

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

April 2022

70p



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& the gardening team at All Saints
create wildlife havens

PLUS

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The 2 year Lent:

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Fr. Bernard encounters God in the Resurrection

Exciting times at CoGS & news from the villages

All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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The Threshold between Lent and Easter

By Rev'd Kirsty Borthwick



Over the course of this month we will once again cross the threshold between Lent and Easter, as we conclude our annual liturgical journey to the city gates of Jerusalem, to the upper room, to the garden, to the cross, to the grave, and then on into the promise of new life that we are given in Jesus' resurrection.

This year I want to encourage you to take time to pay special attention to one moment on that journey. To pause on one particular threshold. One we often downplay or outright ignore. Holy Saturday.

Holy Saturday sits between the horrors of the cross on Good Friday and the abundant joy of the resurrection on Easter Sunday (or Easter Eve for those of us marking the vigil on Saturday night!). In many ways it's an empty day. We stop and recognise that Jesus is dead. We sit with the disciples in their shock and despair. There's no Eucharist and morning and evening prayer are stripped back to almost nothing. On Holy Saturday we are silenced by the horror of it all.

And yet for many of us Holy Saturday will be very busy! Liturgies need rehearsing, the wood for Easter fires prepared, our churches need cleaning and the flowers need arranging. If you're looking for silent space to contemplate Jesus' death on Holy Saturday, our buildings might not be the obvious place!

But that hustle and bustle, as our communities work to prepare for Easter, is a beautiful echo of Jesus' work on Holy Saturday. "He descended into hell" we proclaim in the Apostles' Creed. And there's a long tradition of describing that descent into hell as an act of liberation. On Holy Saturday, whilst the disciples are stunned to silence on earth, in hell Jesus is hard at work, hustling and bustling as he wins his victory over the powers of death and throws the gates of hell open.



St John Chrysostom's famous 4/5th century Easter Sermon includes these words:

Hell took a body, and discovered God.

It took earth, and encountered Heaven.

It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see.

O death, where is thy sting?

O Hell, where is thy victory?

In a world that's torn and tired and filled with violence and despair, perhaps there's truth and hope to be found this year in contemplating Holy Saturday; in striving to see Jesus at work even as he lies dead in a tomb and to join our hustle and bustle in preparation for Easter with his, as he throws open the gates of hell, and carries us over the threshold into the resurrection life.

Wishing you a joyful and hope-filled Easter when it comes!

Mother Kirsty

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 Sundays: All Age Service

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)

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

Morning Prayer: St. Hugh's Chapel

9.00am Tuesday – 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 Holy Communion (in church & via Zoom)

1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday - Saturday

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

11.15am Holy Communion

Good Shepherd, Astral Park Sports & Community Centre, Johnson Drive, Sandhills, LU7 4AY:

Sundays at 9.45am:

1st Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2nd Sunday: 'In the Community', at Astral Park

3rd Sunday: Family Service

4th Sunday: Bring and share breakfast and Holy Communion

Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am

Sunday Saints: for age 3+ year olds, meets during 9.30am Sunday service at All Saints.

All Saints Toddler Time: All Saints every Wednesday during term time, at 9.30am & at 1.30pm. £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.**

Leighton Young Singers Club: for children in Years 2-6, meets on Fridays at 6.30 - 7.30pm.

Bereavement Café: a support group offering friendship and understanding.

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

Choir Practice: Friday evenings, 6.45 trebles; 7.30 adults.

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

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday & Saturday 10am-2pm; Friday 10am-12noon (drinks & cakes only)

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup and some diary dates:

All Saints Holiday Club 15th - 19th August – “JUNGLE FEVER “

Application forms available after Easter.

*** **

3rd April Passion Sunday

Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm

*** **



6th April

Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm.

Tickets £5.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



Worth a smile

Dem Bones, dem bones

It has been said that the body of any organisation is made up of four types of bones....

- There are the Wishbones – who spend their time wishing someone else would do something about the problem under discussion....
- There are the Jawbones – who spend their time talking about the problem.
- There are the Knucklebones – who spend their time knocking everything that everyone has already done or would like to do.
- Finally, there are the Backbones who quietly come along, get under the load, and carry it!

Which type of bone are you?



Why was the Easter bunny upset?

He was having a bad hare day.



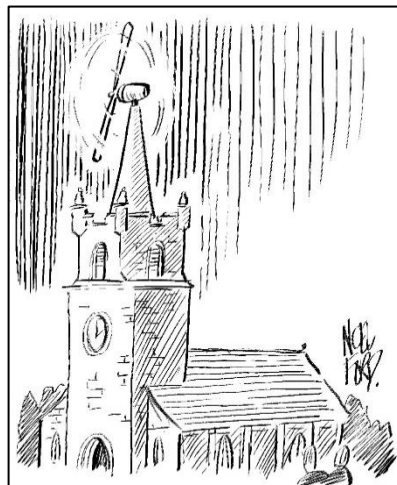
What is Easter Bunny's favourite kind of music?

Hip-hop, of course!



What do you call a rabbit that can tell a good joke?

A funny bunny.



"It's not as picturesque as the old steeple but it's saving a fortune in electricity bills!"

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, February:

12: James Haugh & Samantha Haines at All Saints

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

Holy Baptism, February:

No Baptisms

R.I.P. February:

1: Glenys Johnston at All Saints; 8: Monica Bacon at Bierton; 15: Phyllis Short at All Saints; 16: Peter Birchall at All Saints, Sheila Birchall at All Saints, John Toy at Bierton; 22: Colin Major at St. Leonard's

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

Years Mind, April:

1: Frederick Saunders, Roy Gibbons; 2: Betty Ransom; 3: Isabella Campbell McKee Bell, Doris Ranger, Andrew Tooth; 5: Albert Woolhead, Charles Waples, Robin Boyce; 6: Ethel Higgs, Alison Austin; 7: Peter Archer; 8: William Stebbings, Elsie Hyde; 10: Florence Hyde; 11: (Sam) Henry George Dixon, Susan Moule, Graham Joynes; 12: Marjorie Bester; 13: Hugh Frank Delafield; 14: Rosemary Hodey; 15: Stephen Royle; 17: Jean Rumbelow; 19: Mal Royle, Edith Foskett; 20: Burt Edgoose, Katie Palmer, Eddie Pool, Jamie Crossan; 21: John Macfarlane; 22: Michael Gardner, Pamela Webb; 23: Norman Warburton; 24: Penny Edwards; 26: Kathleen Royston; 27: David Guess, Doris Hyde, Zoe Walker; 28: Travers William (Bill) Ellison; 29: Derek Windle



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

LIVE PROFESSIONAL CONCERTS

In St Barnabas Church, LU7 2NR 7.30pm

Saturday 30th April 2022

Blackweir Brass Quintet

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Pulford VA Lower School
Head Teacher: Mr Dave Heather
Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick
Tel: 01525 372188
Website: www.pulfordschool.org

A church school for
a whole community



“Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with clashing cymbals” Psalm 150 v5

We definitely heard the cymbals on Thursday 10th March when it was our privilege to welcome Jeff Rich, the drummer from Status Quo, into Pulford. He gave a first class percussion workshop to Years 1-4 which was thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils (and the staff!). Jeff brought a plethora of percussion instruments for the children to try; not only to hear the different sounds but to use as they listened to a beat, bringing them all together as a huge 'rock band' at the finale. It was fantastic to be able to offer these curriculum enrichment projects once again.

Whilst we realise that we are so blessed here, we are also very mindful of those families abroad who have lost their homes in the current crisis. We launched a 'Children helping Children' appeal as we thought about how Pulford School and their families could help refugee children. You will see from the photos we were able to collect over 200 Easter eggs, as well as colouring books, pens and pencils. We are grateful to the local team who have now collected the donated items and are organising their distribution to families who have had to move swiftly and leave their homes. Thank you to those of you who also supported the appeal. We pray that these donations will bring some joy to the children that receive them.

Alison Quick





The Gentleman Gardener

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Eileen M. Naples

BSc., AMCST
Ryecroft, Plantation Road, Leighton
Buzzard, LU7 3HT

01525 377384, or 07774 901293
email: eileennaples50@outlook.com

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web.co.uk/petandgarden*

On a musical note.....



The two-year Lent

It seems that the Lent of 2020 has lasted for over 2 years, and this will be our first full Lent, Holy Week and Easter for 3 years. Of course we adapted and found new ways to commemorate Lent and to celebrate Easter, but as a choir we have not been able to fully contribute to what is the busiest time of the year in the church choir calendar. The 'virtual choir' recordings allowed us to continue to sing and to play our part in the Easter liturgy in a more constrained way, and the online streaming arguably allowed even more people to share our Holy Week services. In fact, I think last year's Maundy Thursday service was actually enhanced by the atmospheric video production. However, we are looking forward to being able to dust off our Holy Week repertoire this year and play a full part in the services!

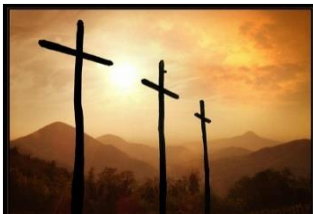
The season of Lent offers us the opportunity for reflection, penitence, self-denial, and preparation for Easter. As a result, the music during Lent is generally more reflective and contemplative in tone, with more focus on plainsong and unaccompanied singing. We don't sing the Gloria during the Eucharist as it celebrates the coming of the Lord, so instead we save our pent-up Glorias for one triumphant celebration on Easter Eve!

The Lenten music started on Ash Wednesday with Allegri's *Miserere* "Have mercy on me, O God", when the iconic top-Cs sung by the treble soloist have rarely sounded better. As the season turns towards Holy Week, the tone of the music intensifies as we anticipate the story of Christ's suffering and death. On Palm Sunday we follow Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem as we process through the High Street trying valiantly to sing the hymn "Ride, Ride on in Majesty" in time!

On Maundy Thursday we remember Jesus sharing the Last Supper with his disciples, ending in candlelight in the south transept while the sanctuary is stripped. The senior choristers stop the younger ones from being too startled as the bible is slammed shut, and the choir departs in darkness. On Good Friday the music is unaccompanied as we sing the Reproaches, the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and plainsong hymns during the three hours that Christ is in the cross. The Easter Vigil is the first service of Easter and begins with the symbolic expectant waiting for the resurrection of Jesus. The choir remember this for the ghostly shadows on the walls of the church as the clergy and servers process outside the windows in candlelight to the west door! As the church is illuminated the choir pick up Lindsay's strategically placed bells and tambourines to compete with the organ in a cacophony of noise as we celebrate Jesus's resurrection. We then finally celebrate Christ's resurrection with a joyful sung Eucharist on Easter Day.

We have been waiting 3 years for this Holy Week, so it is going to be extra special!

Alan Perrott



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER 2022

Palm Sunday 10th April

- 8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Procession from the Market Cross
followed by Sung Eucharist with a dramatic reading of the Gospel
6.00pm Stations of the Cross

Monday 11th April, Tuesday 12th April & Wednesday 13th April

- 8.00pm Holy Communion
with hymns and addresses by Bishop Richard

Maundy Thursday 14th April

- 10.00am Holy Communion
7.30pm Sung Eucharist and ceremony of foot-washing
followed by Watch of Prayer until midnight

Good Friday 15th April

- 12.00 noon A time for reflection with music and readings
12.45 - 1.50pm Preaching of The Passion – Bishop Richard
2.00 - 3.00pm The Good Friday Liturgy

Holy Saturday 16th April

- 9.00am A quiet service of reflection
9.00pm Easter Eve Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter
followed by cheese & wine

Easter Day 17th April

- 8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am Parish Eucharist for Easter Day
11.30am Messy Mass for Easter Day
6.00pm Festal Evensong

Christian Aid works with 700 local organisations in around 50 countries throughout the world. They help poor communities to deal with climate change, floods, droughts, famine and natural disasters. They help with education on health and sanitation in rural communities, and for more than 70 years, have provided humanitarian relief & long-term development support for poor communities worldwide, while highlighting suffering, tackling injustice and championing people's rights.

The impact of Covid-19 on the poorest countries in the world has been disastrous and it only makes their situation even more in need of our help.

This year Christian Aid will focus on the effect of drought which numerous countries around the world face. It recognises that droughts have become more intense and more common because of the changing climate. The impact on the world population is great, as it means that millions of people around the world struggle to get the food and water that they need. Your gifts could help to buy water taps for a village and provide water for a community garden.

How can you help?

There are many ways in which you can raise money towards this year's appeal.

Here are just a few ideas:

- 1. Hold a coffee morning or afternoon tea for friends and family*
- 2. Sponsored walk or cycle ride*
- 3. Bake for Christian Aid and invite everyone to buy your cakes*
- 4. Dine for Christian Aid. Invite family and friends to dine with you*

There will be the usual red Christian Aid envelopes in Church throughout the Christian Aid week so that you can put your donation directly into the envelope.



This is Jessica – read her story on the Christian Aid website:

Pauline Lyon has posters and sponsorship forms for all fundraising events.

Please contact her if you would like one:

01525 234139 or 07968 746618

Email: paulinelyon@idnetfreemail.co.uk

***Every gift. Every action. Every prayer.
Every one of us can help to change lives***

Around the Ouzel Valley Team

Eight churches, each special in their own way, but all being Christian witness to the whole community of Leighton Linlade & the villages of the Ouzel Valley

Over the last few years a group of willing (!) and able (relatively!) volunteers have been making real progress on keeping the St Michael's churchyard neat and tidy. It started with a few graves which were so overgrown that you couldn't see either the grave bed or the headstone for ivy, dandelions and moss.



By working together (at an acceptable social distancing of course), we started to reveal a row of graves beneath the large yew tree at the West end of the church. These all belonged to a family, no longer represented in the village, with grandparents, parents and even an infant daughter, all buried in a row. Once uncovered, some bark chippings were added to suppress the weeds, and here is what it looks like now!



The wild flower meadow in the churchyard where in the summer, we have our plant sale (May 14, 10.30am to 12.30pm); and delicious cream teas (July 24 at 3.00pm);



and our man keeping watch.

This month, St. Michael's, Eggington

*Triumphs in the churchyard,
including a community contribution
to creating a haven for wildlife.*



Left:

During July/August 2020, the crack in the vestry wall, which was caused by subsidence, was repaired by having the wall on the north side underpinned. Also the inside walls had to be replastered and the exterior walls repointed.

Below:

Spring crocus bulbs growing around the trees in the churchyard. The Brownies and Guides have built bug hotels and there is also a hedgehog hotel.



Another area of renewal is our church noticeboard at the gates at the East entrance. The frame has been cleaned and re-stained. We are now just waiting for the door which goes over the notices to be replaced.



Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwarden:

Steve Nixon



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

March's moves, mission and mochas

March has truly been a month of new beginnings for the Church of the Good Shepherd (CoGS). We moved to our new home at Astral Park, the advert for the Pioneer Missioner role went out and with great excitement we welcomed a new coffee machine!



We moved to Astral Park Sports and Community Centre, half a mile from our previous home in Greenleas School on the Sandhills estate. It was encouraging to see that our church can be picked up and placed somewhere else but still maintain that constant, warm and welcoming community feel. Visitors to outdoor café could, for the first time, hear the music from our service flowing through the open doors.

It was fitting that we commissioned Frank and Katharine Reedy and Stuart Blofeld in their ministries as Pioneer Enablers at the service. Rev'd Steve Marsh said: "Their collective Pioneering has been central in our transition to a missional community at Astral Park".

In keeping with the mission theme, the job advert went out recently for the Pioneer Missioner role. This role will be based at CoGS and marks our next step in developing missional outreach to the new housing estates that are being built in our town. We are looking for someone who is lay or ordained, who can also help develop youth and school initiatives. The first year of the role will include assessing the suitability of a double-decker bus as a mobile base for missional outreach work and identifying community needs. The job is being advertised on www.premierjobsearch.co.uk and the closing date is 29th April.

As our free café grows in popularity at Astral Park, with an array of gifted snacks, hot drinks and even liquid refreshment for dogs, we have invested in a 15 litre coffee percolator. At our first service at Astral Park, we served nearly 100 drinks, the majority going to football spectators using the park. Many café visitors offer to make a donation for their drink and so we started a collection for the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal.

Jo Bellamy

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565;

Roger Spalding: 07451 877501



As the clocks have now gone back and we have now more light during the day, we look forward to being able to do the things we haven't wanted to do, or feel that we were unable to do.

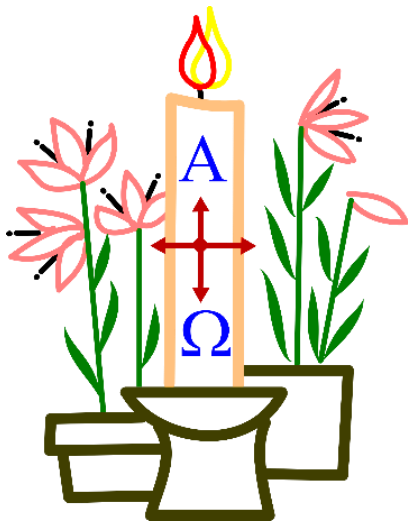
The season of winter has now moved into spring, and the flowers are beginning to show new growth from the ground. Do we feel that we need to have new growth in our thoughts, prayers and actions?

Coming out of the pandemic (what freedom!) is great, but it can make us feel a little anxious, and I can't help but wonder how the disciples felt, when Jesus was being held and punished and thinking was it their turn next? But like them we also must walk in the light of Christ.

Candles are lit for many occasions, Christmas, Candle Mass, Valentine's Day, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Sunday Services and many more occasions. Light is essential for growth and health of mind and spirit.

When it comes to Easter we light our Easter candle to start a new year in the Christian calendar. We renew our baptism and confirmation vows.

In May, Brian and I will renew our wedding vows to each other and God, in our beloved church here on the hillside.



The verses from "Lord the light of your love is shining" speak for themselves:

*Lord the light of your love is shining,
In the midst of the darkness, shining,
Jesus, Light of the World, shine upon us,
Set us free by the truth you now bring us,
Shine on me, shine on me.*

Like the disciples, our church in Hockliffe are proud and joyful and are happy to "shout for joy".
Happy Easter
Carol Speller.

[Many many congratulations to Carol and Brian as they celebrate this quite fabulous landmark anniversary. Ed.]

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Sandra Brewin 373644;

Julia Haviland 850380



As bombs, shells and missiles cause devastation in Eastern Europe and terrified women and children flee to safety in western countries and untrained men and boys take up unfamiliar arms to defend their country, we look out at our village in astonishment. The sun shines, the birds loudly rejoice, the flowers bloom radiantly and all appears well with the world. It is spring. How can things be so radically different for people (and animals) just because of the place one happens to be born?

Here in Billington we have much to be thankful for. Although several people have suffered from Covid 19 all have recovered and are back to normal life. Children in the village and beyond are beginning to make use of the play equipment and some little ones have been seen using the gravelled path as a cycling track. Thanks to the careful stewardship of the chairman of the Village Hall David Thompson and the efforts of Mike Lennard procuring a grant, we have been able to install an accessible toilet. This has been skilfully built by Mike Reilly who lives in the village. Strangely the new addition has made the hall look more spacious inside; a very inviting venue to hold a party or an event.

Speaking of events, before this magazine goes to print Deborah Earnshaw is organising a coffee morning on Saturday 19th March in aid of the Florence Nightingale hospice to be held in the village hall. She is also taking part in a four day sponsored walk for the same cause. It is not too late to contribute to this if you would like to. Deborah can be contacted on 01525 215973.



Another event which everyone is looking forward to is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. We pray that she will remain well until, and well after, that time. In Billington, we will be celebrating by holding a Bring and Share Lunch on Sunday 5th June in the Village Hall. More details will be available nearer the



time but this will be a shared party for the whole village, with food, drinks and games and competitions for children. The Parish Council, the Church and the Village Hall are all combining to make this a memorable day for everyone.

Sandra Brewin

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634

Paul Brown 751861



This report is very brief as we have the centre spread this month so there is no point in me telling you how wonderful the churchyard looks when you can see the pictures yourselves. An enormous amount of work has been done by the monthly working party and there is still much to do. Unfortunately, we are having to have at least one diseased tree cut down due to ash dieback.

It seems that at last we are getting back to a normal social life. Eggington folk love getting together and quite a few new families have moved into the village over the last 2 years. We want to meet them socially and show them what a friendly place Eggington is.

When we moved here in 1991 a lovely lady called Guinevere Calder gave us a book she had written about Eggington. It told its history and the history of many of the houses, the shops, post office and of course the school. I wonder if there are any copies around or if we could get it republished. Perhaps some other long-term villager would update it.

But I have dates for you...

We are very pleased to tell you that Michelle is having her first 'post-Covid' coffee morning on Wednesday 6th April 11am at the church, and it will be the first Wednesday of the month thereafter.

Easter dates:

Good Friday service: 2pm on 15th April.

Easter Day service: Sunday 17th April at 9.30am.



Future dates for the diary

4th May: **Coffee Morning:**

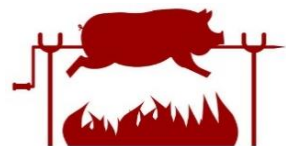
14th May: **Plant Sale** in the churchyard from 10.30-12.30.

We do not yet have a date for our Cream Teas.

I believe the Parish Council is organising a Jubilee celebration in June.



More great news! There is a Hog Roast and fun day being planned by Susie and the SMILE committee for 3rd September at Eggington House. This is always such an enjoyable event. Please put it in your diaries,



The weather is at last brightening up and spring is here.
Happy gardening! Best wishes,

Angela Dyer



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Gwenda Burley

RIP



Gwenda Burley was a devout Christian, a faithful member of the congregation and a regular attender at the 8am service each Sunday. She was a bell ringer for over 40 years and enjoyed ringing bells in churches throughout the diocese.

Fully integrated into the life of the parish, one of the many things that Gwenda was involved with was organising and running the white elephant stall with her late husband David. They did this for many years and their garage was always full of stuff for the next year's fête, so there was no room for the car!

She also ran the bereavement group and organised the bereavement visits throughout the parish. She went on most of the parish pilgrimages with her sister Mary, visiting the holy sites in Israel & Italy and more.

Gwenda devoted her life to her family and was immensely proud of her 3 children and her 7 grandchildren. As a health visitor she visited and supported many families in the Leighton-Linslade area and was well known for her compassion and her practical help. She will be greatly missed by her family and friends.



On Sunday, 6 February 2022 in 48m

Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire

All Saints

Tenor: 11-0-5 in G#

1320 Surprise Minor (2m)

720 London, 600 Cambridge

- 1 Lizzie Pawley
- 2 Rosalind J Keech
- 3 Barry R Eglesfield
- 4 Bob Tregillus
- 5 Jonathan Pawley (C)
- 6 Ryan S Noble

*Both rung by her friends
in thanksgiving for the life of*

Gwenda Burley,

long-time ringer at Leighton Buzzard

Bedfordshire Association

On Sunday, 6 March 2022

Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire

All Saints

Tenor: 35-1-14 in c#

1259 Grandsire Caters

- 1 Margaret Birtles
- 2 Jenni Mountford
- 3 Samantha L Brett
- 4 Lyndsey B Brett
- 5 Angela Blackburn
- 6 Robert Tregillus
- 7 Nicholas H Brett
- 8 Barry R Eglesfield
- 9 Andrew M Keech (C)
- 10 Alan J Marchbank



... *The Resurrection* by Rev'd Dr Bernard Minton

*A series exploring some of the ways
we encounter God in the world and in our lives.*

The resurrection is the cornerstone of Christianity: it is the capstone around which everything else fits. Lots of Christian doctrines or truths are important: the Incarnation; the Last Supper and Crucifixion; the Sacraments; the Ascension; Pentecost. But all of them either lead up to, or flow out from, the central truth of Christian belief: the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We are familiar with the story and it is central to our faith so it is easy for us to forget that the Resurrection was *completely* unexpected, even by those closest to Jesus. They were not looking for anything like this triumph through defeat: this love bursting out from the grave. For them – as for us – the Resurrection forces us to understand *everything* differently. God's triumph does not fit into any human pattern.

The Resurrection is not like anything else, because it is not simply the re-animation of a corpse: *that*, we could understand more easily. The encounters with the risen Jesus illustrate the confusion and mystery of the Resurrection itself: so does the fact, as many have pointed out, that the Gospels tell us nothing about what happened in the tomb. Jesus' body is buried, and at that point He is definitely dead. Days later, the women come to properly anoint His corpse, and find that it has gone! But there is no story that tells us *how*: just accounts of the ensuing consequences, when a sometimes-unrecognisable Jesus eats breakfast, and walks through walls!

These consequences are integral to the Resurrection, because resurrection is not something that only happens to Jesus. The Resurrection is just as much what happens to those who love Him when they meet Him so unexpectedly. Frightened cowering fishermen and astonished ignored women suddenly can't be daunted, not even by the High Priest or Roman officials. The Resurrection is not just a past event; something that can be consigned to a specific moment of history. *The Resurrection is what happens when we ourselves experience the risen Jesus.* The Resurrection is not really a belief that we hold about past events; it is above all else an experience and an encounter for us, just as for the very first disciples. (I sometimes wonder whether one of the problems with contemporary Christianity is that we have forgotten that the Resurrection is an experience God invites us all to share here and now. We have ceased to expect it!)

What is it, then, to experience resurrection? What does it mean to encounter God in this way?

It means that for a moment, fleetingly, we experience the fullness of life that God intends and promises to everything that He has made. This is what the first disciples felt when they realised they were meeting a reborn Jesus. Like them, we can experience a sense of being overwhelmed by an impossible waterfall of joy and love that seems about to burst our heart from the inside. We can't manufacture this encounter for ourselves. We can't *earn* it. We can make it more likely by intentionally putting ourselves into the presence of God as often as we can, but in fact this experience of resurrection need not be obviously religious at all! It can happen when we are caught up in music or art; swept up in the euphoria of a rejoicing crowd; when we see our new-born child; or hear our beloved say, 'I love you too'. The Holy Spirit is active inside *and outside* our religious practices!

All of these different experiences are encounters with God's Resurrection: they are tentative foretastes of what we mean when we talk about 'the resurrection of the body'. In all of these encounters, we feel for a moment that we are becoming ever more fully that integral whole part of Creation that we are each called to be.

C S Lewis conjures up a number of metaphors that I have found helpful for imagining this resurrection experience. One character swims up a waterfall, the water cascading in rainbow droplets around him. In another book, the full reality of creation made perfect compared with the shadows we see around us now, is as though blades of grass were heavy as lead or sharp as



diamond: everything is more *real*, somehow, and *fuller*. It is as though, Lewis says, we were at last able to 'get inside' the dawn, and experience it from the inside, and not just as observers. The cry of those in heaven, for Lewis, is 'further up and deeper in'.

Resurrection is always *new*: there is always a deeper current in which to swim. It is always leading on to 'that which is to come'.

So I will finish this thought by suggesting that one of the mistakes we make about eternity is imagining it as changeless and unvarying. *God* is unchanging, because He is perfect. He is already perfectly beautiful, and wonderful, and loving, in His Triune self: He always has been. But *we* are not! When we experience resurrection, we are drawn ever more deeply into love and into mystery, in an experience of new life that is continually enlarging us and making us ever more lovely and loving and fulfilled. To encounter God in resurrection is to be continually drawn further up and deeper in to the endless mystery of who we are truly and lovingly meant to be together.

Bernard Minton

***The Gardening Team:
Planning, and planting for the future,
working in the present, and preserving the past.***



The churchyard has woken from hibernation with a glorious display of spring flowers. Whatever the season though there is always plenty for the gardening team to do on their Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

The winter was for mending and tidying, wood-treating the shed, dealing with fallen trees and old Christmas trees, gritting paths and removing ivy.

Now that spring has sprung, we'll be mowing, weeding the French drains (the gravelly bits round the church) planting native and woodland flowers and lots more besides.

Please do come and see. You might want to follow the new 'tree trail' leaflet; sadly we lost one of the redwoods in the recent storms, but there are still plenty of magnificent trees for you to identify. Perhaps you built one of our bird boxes at Holiday Club; the blue tits are putting them to good use, and birds of all sizes - from tiny goldcrests to "Phil" the pheasant - visit regularly for food.

There are two new seats, made from stone uncovered from the brambles, for people who want to sit somewhere quiet and peaceful, and we've removed the ivy which was damaging some of the ancient gravestones, so you could wander round and read the inscriptions.

The gardening team is very conscious of All Saints' 'eco-church' status and we're composting and wood-chipping instead of having bonfires and have taken expert advice on the timetable for mowing and managing the areas of meadow-grass. You can see our gardening calendar on our new noticeboard fixed to the shed.

In short, we are working hard to strike a sometimes-difficult balance between keeping areas appropriately tidy for the Church and encouraging biodiversity, preventing the graves from being choked with ivy and alkanet (and removing cover for rough-sleepers), whilst trying to avoid a municipal and over-managed look.

Here in the churchyard you can find a space for quiet contemplation, watch wildlife, take in the names and dedications on the historic headstones or join in with some of All Saints' many outdoor events. Whatever your reason for visiting the churchyard, you are most welcome.

Kath Mowbray on behalf of the Gardening Team



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