

Saints ALIVE

The magazine of:
All Saints, Leighton Buzzard
St. Nicholas, Hockliffe
St. Michael's, Eggington
St. Michael and All Angels,
Billington
The Good Shepherd, Sandhills

June 2020

60p

Inside:

Mr. Heather
looks forward
with some trepidation to
re-opening Pulford
and sends this message
to all the children
from all the staff
[The text is on P7 inside]

Congratulations
to Canon Malcolm
as he celebrates
50 years of priesthood

The choir
continues to hone new
skills and produces a
special double choir
anthem of his choice and
in his honour

Beekeeping
manages lockdown

Steve Marsh
reflects on the
positive side of a
more private Easter



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A more private Easter

By Rev'd Steve Marsh



What are you missing during the Covid-19 lockdown? Are you missing a certain person or a place? An aroma or a particular view?

I love live music and would normally regularly go to concerts to be refreshed. I enjoy the anticipation of a concert, the journey there, discussing excitedly what favourite songs I hope to hear. I delight in the visual feast of seeing talented musicians move and dance with their instruments. I get a buzz from hearing musicians improvise, treasuring the moment, realising that the music being created afresh in front of me may never be repeated. Then there is the journey home, reliving my favourite moments, committing them to memory to be enjoyed again in my mind's eye.

However, all the many concerts that were in my diary have been postponed and I am mourning not having access to live music to refresh me. A CD or DVD or YouTube video of a concert can satisfy the longing to a certain degree, and it is better than nothing, but these cannot fully replicate the joy of live music.

And so it has been with our church services during the lockdown. We have transferred our worship gatherings online, which is better than not meeting at all, but does not fully satisfy in the way that physically meeting together does. On the other hand, I found that being in lockdown during Easter gave me new insights to the season and refreshed my faith.

With us all hidden away, rather than having a public Easter, without the Good Friday walk of witness and the celebrational Easter Sunday services, I have had a much more private Easter. This gave me a new sense of connection with the disciples who were hidden away after Jesus' death, uncertain about the future, much like we are during the Covid -19 lockdown. As the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples privately, I feel that I have met with the risen Jesus more privately this year. Like Thomas, I have brought doubts and fears to the risen Jesus, and wrestling with them, allowed Jesus to transform these doubts into worship. I have invited Jesus to walk alongside me as he did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus and let him unpack Easter afresh for me. And finally, I have sought the eternal, Easter peace that the risen Jesus spoke over his disciples.

I have encouraged the Church of the Good Shepherd and Saint Michael and All Angels communities to also seek God more privately during Easter and the lockdown. I have prayed that this will result in our personal faith in the risen Jesus being deepened and refreshed. This will hopefully mean that when we are able to gather again face to face, our Christian communities will be refreshed and enlivened, bringing encouragement to each other and hopefully the passion to share the peace of the risen Jesus with a world that will be searching for a new sense of hope for the future.

So as we look forward to being reunited with the things we are missing during the lockdown, be it live music, a loved one or a favourite place, I pray that being reunited with these things will bring you delight and joy. I also pray that you will take this time to deepen your personal relationship with the risen Jesus so that when we physically meet again as Christian communities there will be an attractive new delight and joy there also.

Rev'd Steve Marsh

Our normal pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays

8am Holy Communion

9.15am Parish Eucharist

11.15am All Age Service:

1st Sunday: Messy Mass

3rd Sunday: All Age Communion

11.15am Holy Baptism (2nd & 4th Sunday)

6pm Evening Worship

1st Sung Evensong, with augmented choir

2nd Said Evening Prayer

3rd Full choral Evensong followed by

Benediction

4th Said Evening Prayer

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3rd Tuesday)

12.00pm Wednesday (BCP on 1st Wednesday)

10.00am Thursday (said with hymns)

9.00am Saturday

Morning Prayer: St. Hugh's Chapel

9.00am Monday – Friday

Evening Prayer: St. Hugh's Chapel

4.30pm Monday – Friday

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

www.linslade-parish.org.uk

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays

8am Holy Communion

11am Parish Communion

(1st Sunday: Family Service)

For details of other services please visit:

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

Sundays:

1st & 3rd Sundays: 9.15am Parish Communion

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

Sundays:

11.15am Parish Communion

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

Sundays:

9.30am Parish Communion

(2nd Sunday: Family Communion)

Plus Messy Church on an ad hoc pattern.

Shared Prayer: 6.15pm on alternate Tuesdays.

(Venues vary – please contact Nerissa Walters

01525 371615 for details).

Good Shepherd, Greenleas School, Sandhills:

Sundays at 9.45am

1st & 3rd: Communion

2nd: Messy Church

4th: All Age Worship

***The church building is currently closed.
For details of services and all other events,
please see the websites.***

Sunday Saints: for age 4+ year olds, meets during 9.15am Sunday service at All Saints.

All Saints Toddler Time: meets in All Saints on Wednesdays during term time.

Morning session 9.30 – 11am every week; afternoon session 1.30pm-3pm, except 1st Weds of month.

£1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included.

ACTIVE: (Senior Youth Group for age 11+) **not meeting at present because of a lack of leaders.**

If you could help, please contact the office.

Young Adults: meets fortnightly on Tuesdays at 8pm. See Facebook page "All Saints Young Adults".

New Beginnings Bereavement Support Café, offering friendship, support and understanding

1st Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints.

Choir Practice: Friday evenings, Juniors 6.45pm; Adults 7.30pm.

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30pm-9.30pm.

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday, Friday & Saturday 10am-3pm.

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

This year's Summer Fete, due to be held on 4th July has been cancelled. We are still hoping to bring you the Harvest 'Pignic' and 'Christmas Fayre' later this year so plenty to look forward to!

*** *** ***

After lots of consideration the Holiday Club for this year has been cancelled, but the good news is that we will bring you 'Jungle Fever' next year! The dates are 16th - 20th August 2021 so get the date in your diary now.

*** *** ***

All Services are currently suspended and meetings and social events cancelled. We will keep our website and Facebook page updated.

<https://allsaintslb.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsleightonbuzzard>



Worth a smile

The following are actual call centre conversations...

Right-click

Tech Support: "I need you to right-click on the Open Desktop."

Customer: "OK."

Tech Support: "Did you get a pop-up menu?"

Customer: "No."

Tech Support: "OK. Right-click again. Do you see a pop-up menu?"

Customer: "No."

Tech Support: "OK, sir. Can you tell me what you have done up until this point?"

Customer: "Sure. You told me to write 'click' and I wrote 'click'."

Wrong number

Customer: "I've been ringing you on 0700 2300 for two days. Why didn't you answer?"

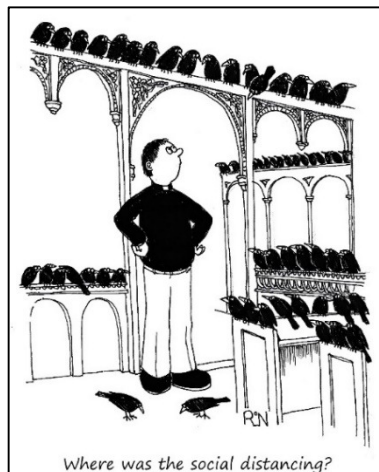
Travel agent: "Where did you get that number from, sir?"

Customer: "It's there on the door to your Travel Centre."

Operator: "Sir, they are our opening hours."

Other side?

Caller (enquiring about legal requirements while travelling in France): "If I register my car in France, do I have to change the steering wheel to the other side of the car?"



Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, April:

No weddings at All Saints

'Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate'

Holy Baptism, April:

No baptisms at All Saints

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. April:

6: Raymond Harvey at Crownhill; 14: Allan Couper at Old Linslade Cemetery; 17: John Faiers at Crownhill; 20: Alison Leslie at Bierton; 23: Gladys Stanbridge at Hockliffe Cemetery, Shirley Wheeler at Old Linslade Cemetery; 27: Alison Austin at Bierton, Bruce Baylis at Old Linslade Cemetery

'Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'

Years Mind, June:

1: Ada Gotzheim; 2: Sheila Aris, Barbara Macdonald; 3: Hedley Thompson, Ira Bowerman; 4: Karl Jones, Rev. David Joynes, Freda Waples; 5: Norman Griffiths; 7: Dorothy Speller, Beryl Jessup, Sidney Westwood; 8: Robert Molloy, Doris Pullin, Shirley Jones; 9: Ann Meredith; 11: Peter Beecroft; 13: Davina Baker, Jasmine Baker; 15: Jean Waudby, Cyril Burchell; 18: Norman Cowley, John Shelley; 20: Margaret Leath, George Willett, Doris Froud; 21: Marie Cooper; 22: Frances Eaton, Ron McCall; 23: Edgar Hart, Minnie Eaton; 24: Norman Dillamore; 27: Elsie Beauchamp, Eddie Shephard; 28: David Ingledow, Velda Turney; 29: Rosemary Plenderleath, Rosie Hughes; 30: Caroline Greco, Paul Bottos

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*A church school for
a whole community*

Last month I wrote about life in lockdown at Pulford. This month we are currently preparing for a planned phased re-opening date of June 1st. Like the rest of us, this is all a new experience. What will the new adapted school look like and how will it operate?

Well, what we know so far is that the youngest children are due to return to school first. That will be the nursery, reception and year one children. Also our year four children will have priority next as they will be transferring to their middle schools in September. We are grouping these children into classes of fifteen. The new word for these groups appears to be “bubbles”!!

We also need to restrict movement around the building as much as we are able. So daily worship will be led by staff and one of the year four “bubbles” and using the wonders of modern technology we will live stream into the other class rooms and out to those children at home.

Lunch will be a particular challenge as not only will numbers in the hall be severely limited but our cleaning routines need to be of the highest standard throughout.

For me, I think the one area that is making the most nervous is drop off and pick up. With 165 children and parents on site at the beginning and end of the school day I am currently trying to devise a system which allows everyone to get into class quickly whilst maintaining our “social distance”. I will let you know next month how it goes.

For the children, however, they seem more concerned about whether football will be allowed. Can I play tag? And of course what might be for lunch on the first day back!

Please pray for us as we make the return to school especially on the morning of the 1st June that “all manner of things may be well”.

Dave Heather

*Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples,
‘I am with you always’.*

*Be with me today, as I offer myself to you.
Hear my prayers for others and for myself,
and keep me in your care.*

*(Front cover message reads: To all the lovely children at Pulford School:
We miss you all lots and can’t wait to see you all again soon.
Keep smiling; keep chasing rainbows; stay safe;
stay arateful and remember God’s love is always with you. Amen. Xxx)*



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On a musical note.....

Music can, of course, be enjoyed as a solitary activity. If you happen to be out shopping between 3.30 and 4.30 on a Wednesday afternoon, you can sit in the car for a while listening to Choral Evensong on Radio 3. And how many people do you see on trains with earphones? But music can also be enjoyed as a collective activity, with its social side and teamwork - orchestras, choirs and the like and in particular church choirs. And as you all now know, you can make music completely on your own but at the same time be part of a choir.

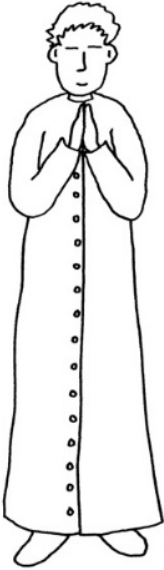
After our first tentative steps before Easter (reported in last month's Saints Alive), the All Saints choir has now become a virtual choir. As well as the fortnightly adult drinks on Friday evenings, the trebles have a weekly choir practice for 15 minutes or so via Zoom (my thanks to Sian for taking that). And there is a fortnightly treble social gathering (also via Zoom) so we can still sing Happy Birthday to each other, when appropriate.



The choir has settled into a routine of recording a hymn each week with a fortnightly anthem. My thanks to Alan and to Patrick for collecting together all the individual parts, putting them into one sound file, perfectly aligned so that everyone starts together. Thanks also to those members of the congregation who contribute to the hymns.

And my thanks to the choir for their dedication to this task. Just pause for a moment and imagine how hard this is. First of all, for the adults, there is no rehearsal at all to help to learn the music – you're on your own; and for the trebles there is only a short time to rehearse and it is impossible to sing together as a group because of the limitations of Zoom. So the music has to be learned by listening to the backing track. Secondly, you have to set up the necessary technology (earphones to hear the backing track and something to record your performance). Thirdly, you have to arrange things so that you can see the music when recording. Then, and this is the really hard bit, you have to sing a flawless solo, effectively, to no audience. And you have to sing the whole piece in one take. If you make a mistake, it's back to the beginning and try again. Oh, and if you choose to do a video (my thanks to those who do), you have to make sure you look good!

THE CASSOCK



THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE



THE INWARD REALITY

CartoonChurch.com

Thank God for Laughter **by Ivy Rawkins Jeffers**

*Thank God for laughter, and thank God for mirth;
He didn't forget them when He made the earth.
Look at Creation; God's nature can joke;
See a goose waddling; or hear a frog croak.*



*Thank God for laughter, and thank God for wit;
Pure, clean and simple, it's always a hit:
Just see the right side, and laugh off the drear –
For laughter is holy, and God likes to hear.*



*Thank God for laughter, and thank God for fun;
Thank God for talent in making a pun;
God wants us happy, not deep in the blues;
So he gave us laughter and things to amuse.*

**A message from Venerable Dave Middlebrook
Archdeacon of Bedford**

to all those across the archdeaconry who are making a difference.

Thank you for all that you are doing to ensure your congregation, and members of the local community, are cared for and looked after. May I thank everyone who has stepped up to the challenge of what it means to 'be church' in this 'new world' in which we find ourselves; livestreaming services, using social media, grasping 'zoom' meetings, and so much more. As I've sampled various online services and resources from different churches across the Archdeaconry I've been amazed and thankful for the creativity and willingness of people to use these technical resources to demonstrate something of the light of Christ to their community.



Please do take care and stay safe. God bless.

A report from Parish Pump: Welcoming more people

Many churches across the country have reported that more people are visiting their services streamed live online than have ever come to their church buildings in normal times. We thank God for this opportunity to welcome them as we express and share our faith in Sunday worship. It is clear that this is a time of great challenge but also an unprecedented opportunity.

The Power of Prayer from The Daily Mash:



A SCHOOLBOY who asked for divine intervention to get out of his GCSEs is in terrified awe of the trouble he has created. Martin Bishop, aged 16, had been putting off his revision for months and decided to turn to divine intervention for some last-minute assistance.

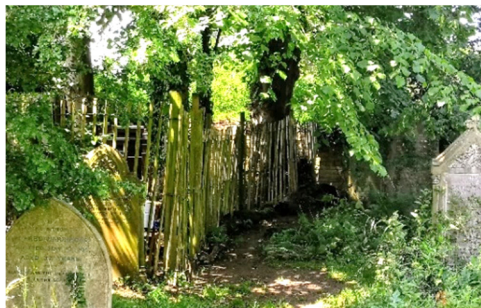
He said: "I'm not the first to try it, and I won't be the last either, but I didn't expect it to actually work. I thought the big guy would just rustle up a freak snowstorm during the summer so nobody could get to school, or at the worst unleash a plague of frogs like in the Book of Exodus. Even by Old Testament standards he's gone a bit over the top by creating a global pandemic. And how come he chose to answer this prayer but ignored all those times I begged for a snog from Kelly in maths class? Still, I've only got myself to blame. In the future I'll work a bit harder instead of invoking the terrible wrath of a higher being."

God said: "It's actually just a big coincidence but it's been funny watching Martin have a meltdown about it."

“Little things, BIG difference”

Celebrating those who make things happen...

Just when the sun was beginning to warm the hives and our bees were venturing out, along came the virus, causing the lockdown and social distancing – how would we do beekeeping?



It wasn't long before DEFRA issued a directive for us – ‘only 2 people in the apiary at one time and maintain ‘social distancing’, making beekeeping very ‘interesting’.

Liz & Peter Corbett, the only married couple in the Team, offered to work the apiary and the Team agreed to support. We removed the dirty winter hive equipment and replaced with clean, so the Team were scraping, soda crystal washing, scorching and repainting some 32 pieces of equipment at home.



We eventually agreed Team Guidelines for Social Distance Beekeeping. With these in place all the Bee Team were able to take up beekeeping once again, working in pairs. Always keeping two wheelbarrows apart!

The lovely long spell of warm sunny weather we had in April encouraged our bees out to forage in the spring blossoms, returning to the hives with nectar

COVID-19, All Saints Apiary and the BEE TEAM



The queen began to increase her egg laying and the colonies started to grow. By the end of April, the honey frames were beginning to fill.

The new guidelines also included special measures for using the coffee shop kitchen for honey extraction.

We hope it will not be long before the Spire Coffee Shop is open again and you can pick up a jar of honey!



All Saints Apiary is definitely up and buzzing!

P.S. On our frequent churchyard visits this Spring we have been fortunate to see it at its best, teeming with wild flowers, animals and birds. A big thank you to the Churchyard Team.



The Bee Team

Congratulations, Canon Malcolm

On Ascension Day, 21st May, Canon Malcom celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination as priest. He had planned a Eucharist as a thanksgiving to God, with a wealth of music and liturgy already meticulously worked out. The following Saturday a similar service was to take place in St Mary's Cathedral Glasgow where he was ordained and served as curate.

His career has included 6 years as Team Vicar in Grantham and a 3 year spell as Priest-in-charge of Invergordon, where the job was linked with responsibility for training candidates for self-supporting ministry. Malcolm eventually returned to the Cathedral in Glasgow as Provost (Dean). You would think that one Cathedral would be enough, but ten years later he moved to be Provost of Inverness Cathedral. He was active in all areas of the life of the Episcopal Church as well as being involved in the UK wide Deans and Provosts group. He also contributed to *Exciting Holiness*, the book we use to commemorate Saints and other heroes of the faith, by contributing biographies of those from Scotland.



I first got to know Malcolm when he returned to England as Vicar of Eaton Bray in 2002. He became Rural Dean in 2004 and as I was Lay Chair, I worked with him very closely on Deanery issues. One incident stands out for me. The Deanery Treasurer suddenly died and we realised that we needed to change the signatories on the account. Not having the death certificate, we went into NatWest in Dunstable only to be told that we needed the signature of the deceased! Malcom drily responded: 'I may be a priest but I do not raise the dead!'

The problem was eventually solved by Father Grant Fellows, who had been a signatory on the account when he was Vicar of Heath & Reach. After a gap of several years, he was now Vicar of Leighton Buzzard, but his signature was still registered. What a relief!

Malcolm retired in 2009 and moved to Linslade. He and Katrina have become regular members of the All Saints congregation and the choir. But his priestly ministry continues, not only in the parishes of our Team, but in many other places as well. He gives willingly of his time to ensure that worship continues in as many places as possible. For weeks on end he can be found at different churches across the Deanery and further afield.

I could go on but I hope this has given you some idea of the faithfulness of Malcolm. Please join him, remotely, in giving thanks to God.

'Well done, thou good and faithful servant! – but please don't stop doing yet.

John Wallace

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Julia Dickens 210210; Nerissa Walters 371615



Forget all the terrors of Covid-19, the lockdown, the prospect of years of recovery for those who have been sick, the spectre of a global economy so bust that our great-grandchildren will still be paying for it a century from now. Forget also how many people are just lovely, befriending neighbours, offering help to strangers, banging saucepans for the key workers who put themselves in danger for the good of the rest of us.

Forget all that – just for a minute, forget it.

Apart from all that, I am just becoming properly aware of a terrifying underworld, full of snares and traps set by a few really nasty people to catch out innocent and unwary, often vulnerable, victims. Staying safe is akin to walking a tightrope across a swamp, where the crocodiles are snapping at your toes. Scams, online and elsewhere, are now so prevalent that both the government and the police are sending out regular alerts, with guidance on how to avoid falling for them.

So to my story: At the start of lockdown, my 94-year old father came to live with us. This is, domestically-speaking, a bit of a game changer! Little things include a shortage of teaspoons and saucers, 2 of each required for every (clean) coffee mug. (He eschews our slovenly habit of making one mug last all day with no more than a quick rinse; a saucer for the biscuit which accompanies every cup is de rigueur!) His penchant for porridge, home-made soup and chewing every mouthful 32 times is very time-consuming.

Being innocent and unwary, he is very vulnerable. He utterly trusts people to behave properly and not to be mean. But oh my goodness – what a lot of people there are out there, not behaving properly, crocodiles lying in wait for the unwary.

For instance: he gets regular e-mails purporting to be from TV Licensing, saying he hasn't paid ... We discuss (repeatedly): this is a scam, you're 94, you don't pay ... don't put your details in there ... We know the free licences are coming to an end, so there is a measure of plausibility here, but the e-mails, while good, are clearly not right.

"Well", he says, "they should write to me properly".

"They will, Dad, they will. When the free TV licence thing ends, they will write to you. This is NOT them!!!"

One night, when I am cooking dinner and being less than properly vigilant, he beetles off, gets his credit card, debit card, all bank details ...

20 minutes later, he shuffles into supper with the clickety-clack of his stick practically dancing, JOLLY pleased with himself because he has now paid.

"BUT" he says "they should write to me properly!!!!!!!!!"

Aaaaaaargh! Beware the crocodiles

Julia Dickens

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Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



The Treasures Within

The village is quiet, the church is closed, and nature breathes a sigh of relief, for now we are in 'Lock-Down'. Daisies have a chance to grow and crows play hide-and-seek in the tall grass. The place is silent, just the sound of a sparrow in the tall trees and a bumble bee investigating the overgrown cow parsley. A silhouette of a WW1 soldier still stands guard over the east gate to the churchyard. With head bowed he is seemingly unaware of the encroaching greenery that was once lovingly kept at bay each month by church members.

It is a sunny day. I have come to seek peace from lawn mowers and excited children allowed into their gardens to let off steam. Here in the stillness, however, I notice things I have never seen before. In the corner is a huge, overgrown monument, cordoned off by tall iron fencing. Who lies there, I wonder? Elsewhere is a tiny statue of a fairy riding on the back of a snail. As I look harder, I discover more delights amongst the bushes and tulips.

It has been a long time since I was last here, well over a month. Sadly, the thick, locked, wooden door bars my entry into the church. If it were open it would reveal more treasures within. Like an old 13th century font standing prominent in the west end of the church. A heavy, carved, wooden cover hovers above, suspended by a chain, an 18th century addition. The church has two bells, so I am told, both from the 17th century. It would be wonderful to hear them ring but far too costly to ensure they are of good repair, so they remain silent.



Not all the treasures are ancient. One treasure, a triptych depicting the Church's Patron Saint, St Michael, hangs on the north wall. It was designed and drawn by local talent, Amy Roberts, when she was 15 years old. As well as St Michael, the triptych includes the Whore of Babylon, the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse and the Seven Deadly Sins, all from the Book of Revelation.

Strangely it takes a world-wide disaster like Covid-19 to encourage a fresh new look at the beauty God has given us in his world, and to bring a new insight to the discoverable treasures here at St. Michael's. I hope one day when this is all over that you too will come again to view our lovely little village church and experience the wonder for yourself.

May God bless and keep you safe.

Linda Morris.

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Sandra Brewin 373644;

Julia Haviland 850380



Can anybody tell me why this year, this beautiful shrub beside our front door has not one single black fly on it. We have lived in Wickham Cottage for 26 years and each spring season we have been disheartened by the clusters of these nasty little insects. Is this a divine consolation for having to put up with lockdown?



We have been grateful that during this time of not being able to meet in the physical church Steve and others from the Church of the Good Shepherd have got to grips with the wonders of Zoom. The services are popular. It's fascinating to see various people popping up on the screen. The two Steve's (Marsh and Davies) have both given us thoughtful and imaginative sermons on the Easter stories. Can't work out how the leaders manage Junior Church but the children always make some beautiful art work.

I can recommend a book called *The Universal Christ* by the Franciscan teacher and writer Richard Rohr. It is a very hopeful book, full of deep understanding of what Jesus really meant by some of his statements that we may have found difficult. I quote from the dedication. "I dedicate this book to my beloved 15 year old black Labrador Venus, whom I had to release to God while beginning to write this book. Without any apology, lightweight theology or fear of heresy, I can appropriately say that Venus was also Christ to me."

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh; Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Steve Nixon; Hazel Farlam



The Sabbath has been an important theme for our church, as pre-lockdown, many of us had busy lives, sometimes overwhelmingly so. Making sure volunteers did not feel burdened by their commitment was important to us. Pre-lockdown, my life was busy with the usual juggling of commitments seen in many households. After-school and weekend activities were plentiful but often exhausting. I was regularly looking at ways our family could bring the Sabbath in to our lives but nothing ever really stuck.

Being forced to strip all of the aspects from our lives that kept us busy has allowed me and my family to see the value and the beauty of the simple things. A family walk is no longer a treat but a daily occurrence. The lockdown has also had other benefits for my mental health at a time when I know many others are struggling. I captured this feeling of freedom during lockdown in a poem that I have shared with friends and I was surprised to find that much of what I had written resonated with others.

I'm locked down but I'm free

I'm locked down but I'm free, free from social anxiety.
I do what I want inside my own home, I don't feel guilt nor am I alone.
I don't worry what others think and make my own decisions,
I'm living my own life and I'm not exposed to comparisons.
I don't feel sad for being away from the children,
I get to see what they learn and I'm the one that nurtures them;
My husband is at home and I have his attention;
I don't have to compete with a match or another distraction;
We get on really well, I haven't had a surge of resentment,
Just being together reminds me of our early contentment.
I don't care what clothes I wear, comfort is the key,
I can wear whatever I like there's only my family to see.
This lockdown has set me free, clarity to decide who is me;
All the noise that dictated my life has been silenced along with the strife.
For no appointment am I late, another reason to not myself berate;
No worry of my husband stuck on the road;
No kids' swimming lessons that my sanity erode.
I have more choices now I'm locked down,
Choices to do little and my loved ones surround,
I'm closer to the ones that matter, ringing often for a cheer-up natter.
There's much in this lockdown that will cost dear,
The worry, the economy, the death, the fear;
But in my microcosm where anxiety once reigned,
My sense of self is no longer restrained.

Jo Bellamy

Patterns of Prayer

In a series of articles looking at different types of spirituality and the influences that inspire us in our lives of prayer, Father Noel McGeeney discusses

Franciscan Spirituality



Back in the winter of 1977, my first year in seminary we went to the senior college to see a film one Sunday evening. (Do you remember the 16 mm spool of film and projector, and the whizzing sound that accompanied the film?) We watched a film about St. Francis called “Brother Sun Sister Moon”, of course in black and white. It was as much about Saint Clare of Assisi as it was about Francis.

Francis the man: Born into a wealthy family with an education and with the ideal of chivalry, he was a knight with a sense of honour and discipline. He was expected to follow in the family business, but was taken prisoner and held captive for a year until his father paid a ransom for his release. He took time to recover from his injuries so all this had an impact on how he would perceive the world. Another experience was an encounter with a leper where he dismounted and embraced him as a brother. His first conversion was to put God at the heart of his life, before family expectations, status, and ambition. His realisation that everything we have in life has been given to us, and to come with honesty before God, we need to start with nothing. Thus, he walked away from his old way of life, privilege, and status, and removing all his clothes, began his new life as naked as child coming into the world. He set out not only to follow Christ but to be Christ-like.

His time was not that different from ours; it was a time of violence, greed and inter-faith violence. He crafted a spirituality as an antidote to this. The three keys to Franciscan spirituality are Humility, Love and Joy. He became a mediator between Christian kings and Muslim Sultans. He had a real devotion to the disadvantaged and the stranger in society. Francis was an ordained deacon but would/could not bring himself to be ordained as a priest. He, like Clare, set up a religious order. He is renowned for his love of all creatures, his simplicity of life (“*live simply so others can simply live*”) and the practice of poverty (“*preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words*”).

The composition of the famous Canticle came about the following way: during the summer of 1225, Francis was suffering from an eye ailment that left him practically blind; after some soul searching he understood he needed to compose a canticle/song of praise and thanksgiving for the very presence of God’s comfort and compassion surrounding all of them in and through the natural world which God made visible for all who have eyes to see. Thus, the canticle of Brother Sun was born:

*Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
all praise is yours, all glory, honour and blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong;
no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.*

*We praise you, Lord, for all your creatures,
 especially for Brother Sun,
 who is the day through whom you give us light.
 And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
 of you Most High, he bears your likeness.
 We praise you, Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,
 in the heavens you have made them bright,
 precious and fair.
 We praise you, Lord, for Brothers Wind and Air,
 fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
 by which you cherish all that you have made.
 We praise you, Lord, for Sister Water,
 so useful, humble, precious and pure.
 We praise you, Lord, for Brother Fire,
 through whom you light the night.
 He is beautiful, playful, robust, and strong.
 We praise you, Lord, for Sister Earth,
 who sustains us with her fruits, coloured flowers, and herbs.
 We praise and bless you, Lord, and give you thanks,
 and serve you in all humility.*



St. Francis receiving the Stigmata

It is quite a thing that this spirituality has been among us since 1225, professing that the earth and all within it is holy. At a time when the focus of organised religion was on sin, shame, guilt, fear of God and hell, Francis saw the hand of God in everything and the love of God for all. One Christmas he brought all the paraphernalia of the crib into a local church to demonstrate that God is present in the ordinariness of life thus making faith real and accessible to people. It is worth noting that the current pope has taken the name Francis. I liken Greta Thunberg and the way she perceives a thing to be good or bad, right or wrong, with Francis and his literal living out of the Gospel.

It is truly a spirituality for this time of pandemic as we re- evaluate what is important and vital for the planet. There are three orders to the Franciscans: clergy, religious and the third order of St. Francis for laity. People opt to have a rule of life for daily living while being connected to like-minded others. The third order of St. Francis is growing year on year. A life balanced between contemplation and active service. According to the principles of the Anglican society of Saint Francis, the balanced Franciscan life is made up of three ways of service: prayer, study and work, thus mind body and spirit all find a place of equal value in the service of God. The Franciscan way is a challenge to the values of a materialistic world, so it is not going away anytime soon. Franciscan spirituality is there when people realise that there is more to life than possession, accumulation, and achievement.

I hope there is enough here for you to read more, especially about Clare of Assisi and the influence she had on Franciscan Spirituality.

Finally, the first known bearer of the stigmata was St. Francis in the 11th century and there have been about three dozen others throughout history, most of them women.

Noel McGeeney

The days ahead... CFC decisions

For many, being "locked down" has provided something often in short supply in normal times - space to read and to think. I have been thinking about the Church and wonder how it is going to fare when its buildings are allowed to re-open and its people are called back to pick up the threads of the old normality.

At the time of writing, we have had seven weeks with no church to go to. Clergy have struggled to maintain services from their living rooms - or even from their kitchen in the case of the Archbishop of Canterbury (although why, as he has a perfectly good chapel as part of his home), with varying success. Well done to them. We do not expect our church leaders to be internet experts, but many have risen to the challenge.

I have come to the conclusion that the reasons for churchgoing can be put into three slots, which I have abbreviated to "CFC", an acronym which stands for "Culture", "Faith" and "Community". They are not mutually exclusive and many churchgoers would, I suspect, recognise in themselves elements of more than one.

***Culture** is for those who feel comfortable in church. They like the history, the language, the buildings, the liturgy and the music, which have probably been a part of their lives since they were children, all hold comforting and reassuring memories.*

***Faith** is something deeply personal, a link with the meaning of life and its eternal promise, somewhere to seek guidance through worship and sacrament and on which to lean in times of trouble. A belief in the words of Jesus that they are not on their own, even if sometimes it feels like it in this world. Faith is the yardstick on which to measure performance, engendering a personal sense of right and wrong.*

***Community** is for those who like coming to church, or being associated with it as a flying buttress (a phrase of Winston Churchill, who described himself as someone who supports the church from the outside). Church people are nice, like-minded, who pose no threat and encourage secular activities which they also like to do and perhaps can't do anywhere else. They don't have to have a commitment to the faith of the Church, but are sympathetic and don't mind being with those who do.*

But the "old normality" may not be the new normality and this provokes a few thoughts:

- * How many people now out of the habit of regular community worship, will return?*
- * How many people on the periphery of church life, will come back to it?*
- * How many of those who have had a regular commitment to the church, by serving at the altar, singing in choirs, doing flowers, ringing bells and polishing brasses will feel that this is a good time to make a break and do something different?*

CFC? As church people we must consider where we go from here. The Church, everywhere in the infected world will need to know our answer to its call. To thrive, it needs us back.

Terry Warburton

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