

# 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*

*September 2020*

*60p*



## **Inside:**

**All Saints Preservation Trust: Terry Warburton retires**

**PLUS**

**From 6th September,**

**All Saints Sunday service times will change,  
and All Age Worship will restart.**

**See page 16 for details**



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*Vacancy*

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## *Opening up to receive God's gifts*

*By Rev. Cate Irvine*



Every article I have written since the start of the pandemic I find myself beginning with a sense of trepidation, knowing that between the time of writing and that of publication almost anything could have happened. We have made this strange shift from having a reasonable confidence that we know what the weeks and months ahead will bring into a world where our plans are much more focused on what we will do in the immediate future.

As we go into September I suspect that many of us are wondering what the autumn will bring. But whatever changes we are experiencing in our daily lives, the patterns of nature and the changing of the seasons continue. The Church enters the season that we call Creantide and we give thanks for the harvest of the land and seas. Perhaps this year, more than ever, we have been reminded that we too are part of God's creation. We live in our vulnerable human bodies and the culture that tries to sell us health and beauty, or implies that we have a right to these things, has been exposed. We find that, after all, we are God's creatures; we cannot remove ourselves from the world in which we live.

I hope that the many trials that the pandemic has brought us will help us to remember this fundamental truth. It may sound alarming at first, to relinquish the illusion of control that we have over our lives. But, if we look at things from another perspective, then rather than experiencing this as a loss, everything becomes gift. Creantide culminates in the feast of St Francis of Assisi on the 4th of October. Francis, who came from a wealthy merchant family, famously gave back to his father all that had been given to him, including the rich clothes that he was wearing! Instead Francis chose a life of poverty and humility and found God revealed in the natural world around us, yet Francis and those who follow in his tradition are known for their great joy.

Sometimes it is only in letting go, painful though it might be, that we can open our hearts and minds to receive God's gifts. Perhaps in your prayers you might ask God what it is that you are clinging to that is keeping you from drawing closer to God. Believe me, there will be something for each of us!



If it helps, you could begin with your hands closed and ask God to help you trust in his unfailing love. When you feel ready open your hands as a symbol of that trust and the confidence that God has much more in store for us than we can begin to imagine.



***Mother Cate***

## *Our normal pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team*

### **All Saints**

#### **Sundays:**

8am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am All Age Service:

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Messy Mass

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: All Age Communion

11.30am Holy Baptism (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday)

6pm Evening Worship

1<sup>st</sup> Evening Prayer,

2<sup>nd</sup> Said Evening Prayer

3<sup>rd</sup> Evening Prayer followed by Benediction

4<sup>th</sup> Evening Prayer

#### **Weekdays:**

#### **Holy Communion**

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday)

12.00pm Wednesday (**Not presently happening.**)

10.00am Thursday

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](http://www.linslade-parish.org.uk)

**During Lockdown, services in Heath & Reach, Eggington and Hockliffe are being shared by Zoom from each church in rotation at 10am. For details please contact Fr Noel McGeeney.**

#### **St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach**

#### **Sundays: Occasional services**

8am Holy Communion

For details please visit:

[www.saintleonardschurch.com](http://www.saintleonardschurch.com)

#### **St. Michael's, Eggington**

#### **Sundays: Occasional services**

#### **St. Nicholas', Hockliffe**

#### **Sundays: Occasional services**

#### **St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington**

#### **Sundays:**

11.15am Parish Communion

#### **Good Shepherd, Greenleas School, Sandhills:**

#### **Sundays at 9.45am:**

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>: Communion

2<sup>nd</sup>: Messy Church

4<sup>th</sup>: All Age Worship

*Service times may vary.*

*For details of services and all other events,  
please see the websites.*

**Sunday Saints:** for age 4+ year olds, meets during 9.30am 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 1<sup>st</sup> Weds of month. £1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included: **will restart in October**

**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

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints. (**Not meeting at the moment.**)

**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-2pm. **NOW OPEN.**

*Contact Details on Page 2.*

# News Roundup

**Church Giving:** The Finance Committee set a roughly balanced budget for 2020. At the half-way position the figures have shown that income was down by over £19,000. This was caused mainly by a reduction in weekly collections (both cash and envelopes), Coffee Shop takings, fees from weddings and funerals, and fund raising.

Half of our income goes in our payment to the diocese and then we have costs which we cannot cut such as insurance, alarm maintenance and upkeep, utilities and staff. If you have been saving your giving, and have not felt able to come to services, please either put your donations through the church letter box or make a bank transfer to All Saints, Leighton Buzzard, Sort Code 40 52 40, Account 00019360. We would be most grateful for any funds received in order that we may keep our lovely church going for a time when we will be able to meet and celebrate together.

\*\*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\*

**The Coffee Shop** hopes to welcome customers back on Tuesday 8th September in a Covid-safe way. Times will be 10am -2pm and it will be waitress service. Things will be very different and will probably change as we develop new ways of working, enabling both our customers and staff to stay safe, so please bear with us at this time.

\*\*\* \*\* \*\* \*\* \*\*

**APCM** will be on 20th September 10.45am;

**The Paschal Candle** will be blessed on 6th September as part of Evening Prayer;

**Family services** will restart at 11.30 on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September

**Harvest PigNig Harvest Lunch** October 4<sup>th</sup> from 12noon

**Winter Warmer Food & Craft Fair** in the churchyard from 11-2pm 7<sup>th</sup> November



## *Worth a smile*

This morning I saw a neighbour talking to her cat. It was obvious she thought her cat understood her. I came into my house and told my dog. We laughed a lot.



I told my suitcases that due to the pandemic, there will be no holiday this year. Now I'm dealing with emotional baggage.



Why is it that saying: "Have a nice day" sounds friendly, but saying "Enjoy your next 24 hours" sounds threatening?



On dating app: 'Princess, having had sufficient experience with princes, seeks frog.'



Teacher: We borrowed our numerals from the Arabs, our calendar from the Romans, and our banking from the Italians. Can anyone think of other examples?

Student: Well, we borrowed our lawnmower from the Smiths, our ladder from the Browns, and our hose from the Jones....

# *Parish Registers*

## **Holy Matrimony, July:**

No weddings at All Saints

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

## **Holy Baptism, July:**

No baptisms at All Saints

*'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'*

## **R.I.P. July:**

16: Joy Square at St. Nicholas, Eric Evans at St. Barnabas; 30: Roy Lemon at Bierton

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

## **Years Mind, September:**

1: Peter Rolls, Ruth Cursons, Christopher Mawer; 2: Sheila Binns; 3: Stella Aris, Ben Reeve, Irene Hillis, Leslie Slater, Charles Moore, Bryan Gilbert; 5: Betty Hill, Jim Bright, Desmond Brown; 6: Brenda Burchell; 7: Edward Dunningham; 9: Les Wood; 10: Edith Boyce, Leslie Scheu, Edward Pyman, Milbrough Mary Morgan; 11: Thomas Grant, Peggy Wallace; 13: John King; 14: Clive Slater, Winifred Weeden, Rose Magee; 16 Peggy King, John Tennant; 18: Stuart Mead, Leslie Howard, Vernon Jessup; 19: Helen Ingram; 21: Jim Wright; 22: William Kingham; 24: Joyce Pim, June Bliss; 25: Ruby West; 26: Freda Goodger; 27: Beatrice Thompson; 29: William Brantom, Gordon Durrington; 30: Margaret Madigan, Betty Lodge

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# ***Pulford VA Lower School***

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A church school for  
a whole community



## ***Pulford School returns to 'normal'***

As I recall, it was this time last year that All Saints was struck by lightning, killing the phones, blowing up the lights and frying half the sound system! I don't know about you, but with all that's happened this year it feels more like 2 years ago!

I don't really like the term 'new normal'. I prefer to remain hopeful that things are 'normal for now' and will continue to improve. From September though Pulford School will be open to all year groups and 'normal' school will begin for a new academic year. Extensive work has been done to ensure the safety of all pupils and staff upon return and we are all very much looking forward to welcoming new children into Pre-school and Reception.

In the last couple of months before the Summer I was so very proud of the tireless work undertaken by all the staff at Pulford School in welcoming back as many children as was possible within Government guidance. Many hours were spent planning and ensuring safety, compliance and risk assessment with regular and sometimes tough meetings.

By the end of term the school was in a position where children from all year groups were receiving an education and even went as far as to erect a marquee on the field when the maximum space for class 'bubbles' inside the building was reached!

Pulford bid a fond farewell to our Year 4 children just before the Summer holidays in a wonderful outdoor Leavers Service led by Rev. Cate and Mr. Heather with readings and prayers from the children as well as awards! This is such an important moment in our children's lives as they experience leaving their **first** school and it would have been such a shame to have had to miss this due to the current situation. Although at times challenging to organise, again many hours of work went into planning and risk management prior to the event with full governing board support allowing the school to safely hold the service.

It is important for us all to realise that we inevitably **will**, at times, feel differently about certain things, especially when feelings are running high, and to truly believe that nobody's opinion is wrong. During these unprecedented times we just need to keep our faith and love for one another strong in our hearts and work together to find the right way forward – It can be done!

Congratulations to the entire Pulford staff team and best wishes to our outstanding school, its Staff, Parents, Pupils, PTA and Governors for the year head!

***Paul Whittington, Chair of Governors***

# *The End of an Era at All Saints Preservation Trust*



Well, it certainly wasn't the sort of occasion to end an era! It was during a zoom meeting in June that Terry Warburton announced he would step down as Honorary Secretary and Appeal Director of All Saints Preservation Trust as from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

The Trust was created over 21 years ago when a detailed structural survey of the church showed that All Saints was in trouble. Cracks were appearing in the tower, leading to concerns about the safety of the spire. It had also become apparent that widespread Victorian repairs to stonework had used cement, thereby causing (and concealing) further deterioration. A massive repair programme was needed and All Saints Preservation Trust (ASPT) was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1999 to raise and manage funds to help enable the preservation work to be carried out. Terry has been at the helm from day 1 and has worked tirelessly since then, both in his role as Chair of the church Fabric Committee and as Appeal Director of the Trust, to make sure that the necessary funds were in place and that the work was carried out to a very high standard. It took sixteen years for the stonework repairs to be completed, culminating in a service of thanksgiving in May 2016. The whole project's success was due to Terry's tenacity and persistence in getting quotes for and overseeing the repairs, applying for grants and raising funds for ASPT. With regular publications of 'Up To Date', Terry has kept the Town regularly informed of progress.

There have been regular lows over the years - when grant applications have been rejected, when various phases of work incurred additional costs due to unforeseen problems and it wasn't known whether there would be enough money to complete them. There have also been many compensating highs: when grants have been awarded, when the scaffolding has come down to reveal the wonderful work that had been carried out behind, the inspirational generosity of the many people who have helped fund the work by donating money to ASPT.



A lesser man than Terry would have crumbled under the pressure (along with the stonework) and the whole town community is incredibly indebted to him, and thankful for his dedication to All Saints church. The fact that it is still standing with its stonework superbly restored bears witness to his tenacity and love for the church.

Terry's efforts have not gone unrewarded. Not only do we have a church that is in such a fine condition, but he has been immortalised in stone so that he is remembered for many years to come – a much kinder face than many of the other gargoyles around the church!

As life returns to normal, we hope that we will be able to publicly acknowledge the many years of unflinching service given by Terry to both the church and All Saints Preservation Trust.

Thank you Terry, we wish you a peaceful 'retirement'.

**Janet Wenborn**



As from 1<sup>st</sup> September, Janet Wenborn will be taking over Terry's role, and Stephen Edwards will become Chairman of ASPT.

Meantime here are some of many words of gratitude from those who worked with Terry during his time in charge:

\* I have many memories of Terry not least that he encouraged my Chris (who had no head for heights) out onto the church roof to see what was going on.

Without Terry we would not have the magnificent church we do have, it's due to his stalwart work we can still worship at All Saints. *Chris Hinchcliff*



\* I could only attempt to care for the Church because Terry took all the burden of caring for the building in which the Church was housed! *Fr Grant*



\* Terry's tenacity, and passion for the ancient building, are what have impressed me most of all. His understanding of the world of fundraising and his ability to "work the system" with his network of contacts come a close second; without these rare skills the church would never have found the money to restore so much, and to such a standard. The church will now stand proud for a century or more. What a legacy!

My most memorable conversation with him about the restoration was when he reported that the windows had to be holding up the roofs, as there was almost nothing but fresh air at the tops of the walls - the rubble fill having settled hugely over the centuries.

There is a photo somewhere of a mason with his arm in the wall – completely, right up to the armpit! As an engineer I marvelled at how / why the roof hadn't collapsed...

*Stephen Edwards*

\* Terry holds the record for getting me soaked through selling raffle tickets at May Day Fayres.

*George Plenderleath*





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## **Sponsored Bike 'n Hike**

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*Bike 'n Hike in Beds 'n Herts*

***Because of Covid-19, Bike 'n Hike on Saturday 12 September will look very different this year.***

All the details and guidance are in the sponsorship packs available from Brian Bainbridge, 01525 382 404 or from the web site [www.b-n-h.co.uk](http://www.b-n-h.co.uk).

Brian is aiming to visit 10 churches and chapels in Heath and Reach, Linslade and Leighton Buzzard; and Maggie Moran and Canon Malcolm Grant are also taking part. For details on how to sponsor any or all, please contact Brian or Lindsay. Bike 'n Hike is open to everyone, church-goers or not, hikers, bikers or by car, mobility scooter or horse.

Remember that half of all our sponsorship money will come back to All Saints or your own church. So here is an ideal opportunity to get fit and to raise money to help fill the financial gap left by the loss of funds due to the cancellation of the summer fete, the closure of the Coffee Shop and loss of donations from services. Money is still urgently required to repair and maintain our beautiful churches and to repay some of the funds we have received from the Trust in the past.

***Many thanks.***

***Brian Bainbridge***



### **Update from Partners in Mission**

The Lent appeal for Mercy Ships generated £445.11 which was made up to £750.

We are very grateful to all who supported this, and also for the fact that, despite the significant shortfall of income since March, the church has maintained its giving, recognizing the even greater need of people in this country and abroad whose situations have been made so much worse by the pandemic.

Recent allocations:

- £2,000 to the Disasters Emergency Committee for use by 14 UK charities providing food, water, medical care and resources to tackle the spread of coronavirus in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, the DR Congo, and Afghanistan, in which countries there are an estimated 24 million internally-displaced people; and also in the camps in Bangladesh where 850,000 Rohingya have fled from violence in neighbouring Myanmar.
- £1,000 Christian Aid's Lebanon appeal;
- £200 Mission Aviation Fellowship, a logistics charity to remote locations,
- £200 Change Ur Life, a domestic abuse charity in Bedfordshire;
- £200 British Red Cross, working throughout the world with medical supplies.

Looking forward, the Church is aspiring to bring everyone together in a fund raising activity in support of the **Bishop's Harvest Appeal**

**'Creating a Buzz in Nepal'.**



# *The New Normal: what is going on at church to unlock and keep people safe*

Welcome:  
it may not look normal,  
or feel familiar,  
but we are working  
to make worship happen while  
keeping everyone  
as safe as possible ...

And ALL are very welcome.



Sanitise your hands as you come in



Fill in your details for Track and trace

Activity packs in lieu of Sunday school and the MU toy bags!





The priest will sanitise their hands before the socially-distanced distribution of communion in one kind (bread only)



Tech in the tower enables those who can't come to church to take part at home; and the collection plate and card reader - the new way to give

No talking allowed as you leave by the west door (one way system in place)



Socially-distanced coffee in the park – no more than 6 to a group

The church is cleaned after the service



*NB: none of these photos was taken during a service.*



## *On a musical note.....* *David Cox RIP*

*At All Saints, we mainly knew David as a stalwart of the 11.15 band, but he was so much more to so many. This tribute is from friends at Eggington who knew him as organist at St. Michael's. He also played from time to time at St. Leonard's, Heath and Reach.*

His first service at St. Michael's was the Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve 2009. It is amazing to think that David had only a few organ lessons back in his youth, although he had learnt to play the piano. It was when he took early retirement in 1997 that he decided to have more lessons, together with clarinet and saxophone, "to make sure he didn't get bored in retirement"! Talented enough to join a couple of local Concert Bands, I don't think he had an opportunity to get bored!



With his gentle and friendly manner, David encouraged others to carry on playing or even to start playing new instruments. At St. Michael's, he encouraged Paula to start playing the flute and the trumpet and gave Carol the confidence to start singing solos. He also helped Monty and Oswald with their playing and encouraged them to come and play at our services.

He was had many practical skills and was able to help his mother a great deal while growing up. (His father had died when he was 3.) After "A" levels, he went to university and then became an electrical engineer in the power industry.

One day his motor bike broke down so he had to catch the bus. At the bus stop he met Irene, who he had slightly known from teaching at the same Methodist Sunday School. They sat together on the bus and chatted all the way into central Leeds. There then followed several dates and six weeks later David asked Irene to marry him. They were married in 1964. Two years later, Diane was born, followed by Simon in 1968. This was a wonderful family time, with David revelling in his new found parenthood, being an adoring father and sharing all the duties of a father including nappy changing!

The family moved to Redbourn in 1969, and had plenty of "family time" together, doing all sorts of things including sailing at Stewartby Sailing Club. Moving to Heath & Reach In 1999, they enjoyed making new friends. And the arrival of grandson Ed in 2002 brought great joy, and the chance to play Scalextric, spend a lot of time in the workshop making things and going cycling together.

When David's illness was diagnosed in February this year, he had said that he had had a wonderful life, celebrated his 80th birthday, been happily married for 56 years, seen his son and daughter grow up and be happily married with a grandson.

I feel so lucky to have known David. He was such a lovely, gentle, humorous, cheerful, intelligent and talented gentleman, and he will be greatly missed. One of the things I will miss is making sure David had got his hat after the Sunday services! He will be a great asset to the heavenly band.

**Paul Brown**

## ***St. Nicholas, Hockliffe***

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***Churchwardens:***

***Julia Dickens 210210; Nerissa Walters 371615***



### ***The language of Lockdown:***

Quarantine. Crisis. Panic. Unprecedented. Deaths. This is the language of lockdown. Sanitising; bubbling; aerosol (turns out that this is more than a way of spraying anti-bac cleaner – who knew?)

My grandchildren have assimilated the language, and rules, into their everyday lives. They chat about “social-distancing” as if it’s normal. The 3 year-olds spread their arms as wide as they can – all of about 2 feet - and explain how it works in their bubbles at nursery. “Social-distancing” is such a wonderful oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. Why have we not used the much more accurate “anti-social distancing”?

Isolation – for the unclean, sent to dwell alone in a habitation outside the camp like lepers, in sight of, but cut off from, their families. As I write, I am listening to Test Match Special broadcasting commentary on a test match from Southampton. To make it sound right, they have added the warm hum of crowd noise to the background, like muzak. Apparently it helps to reassure, bringing comfort in the silence of isolation. But there is no-one there, and that feels just a whisker spooky, if I’m honest.

Testing, track and trace – disclosing where we’ve been and who with. In South Korea this came adrift because of the number of people who were doing things they shouldn’t in places where they oughtn’t, and with people they had no business being with!

New Zealanders have an App, the NZ Covid Tracer App, but they didn’t use it enough during 102 blissful Covid-free days, despite their government’s pleading. Since their recent wake-up call, all that has changed. The phone has become everyone’s personal pager. When a Covid crisis arises, the government lets the nation know with an alert message to every phone.

Keyworkers, front line, and (my personal favourite) – “Be more rainbow”. We all know now what these things are in a way we didn’t in February.

Lockdown: the word itself is normally associated with prison life and confinement in cells, obeying arbitrary rules imposed by powers outside our control. The way we discuss it, we are comfortable with it. Apparently comfortable also with all the new concepts it has brought. But are we really? Everything has changed.

And do we want to come out? To what will we emerge? The “New Normal”? (Norma, Latin for a carpenter’s set square, staying upright, conforming to the rule.) Is this how it’s got to be? For now? A year? A lifetime???

Language is important at the best of times, and these are the worst of times. How we use it will affect our outlook on life for ever, I suspect.

***Julia Dickens***

**From 6th September,**  
to allow time for cleaning  
**All Saints Sunday service times will change**  
**8am** Holy Communion  
**9.30am** Parish Eucharist  
**11.30am** Messy Mass (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday each month)  
**11.30am** All Age Communion (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday each month)  
**6pm** Evening Prayer – Benediction 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday  
**ALL AGE WORSHIP WILL RESTART 6<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER**

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# ***St. Michael's, Eggington***

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***Church Officers:***

***Carol Hart 384634, Paul Brown 751861***



Fifty years ago my great uncle Christopher was Vicar of Stock in Essex. His sister, my grandmother, lived in the rectory across the churchyard. When she became too infirm to be able to attend the services they rigged up a recording system where she could sit at home and listen to the services live. This gave her great comfort in her final years. Well how times have changed.

The Zoom system that Fr. Noel has arranged for us is one of the best things that has appeared during the virus lockdown. With the help of modern technology we have been able to attend Morning Prayer each day at 9am which I have never done before, and it is a blessing to meet our friends and pray together every day.

We have been having our full Communion services every Sunday and these have been attended by as many 70 people, not only from our own group of churches but by friends and family from all over the country. Paula Smith who used to live in Eggington tunes in most days. In fact Paul worked out that there were people from 7 different churches joining us, not including Noel's relatives from Ireland. Since March I have attended church every week instead of the usual fortnight. It is a marvellous arrangement and I hope that it will continue into the future and be available to all especially vulnerable people, and anyone who, due to ongoing health and disability issues are unable to attend church. I personally do believe that I am receiving Holy Communion at the services we have, even though I am not physically there. Belief and faith and the presence of my friends in the ever increasing congregation is all I need. When Jesus said 'Where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them' I am sure He includes us all physically and virtually together. I am also sure He would be glad with the way His word is reaching so many more people in this way.

As far as the financial aspect is concerned. All the regular congregation in Eggington are now making contributions via the bank, in one way or another and if anyone else would like to make donations to pay for the ongoing costs of running the church please call me for bank details etc.

Back to Eggington. The Saturday working parties have been doing marvellous work in the church and churchyard and it looks beautiful. Hedge cutting, pruning, clearing graves and paths all done keeping to the social distancing rules. There is nothing 'virtual' about this, it is physical hard work. The photo above reflects these efforts. Our very grateful thanks to all the team. We have a wedding this month to show it off. The church is open from 10 -12 on Saturdays for private prayer. The building repairs to the vestry have also commenced. The weather has been wonderful. We are truly blessed.

Stay safe.

***Angela Dyer***

## **St. Michael & All Angels, Billington**

**Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh**

**Tel: 01525 838450**

**Churchwardens:**

**Sandra Brewin 373644**

**Julia Haviland 850380**



There is little to be said about life in Billington that hasn't been said before. We like all others are living in hope of a complete end to lockdown, when all parts of the world will be virus free.

While thinking of the virus I realised that not all are malignant and was reminded of a passage in a book, published in 2004 called *The Complex Christ* [by KFB]. With a little alteration I quote from it:

*"In a world of COVID19, biological terror threats, and computer viruses, it is the micro not the macro that wields the power; in the age of infections simple bandages and medicines will not do. It is awe inspiring to think that 2000 years ago, before the computer scientists, before the biologists, before the sociologists had even invented the language to talk about it, God knew about this and acted, putting an end to the top down system of the Temple and disappearing into the viral form of the Spirit.*

*Unfortunately we have not been faithful to this vision. We have panicked at the awesome freedom of it, the outrageous grace of it, the unbelievable generosity of it and decided it will not do. We have decided, like Judas of Iscariot, to co-opt God and talk God out of it. We have created structures and thrown up stone buildings to try and tie God down.*

*We have given ourselves over to priests and asked them to represent us before God. We have denied freedom and power to those still heavily infected by God's virus, quarantined them and warned others away.*

*But God in His grace will not give up."*



The text in the centre of the picture reads:  
*Behold what manner of love God has given unto us; I am here.*

**Sandra Brewin**

## ***Good Shepherd, Sandhills***

***Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh***

***Tel: 01525 838450***

***Churchwardens: Steve Nixon; Hazel Farlam***



### ***Leave a corner of your field***

Back in March, at the beginning of the coronavirus lockdown, there was a sudden increase in demand for food banks across the country.

Nationally, food bank usage peaked in June according to research by the Food Standards Agency with 10% of those surveyed having used a food bank in that month. 16-24 year olds, households with children, those with a physical or mental health condition and those who were shielding or self-isolating with Covid19 symptoms were more likely to need food parcels.

Locally, the Leighton Linslade Community Food Bank run by Leighton Linslade Homeless Shelter (LLHS), saw a 55% increase in demand for food parcels. Most demand was from single people (36%) but families or larger households (3-4 or 5 people) received 43% of the food parcels.

When asked how the local community had stepped up to help during the lockdown, Paul Latimer, manager of the Homeless Service said: "We have been truly blessed by local businesses and the community, so much so we have been able to support other food banks and Central Bedfordshire Council in the initial stages of the pandemic."

23 crates of tinned or dried goods were sent to Redwings Lodge, a hotel in Hockliffe by July, where those that had been sleeping rough were housed by Central Bedfordshire Council during the lockdown as part of the Everyone In scheme. Leighton Buzzard Helpers also received 64 crates of tinned and dried goods to distribute.

Paul said that during the lockdown, he was most grateful for the support from the community and for people coming together to help others in need. The challenge ahead though is finding new volunteers to run the food bank.

Normally, at this time of year, churches will be planning their harvest festivals or harvest services. Each year the Church of the Good Shepherd, along with many other churches, organisations and schools, collect non-perishable goods for the food bank. This is done in the spirit of Leviticus 19:9-10, where God said to Moses:

*'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner'.*

This year, for many there may not be the meeting place or occasion to collect the harvest donations. But, now as furlough is coming to an end, job losses are mounting and the impact of the pandemic takes its toll on people that have managed to get by so far, those that use the food bank still need its local community to do the equivalent of leaving a corner of their field for others.

## ***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, Laurelin Burge discusses*

### ***Praying with Nature***



*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*  
(Psalm 19:1)

Over the last few months, like many of you I imagine, I have struggled with prayer. I hadn't realised how tied to a building my prayer life was until I could no longer go to that building, and although I have always known that God is not tied to a specific place, the loss of access to church felt like a bereavement of sorts. I felt separate from God somehow and I had to find other ways to make those connections, and different ways to communicate with God. I have always felt close to God when surrounded by nature, so searching for God and praying with nature seemed like a fairly obvious place to start. So for the last few months the world has been my church and the plants and animals the congregation that I have shared my worship with, and yes, I have talked to them too!

Taking time to stop and appreciate the wonders of the created world has helped me appreciate the many things there are to be thankful for, and has, I hope, deepened my connection with the world around me and God's presence in it.

The Christian tradition has always had a long history of using reflection and meditation to deepen our spiritual life and our experience of God. Recently I came across this meditation involving praying with nature and have found it helpful in focusing my attention and slowing down my thoughts.

First you need to find a 'piece of nature' to pray with. This might be a pot plant, a bunch of flowers, something in your garden, a window box or hanging basket, a bird feeder, something you see on a walk (such as a dandelion growing in a crack in the pavement), a shell, a pine cone, or any other natural thing. You might see something while out for a walk (a flower, a leaf, a stone) and take it home or take a photo of it. Or you might choose to look at an image of nature online or in a magazine.



Then take the time to experience this piece of creation using the following reflection.

***Laurelin Burge***

## Praying with a 'Piece of Nature'

Take the piece of nature and find a space where you can be alone and get comfortable. Do whatever helps you to become still. Ask God to draw you into this experience with an open heart and to guide you.

Gaze on your piece of nature and let go of other things around it. Take time over this. Sense how God is gazing on you as you gaze on God's piece of nature; God's creation.

Where does your eye first focus when you look at it? Then where does your eye travel to? Take in the whole of the piece of nature. Notice colours, forms, textures, patterns, light, shade, contrasts, movement ...

What words or phrases would you use to describe what you see? What does your piece of nature smell of? Or, if you're sitting with a photo, can you imagine a smell?

Does your piece of nature have a sound? Can you imagine a sound? If possible, touch it. If you can't, a memory might come to mind of touching, or being touched by, nature? Notice this memory.

Use your imagination to place yourself in your piece of nature, as it were. Become different forms or parts of it and sense where you are most comfortable. Where do you find rest? What is it like to 'journey' in your piece of nature?

Imagine this piece of nature can speak. Listen to it. What does it say to you? Stay with what most 'affects' you; what most invites you.

Speak to God present in you and try to name what is emerging. Listen to God and rest in God's loving presence. Gently withdraw from this prayer.

After your time of prayer take some time to reflect on your prayer, maybe over a cup of tea, using the questions below

if they are helpful:

- What is staying with you as I reflect on your prayer?
- What do you want to give thanks for?
- How are you drawn to respond to God?
- Might you write, draw or make something?

Adapted from [www.pathwaystogod.org](http://www.pathwaystogod.org)

*And finally ...*



@ANDY ROBB



*... some Covid-related thoughts,  
wise and otherwise,  
to make you smile*



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