shape us as the extraordinary followers of Jesus we are called to be.

Let's Pray.

Loving Lord forgive us for those aspects of our character that let you down and especially for those times when we are reluctant to change. We invite you to continue to mould us into the characters you want us to be so that we speak out and live out the good news of Jesus in our lives. Amen

Hymn 990 I will offer up my life

I will offer up my life in spirit and truth
Pouring out the oil of love as my worship to You
In surrender I must give my every part
Lord, receive the sacrifice of a broken heart

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of Your name for the things You have done?
O my words could not tell, not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart*

You deserve my every breath for You've paid the great cost
Giving up Your life to death, even death on a cross
You took all my shame away, there defeated my sin
Opened up the gates of heaven and have beckoned me in
Jesus, what can I give, . . .

I will offer up my life in spirit and truth
Pouring out the oil of love as my worship to You
In surrender I must give my every part
Lord, receive the sacrifice of a broken heart

Creed

Leader Do you believe and trust in God the Father?
**All I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.**

Leader Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ?
**All I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;**

**he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Leader Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

All I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession ~ Pauline Wilde

Heavenly Father we thank you that you have brought us safe to the beginning of this new day. We thank you for your word which helps and sustain us in these strange and difficult times. We give you thanks for those like Aquila and Priscilla who explain your word to us. We praise you for all the technology that helps us to take part in Sunday worship from our own homes and also give thanks for those who make it possible for us now to attend church services in our church buildings.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for the government and the scientists who have the difficult job to balance getting the country back to normal working without increasing those infected with the virus and overwhelming the health service. We pray for all those who are concerned for their jobs especially in the retail, hospitality and leisure activities. The virus has affected all our lives and many of us are fearful as to what things will be like in the future and wonder when we will be able to do many of the various activities and attend groups as we used to. Help us Lord when we have those moments to put our hope and trust in you.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

As we approach a new school year we pray for all the young people having received or about to receive their exam results and are looking ahead to the next phase in their lives. We pray especially for those who would be going to university this autumn help them to make the right decision as

to whether to start their course this year or to defer for another year. We pray for the teaching and support staff as they seek to make the schools safe for all pupils to return.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for the people of the Lebanon especially Beirut in the aftermath of the explosion. We pray for those who are bereaved, injured and without their homes. We pray that the aid will be given to those most in need. We pray especially for the hospitals who were already under strain from Covid 19 and now have to cope with the injured whilst having been affected from the explosion themselves.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for all those who are going through a difficult time at the moment because of illness or bereavement. We especially pray Bob Baker, Peter and Eileen Bliss, Mary McAvoy and Joy Storkey. Jesus our healer, we place into your gentle hands those who are sick. Ease their pain, and heal the damage done to them in body, mind or spirit. Be present to them through the support of friends and in the care of doctors and nurses, fill them with the warmth of your love now and always.

We also pray for those who have been recently bereaved especially for the family and friends of Marcia MacFarlane, Valerie Whatley and Brian Rich may your comfort be with them at this time

Merciful Father

accept these prayers for the sake of our saviour Jesus Christ Amen

Lord's Prayer

Leader Let us pray with confidence as our saviour has taught us.

All **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.**

Notices

Hymn 528 O worship the King

O worship the King all glorious above,
and gratefully sing his power and his love:
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

O tell of his might and sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
his chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth, with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, your power has founded of old;
established it fast, by a changeless decree,
and round it has cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air; it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.

We children of dust are feeble and frail -
in you do we trust, for you never fail;
your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end!
our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend.

Blessing

Leader The peace of God,
 which passes all understanding,
 keep your hearts and minds
 in the knowledge and love of God,
 and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
 and the blessing of God almighty,
 the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
 be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Leader Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing

