

# FAITH @ HOME

Week of August 30, 2020

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

## ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

**READ:** Romans 12:9-21

**REFLECT:** This week Paul gives us instructions on the best ways for Christians to live. Each of the 20 instructions has something to do with love—how we love God, love other people and love ourselves. This is the roadmap of how we are to behave as Christians.

Paul tells us to really love other people as much as we can. This love is more than a feeling, it is also an action. Paul urges us to respect everyone we meet and treat them with kindness. Even if they aren't respectful or kind to us. He tells us to do what's right, even when it's hard. If someone is mean to us, don't try to get them back. If we get an answer right at school, don't think we are smarter than everyone else. And pray, pray, pray. In this letter to the Romans, Paul describes how to have hearts full of love and goodness, and a life full of faith and good works.

**RESPOND:** We often think of 'love' as an emotion. It's something we feel for our parents or our pet. It's how we describe how much we enjoy ice cream or a football team. The love that Paul is talking about is the same love Jesus talks about in the two great commandments. This love is more than an emotion; it's an action. This love is how we behave and how we live. These 20 instructions of how to love are really signs of the Christian life. Choose one or two characteristics that Paul names and turn it into a sign using paper and markers. Hang this sign in a prominent place within your home.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ALLISON LILES



The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles is a wife, mother, peacemaker, and priest learning to navigate life in the suburban wilds of Dallas, Texas. After working as Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Executive Director for six years, Allison has re-entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She currently serves as the Priest-in-Charge of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas and the editor of Grow Christians, a ministry of Forward Movement.

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## ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

**READ:** Romans 12:9-21

**REFLECT:** Paul wrote many, many letters giving advice to communities of people trying to live their lives as followers of Christ. This is a particularly beautiful letter encouraging people to love, rejoice in and bless one another, while living in harmony. Which wouldn't be so hard to do if life was always wonderful and happy. But life isn't always wonderful and happy, and Paul knows it. Even so, he encourages people to choose to be loving to one another, even (especially!) when life is difficult. He doesn't say *if* life is difficult, he assumes, at times, life **will be** difficult! He acknowledges there **will be** evil, that you **will be** persecuted, that people **will** weep with sadness. He acknowledges that we **will** have enemies. And yet he calls us to live peaceably with all, feeding and giving our enemies something to drink! Paul reminds us to overcome evil with good! He reminds us even when it is hard that we should always try to, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer."

**RESPOND:** Think of a time you were struggling with something – a difficult situation that felt like it would never end or a person that just made your day-to-day life miserable. How did you get through it? What helped? Where did you find hope? How did you show patience and perseverance? Did you pray about it? Now write an advice letter to yourself! Like Paul, offer yourself encouragement even as you acknowledge what was hard about the situation. Consider what advice might have helped you at the time. Would you have been willing to hear it? Would it have helped? Would you have been willing to act on it? Save the letter you write. And the next time you are facing a difficult situation, re-read Paul's letter to the Romans and re-read the letter you wrote to yourself, and do your best to take these messages to heart.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA BROWN



Lisa Brown is the Director of Digital Ministry for Membership Vision. She is passionate about enriching the spiritual lives of people of all ages, facilitating immersive learning opportunities, collaborative art installations, and digital engagement. Her book, *The Best VBS Workbook Ever!* was published in 2017 and she is also a contributing writer to John Roberto's book, "Faith Formation with a New Generation" and 2020 InsideOut camp curriculum. Lisa continues to grow in personal faith and understanding through her participation in Education for Ministry (EfM), and earned a Certification in Leadership in Lifelong Faith Formation from Virginia Theological Seminary and Forma. A native of Pittsburgh, Lisa enjoys hiking the woods of Western Pennsylvania.

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## ADULT AND YOUTH

**READ:** Matthew 16:21-28

**REFLECT:** When I was younger, I had two burning desires. One was to play the church organ. This I was conscious of; after all, every Sunday I would sit close enough to the organ to observe the heavenly sound come forth from the “King of Instruments.” I often found myself knocking on my grandmother’s chair handle, imagining myself playing just the same. One day that became a reality and I played my first service in May 2012. The second burning desire unaware to me was to become a priest. I recall performing many services in my front yard with my cousin. I had many funerals and weddings. My congregation was invisible people. I recall at my primary school there was a tree and I married many beneath its shade.

Today, many years after what seemed like a young child playing, God was actually at work. Many wonder why I would answer such a call and leave all the glorious money making opportunities behind. I believe there is more to life than owning a fancy car or home. There is more to life than becoming unhappy over lack of money. I am not saying these are bad things, perhaps when we cherish them, we lose focus of our true calling to Love in ways unimaginable.

I too have taken up my cross, and changed course. What about you? Will you take up your cross and humbly follow?

**RESPOND:** Have you ever wondered what God’s plan is for your life? Spend some time prayerfully communicating with one who is greater than you and I, and see what is revealed. Age is just a number; God uses everyone and anyone for the building up of God’s kingdom. Who knows what God is up to?

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: TREVAUGHN TODMAN



Trevaughn Todman is the Diocesan Youth Representative for the Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands. Trevaughn loves playing and listening to music and spending time with colleagues and family. His life is based around God, music, and youth. He describes his calling with these lyrics from Charles Wesley: “To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do the Master’s will.”

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## ADULT AND ADULT

**READ:** Romans 12:9-21

**REFLECT:** The opening lines of this reading read like a checklist. My type-A brain responds with a “got it.” If I just commit to doing this dozen or so things then I will be a successful Christian. Done. But then it hits: “Bless those who persecute you.” How am I supposed to do that and hate what is evil at the same time? Because surely those who persecute me are evil. Maybe this is a little more complicated than I took it to be at first blush. This guidance is complicated because humans are complex and living in relationship with other humans in community is even more so. The reality is that we will wrong others and they will wrong us. We will have to have patience and perseverance. But God calls us to walk alongside each other, even the people who get under our skin. And to do so with good will in love and service.

**RESPOND:** Make a list of a few things you think are good and another list of things you think are evil. Examine these lists and consider whether they reflect God’s love and justice. Are the things you love in line with the things God loves? Are the things you hate the things that are an affront to the justice that springs from God’s love? How can you work this week to align your heart with the heart of God? Pray that God might open your heart and enliven your hands so that the way you live helps to bring about the Kingdom of God.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: SAMANTHA CLARE



Samantha Clare serves as the Director of Christian Formation at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, AR. She has a passion for spreading Jesus’ call for social justice and she helps people to make connections between their daily and spiritual lives so that they can bring their whole and authentic selves to the world. You can find more of her writing at [samanthaclare.me](http://samanthaclare.me).

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