

# St John's

## Prayers:

Dear Lord, teach us humility. Save us from pride and the desire to appear superior. May we never undermine those who seek you and never be a stumbling block to ourselves or others. Amen.

We pray for those who need your love and power in their lives today: Merciditas Alvira, Rachel Gaskin, Ruth Gillespie, Bala Kompalli, Marion Mason and Chris Tatton-Brown.

We commend to God, all who have died recently, including those in armed conflict, natural disasters and those known to us, especially Maurice Fitchet, Anita Lindo and Samuel Okyere. May they rest in peace and rise with Christ in Glory.

## Contacts

Rector	The Revd Matthew Stone	020 8954 3876
	Email: rector@stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk	
Assistant Curate	The Revd Jonny Rapson	07557 808527
	Email: jonny.rapson@london.anglican.org	
Safeguarding Officers	Mark Lynch	07982 906833
	Louise Gregory	07504 527118
Children's Champion	Sue Wright	07958 499682
Adults at Risk Champion	Sheila Oliver	020 8954 4976
Churchwardens	Mark Lynch	07982 906833
	Jane Prentice	07976 388958
Deputy Wardens	Susan Jones	07864 846148
	Graham Nicholson	01923 226969
Treasurer	Jenny Neve	07989 378840
	Email: jenny.neve@googlemail.com	
Data Protection Compliance	The Rector	020 8954 3876

The Parish Office is closed.

**Matthew and Jonny are continuing to say Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer at home. Join them [here](#).**

# St John's Church

## Pew Sheet

### 26th September 2021

#### Services this week:

**9.30am Sunday - Parish Communion with Junior Church at 9.30am in Church House (Café St Jean after the service in Church House)**

**10.30am Wednesday - Holy Communion**

**The online service for 9.30am on Sunday will be available [here](#).**

**The church will be open for private prayer: Sundays - Wednesdays (10.30am-4.30pm).**

**"No one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us."  
Mark 9:39-40**

#### **ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST - MISSION STATEMENT**

Drawn together by Christ's love, we seek by his grace to live out his commandments to love the Lord our God with all of our being; and to love everyone we come across as we love ourselves.

**[www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk](http://www.stjohnschurchstanmore.org.uk)**

Please do check our website for future updates

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## The Seventeenth Sunday After Trinity

### **Collect:**

Gracious God, you call us to fullness of life: deliver us from unbelief and banish our anxieties with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Readings:**

[Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29](#)

[James 5:13-20](#)

[Mark 9:38-50](#)

### **Short Sermon from Frances Westcott**

Somehow, it seems innate in us to want to be superior and for anything we are associated with to be successful. We're British so we support Team GB; we want our football team to win; our school is the best school; our church is the most prayerful and caring church, far superior to that strange evangelical church in the next parish! I could go on giving many more examples. In some ways, this behaviour is a good thing as it promotes loyalty but sometimes it can go too far. The disciples were so keen to support Team Twelve Apostles that they couldn't accept the validity of the rival exorcist who was casting out demons. 'He's not one of us! How dare he be successful in casting out demons! We've got to put a stop to it!' They completely ignored the fact that he was successfully casting them out in Jesus' name.

They were probably still smarting from their own failure shortly before, when they were unable to cast out a demon from an afflicted boy. This man was achieving what they couldn't do and it rankled. When they reported to Jesus that they had tried to prevent him from carrying out his ministry, they probably expected a pat on the back and a few words of praise from their master. Jesus, however, could see that, even if the man was not technically one of his followers or one of the élite 12, he still had a God-given ministry. He would not have been successful in carrying out his exorcisms if he had not believed in the power of the name of Jesus which he was invoking. The disciples were too narrow-minded in wanting to restrict power to

a small élite which they were part of. That was not Jesus' way at all. He was never exclusive. Whereas the Pharisees and others would have excluded taxpayers and sinners from their company, Jesus sought them out. He was keen to be all-inclusive and widen his group of followers.

Earlier, the disciples had been arguing amongst themselves as to who was the greater. One way of appearing superior is to make other people seem inferior. This is what they were seeking to do by denying any power to the exorcist who was not part of their inner circle. He was doing good, not harm, but they couldn't accept him. Jesus had to point out that whoever is not against us is for us. In our own lives, we have to be careful not to denigrate others just because they are not in our group or are different from us. That is how racism and homophobia can thrive.

By their actions, the disciples were attempting to put a stumbling block in the way of the exorcist. He was achieving good results in his ministry but they were trying to undermine him. Jesus is very severe on anyone trying to put obstacles in the way of a believer, perhaps a child or a new, vulnerable believer. Drowning with a millstone round one's neck would be a suitable punishment. Are we guilty of putting obstacles in people's way? In what way might we be a stumbling block to others? Just as importantly, are we a stumbling-block to ourselves? So many things can cause us to sin, so Jesus advises us to cut them out, to amputate or eliminate them so that they have no more power over us. He uses really strong language to express the seriousness of what he is saying. What are the obstacles which we put in the way of our own lives as Christians? Ambition, greed, selfishness? Whatever it is, Jesus says we must get rid of it.

So, there are two important messages in our Gospel reading today: firstly, don't belittle those who are not in our group or who are different from us and, secondly, don't cast obstacles in the way of others or even ourselves. Amen.