

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*

November 2020

60p

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welcome back, Choir***

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7th November



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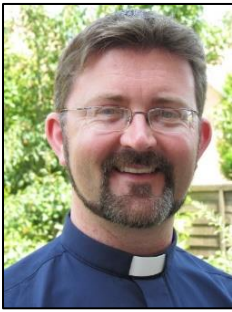
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The Spiritual Harvest

By Rev'd Steve Marsh

As I write this, we have just celebrated Harvest at the Church of the Good Shepherd. This year in my sermon I spoke about how my father, who as a young boy in WWII was evacuated from Portsmouth to a rural village near Salisbury, has fond memories of harvest time there.

During the school summer holidays, the whole village, including children, would help with the harvest. My father remembers riding on the horses, helping lift the hay bales on to the trailers and getting a cracking sun tan. Once the harvest was brought in, there would be a celebration in the village and a thanksgiving service in the church.

Through the advent of agricultural machinery such as the combine harvester, only a small fraction of the number of people who used to be involved in the harvest are now required. Today most children do not spend their summer holiday bringing in the harvest. This has resulted in the present generation becoming disconnected from the physical harvest.

The Gospel reading we had at CGS for harvest was Luke 10: 1-12 in which Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples into the spiritual harvest field, telling them:

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! “



I believe that this commission to ‘go’ into the spiritual harvest fields is also for us today. However, in being busy ‘staying in’ and investing a lot of our efforts into church activities, we need to guard against disconnecting ourselves from the spiritual harvest. We may think that someone else is going out into the spiritual harvest fields, so we do not need to bother, or be hesitant because we do not think we have harvesting skills.

However, we are all called to ‘go’ and I believe we all have the skills and ability to do so. It does not need to be a big evangelistic initiative. It can be, and is most likely to be most effective, when it is a natural part of our daily lives. Pray for people and natural opportunities to talk about life, faith and God. Take the surprising opportunities that fall into our laps to share faith with people. Be assured that you do not go into the spiritual harvest field alone. The Holy Spirit is with you. In these challenging Covid-19 times we can be inventive and imaginative about how we ‘go’ into the spiritual harvest fields, face to face, where appropriate, on the phone, social media or however comes to mind.

So, I encourage you to ‘go’, as Jesus tells us that the spiritual harvest is plentiful, but the workers, which includes you and me, are few. Let us become more connected with the spiritual harvest and look forward to a celebration when the harvest of new believers comes in.

Rev'd Steve

Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

Please note new times which allow for cleaning between services

8am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am

1st & 3rd Sunday (until Jan 1st 2021):

All Age "Service with a difference"

2nd & 4th Sunday Holy Baptism

6pm Said Evening Prayer

3rd Sunday: followed by Benediction

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3rd 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

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

St. Michael's, Eggington

Sundays: Occasional services

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

Sundays: Occasional services

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

Sundays:

11.15am Morning Prayer

Good Shepherd, Greenleas School, Sandhills:

Sundays at 9.45am:

1st & 3rd: Communion

2nd: Messy Church

4th: All Age Worship

Service times may vary.

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

Sunday Saints: for age 3+ 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 1st 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

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

Choir Practice: Friday evenings, 7pm for 30 minutes for all members.

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

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday, Friday & Saturday 10am-2pm. **NOW OPEN.**

Contact Details on Page 2.

This alternative invitation to Communion put me in mind of Michelle Plummer's article for Eggington on Page 17, and her discomfort when it comes to taking Communion:

This is the table, not of the church, but of the Lord.
It is made ready for those who love him
and for those who want to love him more.
So come, you who have much faith
and you who have little,
You who have been here often
and you who have not been here long,
You who have tried to follow
and you who have failed.
Come, because it is the Lord who invites you.
It is his will that those who want him should meet him here.



Worth a smile

When the vicar moved his family into the large Victorian vicarage, a member of the congregation asked the young son how he liked his new home. "It's great," the little boy replied. "At last I have my own room, Mike has his own room, Jemma has her own room, and Bobby has his own room. But poor Mum is still in with Dad."



A little girl attempted the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who does art in heaven, Harold is your name. Amen."



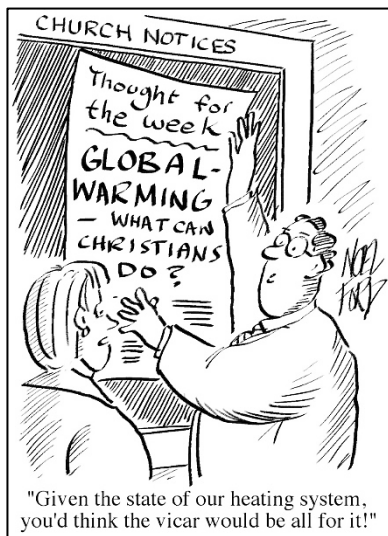
A little boy was told that he should try and be good, and that he could ask God for help with this. So he prayed: "Lord, please make me good, if you can. But if you can't, don't worry about it. I'm having a real good time like I am."



People at my workplace have started a funny new tradition where they give names to the food in the office fridge. Today I ate a sandwich called Mark, followed by some cake called Rosie.



The older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight because by then, your body and your fat are really good friends.



Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, September:

12: Andrew Lark & Samantha Martin at All Saints; 19: Alexander Redwood & Hollie Moore at All Saints

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

Holy Baptism, September:

27: Joshua Matthew Bottom, Grace Destiny Mary Broom

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. September:

17: Barbara Law at Bierton; 25: Roy Prichard at Bierton

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

Years Mind, November:

2: Doris Pughe; 4: Laurie Thompson, Revd. Len Lack; 5: Alistair Grant; 8: Lloyd Burgess; 9: Charles Wallace; 10: Andrew Audas, Alistair Cursons; 11: Harold Palmer; 12: Rose Casey; 13: Edith Palmer, Rosemary Whatling; 14: Leah Perrott, Harry Jones; 15: Michael Munford, Doris Mills; 16: Winnie Rolls, Anthony Jordan; 17: Ray Croxford; 18: Eileen Sandifer; 19: Edith Deeley, Jim Jury, Snowie Mead; 20: Frederick Turner, Colin Treagus; 22: Ivan Davies; 23: Bessie Plummer, Brenda Beaumont, Revd. Peter Lymbery; 24: Margaret Thompson; 25: Ada Nash, Jeanette Pamplin; 28: Derek Dykes, William King; 29: Charles Gotzheim, Rose King

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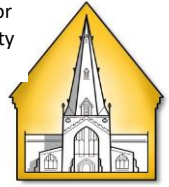
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Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick

Tel: 01525 372188

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A church school for
a whole community



We were blessed with a beautiful day for our outdoor Harvest Thanksgiving service, held in the first week of October in the lovely grounds of our school. The children brought their gifts of food for the needy in our community and enjoyed being able to sing, albeit softly, together. It was such an uplifting service not only for the staff and children, but for the passers-by in the park. A little while after the service, the school received an email from a lady who had been sitting in the park and feeling low that day. She talked about how the children's Harvest service had lifted her spirits and made her able to face the day feeling renewed! How wonderful that Pulford's can be part of making others feel good with our Christian message!

Later in the week, some of the KS2 children from Juniper class linked their thoughts and feelings about Harvest in their poetry lesson. The class spoke about what they were most grateful for at Harvest by looking at images of fruit, vegetable, farmers, the sun and the rain etc. We also thought about those in need that suffer with drought and floods. They put their ideas into some descriptive poems, of which many developed a beautiful prayerful feel! Here are some extracts of their ideas below - what an imaginative class!

Luisa Borrelli, Teacher, KS2

*Thank you God for Harvest,
Thank you for the rain.
Thank you for the things we have
and the thank yous never go down the drain!*
by Isabella

*Thank you Father for the bright sun that shines,
and the fruits that grow beneath the sun.....*
by Daisy

*'Thank you God for red and refreshing raspberries,
Squishy, glossy and tasty strawberries.
Thank you God for bright orange and crunchy carrots,
So yummy and scrummy in my tummy.*
by Rosara

*Thank you God for the bright yellow sun,
and the wet rain, all helping us
have beautiful yummy treats, to share with everyone.*
by Molly

*Thank you for your greatness!
H appiness
A pples
R ain
V ibrant food
E xcellent tasty fruit
S un
T ransport*
by Eadric

*Thank you God for juicy red
apples,
Thank you for red ripened
tomatoes,
thank you for green
watermelon,
Sorry God if we have wasted
our food.
Please forgive us.*
by Ashton



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On a musical note.....



We're back - at last! After weeks of intense studying of the COVID guidance about church choirs from the Government, the Church of England, our own Diocese of St Albans and the Royal School of Church Music, all of which has been changing (sometimes daily) since late August, and after consultation with members of the choir here at All Saints, we have reached the position where we think we are complying with all the guidance and members of the choir feel comfortable about singing in church and rehearsing. You may well wonder if "think we are complying" is good enough, but I don't think anyone can be sure in this area. The guidance is often vague, ambiguous, internally inconsistent and sometimes almost meaningless, and it is incredibly difficult to be sure of anything. We just have to do the best we can.

We now rehearse for half an hour or so on Friday evenings in the nave, where we can fit in the whole choir, socially distanced. Half an hour's rehearsal time was thought appropriate to get us going and to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. In pre-COVID days, we had the luxury of a 45 minute treble rehearsal, followed by a 15 minute adult rehearsal whilst the trebles had a break, before we all came together for a further 45 minute full choir rehearsal. This gave us time to learn new music and to concentrate more on the younger trebles.

For the 9.30 Sunday morning service the choir now occupies the South Transept, where we can fit in 25 choristers, socially distanced. But with a choir of 34 this poses an immediate problem. I have had to start asking some choristers not to come on certain Sundays. This is not at all what we want to be doing, but there is very little choice. Obviously, there will be occasions when people are away for one reason or another and this helps. At the time of writing I have only had to ask one person a week to stand down. I keep a record of who I ask to stand down and when, so as to try and make it all as fair as possible.



We hope to be able to contribute to the usual extra services in the run up to Christmas, although there will have to be changes to accommodate COVID restrictions. So, all being well, there will be an Advent Carol service at 6 pm on 29th November, a service of music and readings for Christmas at 6 pm on 20th December and Midnight Mass with a mass setting on Christmas Eve at 11.15 pm. As before, there will be a special choir for Midnight Mass and if anyone would like to sing in that choir, please let me know as soon as possible.

Paul Dickens



Earthquakes in Leighton Buzzard shake the town:

At a news conference, Prime Minister Mr Johnson assured the nation that the country has absolutely nothing to worry about with regards to the recent Leighton Buzzard earthquakes.

According to the Daily Mirror online: there is panic in LB, and people are demanding that something be done about all these earthquakes!

(Ed: I have a feeling they need to apply to a higher authority than Leighton-Linslade Town Council to get them stopped!)



(Image seen on Leighton Buzzard History, Pictures and Memories FB page.)

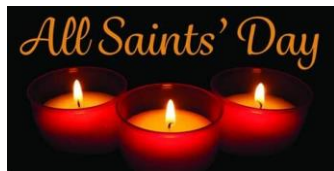
Calendar of events

1st November

Feast of All Saints: Services as usual including

All Age Communion All Saints 11.15am

Festal Evensong All Saints 5pm



2nd November

Commemoration of All Souls:

All Souls' Service, All Saints 7pm

4th November

Baptism Preparation Evening: All Saints 8pm

7th November

Winter Warmer Food & Craft Fayre:

All Saints Churchyard 11am –2pm.



8th November

Remembrance Sunday: Services as usual including

Remembrance Service All Saints 11am

29th November

Advent Sunday: Services as usual including

Advent Carol Service All Saints 6pm

(All subject to review of restrictions)



A poem by Cicely Herbert (after Brecht)

Seen on London Underground, reproduced here as a tribute for Eco Church:

Everything changes. We plant
trees for those born later
but what's happened has happened
and poisons poured into the seas
cannot be drained out again.

What's happened has happened
poisons poured into the seas
cannot be drained out again. But
everything changes. We plant
trees for those born later.

*When you go home, tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow, we gave our today*



*They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them.*





It is 80 years since the Battle of Britain, when Winston Churchill paid this tribute to the RAF: 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few'

Poppy Appeal 2020

Look out for the Poppy Appeal again this year, but not so much via street collections. Instead, the Royal British Legion will focus on contactless donations, as a safer way forward during the pandemic.

One such method will be 'point of sale donations'. This means that when you shop at your supermarket and reach the till or online, you may be invited to round up your total to the nearest pound to help the Poppy Appeal.

A spokesman for the Royal British Legion said: "The Poppy Appeal 2020 is very much still going ahead", but that "the safety and wellbeing of our volunteers, staff and members is paramount."

This means that collectors who fall into the vulnerable category have been advised "not to take part in activity on behalf of the Poppy Appeal that would expose them to any additional risks while coronavirus is still present."

And yet the need is still huge: "Members of the Armed Forces Community are suffering significant hardship as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak and we at the Royal British Legion will do everything we possibly can to support them."



A message from Bill Webb on behalf of All Saints Churchwardens

As the COVID restrictions continue to affect our daily lives, it was wonderful to see the return of the choir to All Saints on Sunday 4th October, about which I have no doubt Paul Dickens will be writing. It was on the same day that we three were sworn in as your Churchwardens by Mother Cate. This was another COVID innovation, as normally we would travel to the Archdeacon to be sworn en-masse. It was, however, lovely for this to be performed “at home” and we were touched by the lovely reception from the congregation in church. It was also good to be able to say a huge thank-you to Nick Clarke on his retirement after six years in the role.

The congregation in church on 4th October (and indeed every week) was, and is, smaller than that pre-COVID. This is something that we are all having to accept, but it has meant that we have lost our chance to worship together in greater numbers and, as importantly, socialise together afterwards with a cuppa. It has also impacted greatly on Mother Cate’s work outside of the church building. We are conscious that many people may be reluctant to come to church currently and would like to understand better some of the reasons for this. If you are one of those people not currently attending, please would you contact one of us, to let us know your reasons. If there is anything we can do, within the guidelines, to enable more people to feel that they can and want to attend, we would like to know. Also, if you have any other suggestions to help us all be more “church”, please speak up. Our phone numbers can be found on Page 2 of this magazine, or alternatively feel free to leave us a note in the Churchwardens tray outside the Head Verger’s office.

At the end of September, a gallant band attended the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. For those of you who have not previously attended this extravaganza, this is the time when we have the opportunity to elect your representatives to the Parochial Church Council and Deanery Synod, as well as formally electing the Churchwardens, and receiving reports from the Vicar and church groups. Additionally, we give an update on the church finances: our headline this year was that in 2019 we realised a small surplus of £4,500. For 2020, we originally budgeted for a small deficit of £1,000. However, COVID is hitting us, like many other concerns, quite badly. We currently estimate that we will now have a deficit in the region of £25,000. This is due to fewer weddings and other occasional services, but principally due to the enforced closure of the Spire Coffee Shop. This goes to show just how vital it is financially, as well as outreach. Now that it is back open, on a more restricted basis, please do come back, and tell your friends as well.

On the subject of finance, Jenny Huskisson is again running a raffle to be drawn on Saturday 7th November, with a first prize of £250 cash! If you don’t already have your tickets, please do contact Jenny. Good luck!

With all good wishes from Janet, Bill and John.

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210 565; Roger Spalding: 07451 877 501



It is a curious fact that no one perceives a widening gap until there is an abyss. Having had 3 or 4 earthquakes in recent weeks, the Ouzel Valley is becoming accustomed to seismic shifts, metaphorically akin to what is about to happen at St. Nicholas.

Nerissa became churchwarden here when Noah was a lad; and I have clocked up a fair few years myself. So change is not premature, but this year, we have both decided to retire, thus, I fear, shaking the ground more than a little, and creating that abyss. It is, therefore, a considerable relief to us both that 2 people have come forward to fill it.

In our early days, sometime in the mid-'90s, Canon Anthony Hulbert was rector at All Saints. The role of priest-in-charge of St. Nicholas was some sort of addendum to that. He was clearly overburdened, and so began a discussion about better ways to manage worship and pastoral care, and maintain a Christian presence here in the Ouzel Valley.

Many options were explored, and eventually (under the guiding hand of Canon Grant Fellows) the Ouzel Valley Team was born. During the intervening period, team rectors and vicars have come and gone; we have seen change of all sorts; and done our best to take on many of the challenges of a modern church – with the plethora of documents and regulations now required.

We have also tried, with mixed success, to do our bit to maintain this ancient building. Rev'd Jennie Cappleman oversaw some major repairs to the tower several years ago, but while the rest is still just about standing, there are considerable and increasing fabric repair needs. The floors are collapsing, the windows falling in, the bells once again unringable, and the porch heading south – literally sliding down the hill. One more earthquake might be the final straw!

Managing these repairs will offer many opportunities for improvement and innovation, with scope for vision in re-shaping how worship happens, who takes part in it, and where they are when they do. Having experienced 6 months of Zoom church, there may be appetite for, and purpose in, re-designing the shape of worship in more permanent ways.

Nerissa and I have not managed much innovation, nor much in the way of fulfilling the dreams of modernising the building or making it more comfortable and user-friendly. But that may turn out to be a Good Thing – because post-Covid, so much has changed, some of it perhaps for the better. A clean sheet and new ideas will be very healthy.

We could not have done anything at all without the support of the whole PCC, and especially Brenda Howard.

And we welcome Brian Speller and Roger Spalding to the role. We wish them joy and fulfilment. And look forward to the seismic shifts we know they will bring.



Winter Warmer

Food & Craft Fayre

7th November

All Saints Churchyard 11am –2pm.



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Church by 'zoom' - for beginners.

Like most people I have adapted the way I do some things over the past 8 months and have also had a go at some new things. I have done yoga, celebrated birthdays, caught up with friends, undergone training, attended meetings and a funeral all via zoom. So why not a church service?

Why not indeed?

I rarely attend regular church services so this really was something new. I have many excuses for my non-attendance but not many good reasons. So, I took the plunge and I would like to report my findings. The main disadvantage: I did not get to sit in our beautiful historic building. Instead I was in my living room, no stained glass, no flowers and, very significantly for me, no people. At the start there was a bit of general chatter and, unusual for me, I kept quiet. It was evident from the off that this was going to be a good way to spend an hour. Everyone was so cheerful and expectant.

The positives: no chilly walk to church. I got to sing in a room on my own - trust me, that is a good thing. I really concentrated on the readings because, having received what they were via email, I read them from the bible rather than watching the vicar or staring into space. I even took notes - is that allowed? I responded to phrases I was comfortable with and made no promises I could not keep. All in the comfort of my armchair.

I am not confirmed. I vaguely remember arguments at home about this and that confirmation classes interrupted my busy life as a young teenager. So, being alone in my front room meant I didn't have to endure that awkward moment when a small congregation notices you are the only one not taking communion.

At one point we all waved to each other on screen (nice touch) and at the end the camera was turned round and I got to see more friendly faces and the inside of the aforementioned lovely building which I have not been in for many months. I even drank a mug of tea during the service.

It was so good I may even do it again. Don't get me wrong, I would prefer to be there in person but at the moment I will not be doing that and 'church by zoom' seems a good second best. If you would like to give it a go, contact Rev'd Noel McGeeney on 01525 237633 or email saggart@yahoo.com

Back in March it seemed inconceivable that the regular 'Elevenses' coffee mornings would not be resumed by November but, as with so many other things, this will just have to wait a while longer. I am assured that Christmas has not been cancelled, details of celebrations will be in the December magazine.

[See page 5 for an Invitation to Communion]

Michelle Plummer

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Sandra Brewin 373644; Julia Haviland 850380



This photo was taken a week or two ago by Tina Thompson. It is the garden of Rose Cottage, Little Billington and was the home for many decades of Fred and Edith Foskett and their daughter Margaret. Fred and Edith have now died but Margaret and Dennis still live in the cottage. Through these wearisome months Margaret and Dennis's garden has lifted the spirits of many as they walked by, astonished at the brightness of the marigolds and dahlias. It has been a gift to the village, and we thank God for all the work that these two dedicated gardeners have put in to refresh thirsty souls.



We have had both joy and sorrow in Billington during the last month. The great joy has been the safe arrival of Rory to Chloe and David Gudgeon from Hill View Lane. Rory and Chloe are doing very well.

The sad news has been that Dina Pritchard's husband Roy from St Michael's Place died in hospital in September. Dina has been a faithful member of our congregation for several years and attended services if she wasn't visiting her family in Greece. Roy's funeral took place on 25th September.

On 19th September our MP Andrew Selous joined 21 village dwellers in undertaking a massive "Litter Pick" concentrating mainly on Slapton Road and Stanbridge Road. 20-30 bags of bottles, cans, nappies, McDonald's rubbish and other quite disgusting stuff were removed from verges, ditches and hedgerows. We wish we could report that the immaculate state has been maintained, but fear it won't be long before we need to set out again to clear the village of trash, mainly casually thrown from car and van windows.

We are continuing to have worship as best we can. Each Sunday since the beginning of September we have had a service of Morning Prayer at 11.15am led by either Rev Steve Marsh, Rev Steve Davies or Rev Don Brewin. These services have all step towards "normality" and have been appreciated by those who attend. We will wear masks and keep our two metres distance. Carl Moulding has kindly played the organ at the beginning and end (much appreciated).



Sandra Brewin

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwarden: Steve Nixon



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Refresh and renewal at CGS

Autumn has brought in more than just a change of weather at the Church of the Good Shepherd (CGS).

Services are now back at Greenleas School with the option for those not ready to return and those with younger children to stay at home and continue to join the service on Zoom.



For the first time in six months, those that attended the service in person, could enjoy live music, although not joining in must have had some squirming in their seats.

One of the pleasures of CGS is the live music and the sense of community as we all join in in our own way. This could be the children dancing (some of the bigger kids join in too...), holding hands aloft or a discreet little foot tap. Members of the band recently recorded Amazing Grace together which was such good quality it would not have been out of place among the professional worship videos found on YouTube. This was a treat as Zoom sound quality often does not do the band justice.

Our church also has a new logo (see above), moving away from the sheep image and embracing what CGS represents within our church and the wider community it serves. We hope that it symbolises a bright and bold future for us all. A community standing together and united in God's image. The church's website (goodshepherdsandhills.org.uk) has also had a revamp.



This month saw the church's Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) where despite the challenges of what 2020 has brought, CGS is still a forward looking and positive church with ambitions for the future.

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, Mother Cate discusses

Ignatian Prayer



St Ignatius of Loyola was a 16th century soldier who became a mystic. He founded a Roman Catholic religious order called the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits.

“The way of Ignatius is about finding freedom: the freedom to become the person you’re meant to be, to love and accept love, to make good decisions, and to experience the beauty of creation and the mystery of God’s love.” [James Martin SJ, *The Jesuit Guide to (almost) Everything.*]

Ignatian spirituality offers us a pragmatic vision of life and work and love. One of the well know phrases that typifies it is “Finding God in all things” because it takes a holistic approach seeing every aspect of our lives and the world around us as part of our relationship with God. There is no separation between the different areas of our lives. God is seen as equally present in all of them and we need to bring all that we are to our relationship with God.

The traditions of prayer that come out of monastic houses tend to have a fixed pattern that was part of the structure of the days and nights. Because the Jesuits began as an order that went out into the world, and are still well known for integrating into all sorts of situations, Ignatian prayer is very adaptable.

One of the great legacies of Ignatius Loyola is the Spiritual Exercises, the setting aside of 30 days to grow in relationship with God. These are usually done in a religious community, but there are also forms that have been developed for use in daily life. Early on in the Exercises, Ignatius sets out what is usually called “The Examen”, and it is this form of prayer that I want to share with you.

There are lots of different version of the examen, below is the version from jesuitresource.org but the website ignatianspirituality.com also has lots of resources and is a bit easier to navigate.

The Examen: A Daily Prayer

St. Ignatius Loyola's examen is an opportunity for peaceful daily reflective prayer. It invites us to find the movement of God in all the people and events of our day. The examen is simply a set of introspective prompts for you to follow or adapt to your own character and spirit.

Begin with a pause and a slow, deep breath or two; become aware that you are in the presence of the Holy.

Thanksgiving:

What am I especially grateful for in the past day? The gift of another day...

The love and support I have received...

The courage I have mustered...

An event that took place today...

Petition:

I am about to review my day;

I ask for the light to know God and to know myself as God sees me.

Review:

Where have I felt true joy today? What has troubled me today?

What has challenged me today? Where and when did I pause today?

Have I noticed God's presence in any of this?

Response:

In light of my review, what is my response to the God of my life?

A Look Ahead:

As I look ahead, what comes to mind? With what spirit do I want to enter tomorrow?

If you want to adapt the examen to make it even simpler, you can ask yourself two key questions: *When has God been close to me today?*

This may be a moment of beauty or peace, the chance to do something I love, or which brings benefit to others, or a moment where someone else has shown God's love to me.

When have I felt that God was far away?

This might be something that I feel sorry for or regret, it may be an awareness of the pain of the world, or the suffering of others.

Then, as you hold these before God in prayer, ask for God's help to live out of those moments when God has been close.

Whatever version you use, the basic steps are very similar and it normally takes about 15 minutes. It is also important to keep a moment of transition before and after your prayer if you can, so that you can be focused and make a conscious effort to savour your time of reflection with God. If you are praying at home, you may want to make a regular space or choose a particular seat that you always use when you pray to help you keep these moments special.

Some people pray the examen once a day, others twice, usually at lunch time and in the evening. What so many people find beneficial is that it reminds us that God is present with us all the time and in everything that we do. We can confidently expect to see God at work both in the world and in our lives. This is a form of prayer that always begins with gratitude. You recognise that no matter what else has happened there will have been moments of grace and of God's presence. Sometimes these are such small moments that it is easy to let them blend into the fabric of life, but if we take time to consciously notice and give thanks for them it can help to give us much needed perspective in life. We begin and end our prayer with thankfulness that God has been present in the day that we are reflecting on and will be with us in the day that lies ahead.

Ignatian prayer is rooted in discerning God's presence in every part of our lives. We need to become aware of what God is doing by paying attention to our thoughts, feelings and responses, as well as looking for God in the world around us. In a time when we are all dealing with change and uncertainty, it is a really helpful and practical way to remind ourselves of God's enduring presence and God's great love for us.

Mother Cate

Eco Church Conference Success



On 10th October, All Saints ‘hosted’ an Eco Church Conference on behalf of the Diocese of St Albans and A Rocha UK. The conference was originally meant to be a regional event at All Saints Church but due to Covid it became an on-line event and was ‘attended’ by people from across the UK and even a few from overseas. The conference was fully booked at 300 but by streaming various sessions on Facebook we reached over 7000 people! We also raised over £2000 for A Rocha UK.

The aim of the conference was to enable churches of all denominations to share ideas about becoming more eco-friendly and to learn about the Eco Church programme. Sessions and webinars covered topics as wide-ranging as Climate Change and Social Justice; Trees in your Churchyard; Practical Architectural Issues and Building Effective Relationships with your MP. All the sessions were recorded and are available on the conference facebook page.

In her closing remarks, Rachel Johnston, the Diocesan Environmental Officer said: “It has been particularly good to celebrate with All Saints’ Church ... particularly impressive has been the development of positive links ... as part of the Leighton Linslade Christian Ecology Group and with the local community through the Leighton Linslade Low Carbon Town initiative.”

The Bishop of Salisbury, Rt. Rev’d Nicholas Holtam, lead Bishop on the environment, also sent his congratulations saying: “I am thrilled to hear how well the Eco Church Diocesan Conference went. It would be great to think that what you have done might be a model for others.”

An Award for All Saints

Just before the conference we heard that All Saints had been granted our Bronze Eco Church Award. Many thanks to all those who have helped the Eco Church Team enabling us to qualify for this award. We are now starting to think about Silver. The first step for this is to calculate the Carbon Footprint of the church – a much more detailed audit that will highlight the areas where we can further cut carbon emissions.

We also need to encourage everyone as individuals to complete their own Carbon Footprint. We recommend this online one <https://footprint.worldwildlife.org.uk>.

Only one other church in Leighton Buzzard has Bronze – Trinity Methodist Church – so it is a race with them to see who can reach Silver first!

Good News from the Diocesan Synod

The Diocesan Synod on 17th October voted overwhelmingly for St Albans to become an ‘Eco Diocese’, and also to send a motion to General Synod to request all other Dioceses not yet enrolled on this scheme to become Eco Dioceses. The target is for St Albans to reach the Bronze level by 2022.

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