

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

February 2023

70p

Inside:

Fr. Bernard introduces a new series on **Elements of Worship:** What we do and why we do it

Another new series "**Focus on**" describes the many groups which sustain the Christian community in the Ouzel Valley Team

An organ recital by Organ Scholar, Sam Kemp

Plus

The Falling of the Dusk – suggested reading for Lent

News from the villages and CoGS

And finally:
Sleepers Wake
Canon John challenges us to get serious about climate change



All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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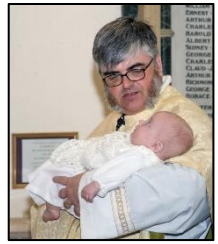
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Introducing a series of articles on worship:

What we do and why do we do it?

By Rev'd Dr. Bernard Minton



This month's clergy letter has the job of introducing a series of articles over the coming year about worship: what we do, and why we do it. The particular focus will be on the Eucharist or Communion Service, but some other aspects will also be addressed.

Some of you will have heard me mention the Jewish aphorism that if the Sabbath were ever kept completely perfectly, with no transgressions at all, it would simply never end: the Messianic Age would have arrived. I suggest that a Christian version of that aphorism would be that if Eucharistic worship were ever conducted perfectly by the whole world all at once, then in the same way the new Kingdom would dawn. This is because both the Sabbath and worship have God as their focus, and are ways of trying to reorder our lives and our senses to focus on Him.

Worship comes from the Old English word 'worth-ship', meaning 'giving honour and praise to someone'. For us, of course, it means giving honour and worth to God, who is above all others worthy of our praise and adoration. When we worship, we assemble together to give God His due honour. We come together for a service: and a service, of course, is something a servant (us) does for their master (God).

As well as the words 'worship' and 'service', we also often refer to 'the liturgy'. Liturgy is a Greek word meaning 'a work done by someone for the general good'. When we come together to worship, we are cooperating together to perform that task for which we were created: to act as priests on behalf of all creation. That is the service we are called to perform.

Eastern Orthodox Christians talk of 'the Divine Liturgy'. This is another way of suggesting that worship prefigures the new Kingdom. When we worship here on earth, we are not just performing a service in the 'here and now', in this moment. Rather, we are sharing in an action also performed in heaven, where the angels and the redeemed also worship God, giving Him glory and honour. If our earthly worship were ever performed perfectly, we would by definition find ourselves in heaven, sharing in the perfect service of the worship of the heavenly Temple. That heavenly worship is perfect, of course, because it is an act that God Himself is carrying out, as both sacrificial offering and High Priest, offering Himself for the world. When we worship, even here on earth, we are sharing in the divine work of priestly reconciliation that Christ Himself performs in heaven.

To worship is thus at once both an obligation and an honour. It is our duty as God's creatures, and our privilege as His children and His friends. Over the next few months, the longer articles elsewhere in our magazines will tell us more about aspects of this shared honour, beginning this month with my own article on the first part of the Eucharistic service.

Fr. Bernard Minton

[NB: See page 20 for Fr. Bernard's article on The Gathering]

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 Evening Prayer

1st Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

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.

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, Friday & Saturday 10am-2pm.

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

Please remember there is a scheme in place with regard to meeting the Religious Affiliation criteria in support of an application to Pulford School. Please collect a pack from the office. For more information, please speak to either Mother Cate, Lindsay Bevis or Jo Waller.

*** **

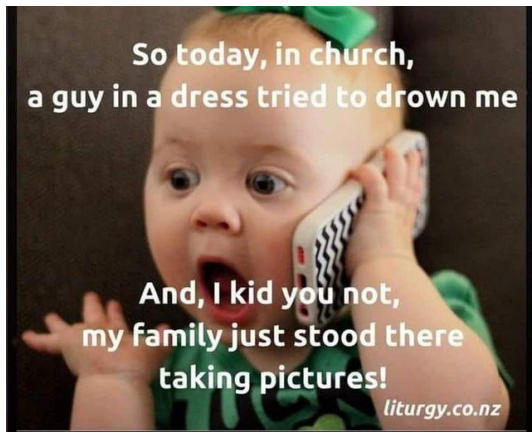
Confirmation: Courses for children on Sunday mornings, and adults on Tuesday evenings, will start in March. The Confirmation Service will be on June 11th at 3pm. If you are interested, please take a card with more details, available from the side table or Parish Office, or contact Mthr Cate, Bill Webb, or Lindsay Bevis.



Worth a smile

Miscellaneous observations on life...

- ❖ Marriage licence – the only permit taken out after the hunt is over.
- ❖ It's easy finding reasons why other folks should be patient.
- ❖ Families are often like fudge – mostly sweet, with a few nuts.
- ❖ Some people cause happiness wherever they go. Others, whenever they go.
- ❖ You can't have everything – where would you put it?
- ❖ Latest survey shows that 3 out of 4 people make up 75% of the world's population.
- ❖ If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.
- ❖ Love is grand. Divorce is a hundred grand.
- ❖ Advert in newspaper: Home computer, as new. Never been figured out.
- ❖ Be nice to your kids. They'll choose your nursing home.
- ❖ The trouble with referees is that they just don't care which side wins.
- ❖ A hangover is the wrath of grapes.
- ❖ Is it true that you never really learn to swear until you teach a loved one to drive?



Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, December:

No Weddings

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

Holy Baptism, December:

11: Max Glen Michael Rixon

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. December:

2: Eric Corkett at All Saints; 5: Leslie Cook at Crownhill; 12: Doreen Peck at Crownhill; 19: Norman Johnson at All Saints; 21: Michael Boulton at St. Nicholas

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

Years Mind, February:

1: Christopher Blackbird Taylor, Trevor Lunnon, Sheila Birchall; 3: Frank Audas; 4: Ted Summerfield; 6: Thomas Nash; 7: Annie Turney, Stan Slater, Yiu To Lau, Lilian Baines; 8: Eric Choake; 9: George Waudby; 10: George Pepper; 11: Stanley Boyce, Doreen Perry; 12: Patricia Lethbridge Farmer, Frederick Bester; 13: Mary Yirrell; 14: John Olds, Ida Kempson; 15: Nina Bolton, Leslie Brown, Winifred Turner, Gillian Marchant; 18: Bessie Scraggs, Robert Cherry; 19: Edgar Conquest, Terence Bird; 20: Frank Bates; 21: Pamela Gilbert, Ivy Wood, Margaret Marsh; 23: Dorothy Collor, Bryn Gittins, Lilian Cowley, Janet Garfield, Madge Vincent; 26: Florence Walsh, Maud Mills, Elsie Bates, Peggy King, Irene Scott; 27: Tom Skevington, Ivy Francis; 28: Stanley Kemp, Doreen Oliver



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Pulford VA Lower School

Head Teacher: Rev'd Dave Heather MBE

Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick

Tel: 01525 372188

Website: www.pulfordschool.org

A church school for
a whole community



Our school continues to be a busy, vibrant, and exciting place to be. We thoroughly enjoyed celebrating Christmas without any COVID restrictions in December. It was lovely to be able to reach out into our community as we used to do with open-air carols in the Market Place and a full school hall for our Senior Citizens event. The market traders have asked us to return during March and April to sing a selection of hymns and songs to reflect the season of Lent and Easter.

Lower School Carols made a welcome return to the calendar. We had 550 children from the Year 4 group singing Christmas Carols accompanied by the Cedars Orchestra, and our Nativity representations were well attended by family and friends.

2023 has started well with the whole school gathering in church to give thanks to God for His love for us, as well as using the opportunity to dedicate this year as one where we will persevere in our studies and in our relationship with Him.

Already preparations are underway for the celebration of Candlemas and the children are busy learning some new arrangements for the songs.

It is a time of rapid change in our world. I was reminded of this fact just recently when a child was heard to say *“and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us some email.”* On the other hand, Christmas has demonstrated that the most important things do indeed remain constant.

So I leave you with the children`s memory verse for this week:

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and forever.” Hebrews 13 v8.

With Best Wishes, Revd. Dave Heather





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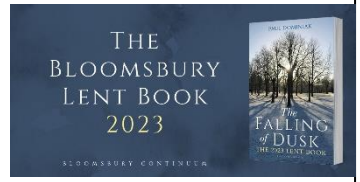
Selections

*Pet, gift and garden.
Household, kitchen tools and
electrical items.
Calor Gas, DIY and repairs.
Memorial.*



selections_pet_garden

Pulled Apart – and a suggestion for some reading for Lent



Lent is period of 40 days before Easter beginning on Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on 22nd February.

Our Ash Wednesday services will be at 10am and 8pm.

Lent is a time of reflection when we draw closer to God through acts of prayer, fasting and generosity. People do this in different ways but whatever we do it should bring us closer to God.

Our theme for Lent this year is “Pulled Apart”. Lent is time when we pull things apart to see how they work. We open up our lives to the searching gaze of God’s love to see what we need to change or what we could do better as we seek to grow in faith. It may be that some of the things that we feel pull us apart such as doubt can also become ways to draw nearer to God.

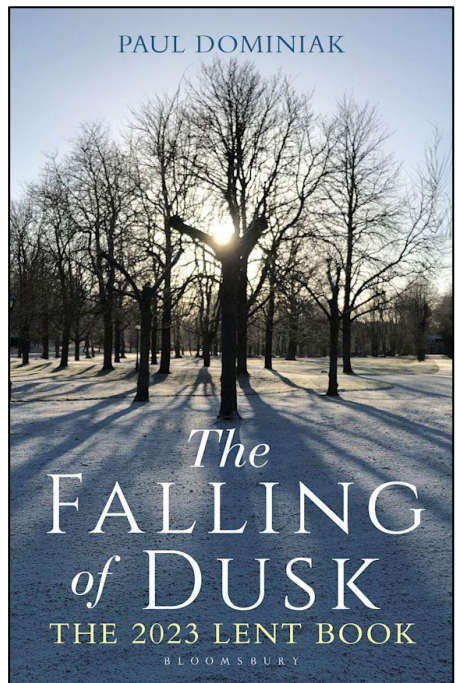
As we move into Holy Week, we’ll be thinking about how things are held together in tension as we fix our gaze upon the cross.

This year we are encouraging people to join the Churches Together Lent groups and will share that information as soon as we have it.

If you would like to read a Lent book in addition, I am recommending the Bloomsbury Lent Book “The Falling of Dusk” by Paul Dominiak ISBN 9781472990471.

“In an age of uncertainty and suspicion, Paul Dominiak explores how each of the seven last words attends to doubt as the refining fire of faith, rather than as its enemy. *The Falling of Dusk* puts into critical conversation some of the great doubters of religion with the breadth of the Christian tradition and contemporary theological voices. Each chapter considers one last word spoken on the cross, unpacking why Christians should embrace suspicious doubt, and how a suspicious Christianity might challenge doubters.”

Mother Cate.



Calendar of Events – Candlemas, winter walks and more



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1st February

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

Tickets £5.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



4th February

Billington Winter Walk

For details contact Tina Thompson 01525 378411



5th February

Candlemas Services as usual at All Saints including

Messy Mass 11.30am;

Festal Evensong for Candlemas 6pm.

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



17th February

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm



19th February

Services as usual at All Saints including All Age Communion 11.30am

22nd February

Ash Wednesday All Saints

Holy Communion 10am

Sung Eucharist 8pm





All Saints

Leighton Buzzard



Saturday 18th February 2023 at 4pm
Organ Recital by
Samuel Kemp



J.S Bach - Prelude (from Prelude and Fugue) in G major BWV 541

G. Böhm - Vater unser in Himmelreich

C. V. Stanford - Postlude no.5 (from 6 Short Preludes and Postludes)

C. Franck - Prelude from 'Prelude Fugue et Variation'

L. Vierne - XIII: Legende / XIV: Scherzetto (24 Pieces en Style Libre)

J. Langlais - I: Prelude / II: Tiento / V: Acclamations (Suite Medievale)

~

Free entry – donations welcome – light refreshments after the recital



On groups and activities, sustaining the Christian community of The Ouzel Valley Team

Every Wednesday during term time you will find the North Transept, the coffee shop and the Good Samaritan Room full of babies, small children and their carers playing, eating, drinking and generally having fun. Welcome to All Saints Toddler Time!



We are a group for parents and carers of pre-school children and meet every Wednesday at 9.30-11am and 1.30-3pm. The children have an opportunity to play and make new friends, learn new skills and generally have fun, while the adults can have a chat and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee with a slice of homemade cake. There is squash, biscuits and fruit for the children. There is a small weekly charge of £1.50 per adult and child plus an extra 50p for each additional child. As the COVID restrictions were lifted we reopened in September 2021 and have been extremely busy with lots of new families coming along. We currently have about 60 families, 75 children on the registers, the morning session being busier than the afternoon.



This month, All Saints Toddler Time

We have lots of toys and always a craft activity, including painting, sticking, colouring, chalking and the ever-popular playdoh. The sessions end with a circle with songs, a short story, birthday cards for any child who has had a birthday in the previous week and a closing prayer.

Last term ended with a lovely Christmas party enjoyed by 39 families and 47 children. Mother Kirsty joined us for the morning, with party hats, delicious snacks, the telling of the nativity story, finished off with a round of Hokey Cokey, all enjoyed in our beautiful church.



Mothers Union continues to support us by doing the refreshments and we greatly appreciate their help. The homemade cakes are always popular with both the adults and children. We recently began to offer fruit as well which is enjoyed by lots of the children.

Our craft table is always popular. One year the children made angels for our tree at the Christmas tree festival and last October they all made strawberries, apples, a pumpkin and a pineapple to decorate one of the church windows at harvest.

We sold chocolate teddies for Children in Need, held a raffle, and 'Guess how many sweets in the jar' as part of a wider church fund raising scheme.

We are looking forward to 2023, welcoming new and returning families. If you have a baby or young child and are free on a Wednesday, why don't you come and see what we do. We would love to welcome you into our group!

Julie, Terry and Gemma Dolton.

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld & Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Celebrating with the community

In the words of our vision statement, Church of the Good Shepherd (CGS) aims to “be at the heart of the local community and enable, create and build the wider community.” Christmas is an ideal opportunity for a community celebration and this year we were once again delighted to run our annual Beer & Carols event in Astral Park Community Centre (last year we adapted this to an outdoor event, “No beer but plenty of carols,” which also went down well).

On one of the coldest nights of the year, around 80 people gathered for mulled wine, soft drinks and locally brewed beer, along with mince pies, sausage rolls, and a good helping of Christmas cheer. Singing was led by our specially convened (For One Night Only) band, Def Sheppard, and everyone joined in enthusiastically with carols and more popular Christmas songs. The Jolly Shepherd pub opened its hatch for the first time. Some of our young people ran a raffle in support of the locally-based KidsOut, which raised a superb £146.50.

We are running regular events throughout the year, such as quiz nights and our midweek Warm Welcome coffee drop-in, part of the nationwide Warm Spaces initiative. Life is challenging at present, but it is a joy to be involved in bringing the community together.

Katharine Reedy



St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565;

Roger Spalding: 07451 877501



Christmas is a busy time, as it always is – and our first event here at St. Nicholas was our St. Nicholas Supper – held on the 3rd December at The Grange, for which we are most grateful and many thanks to Paul and Julia for allowing us the use of their spacious home. We raised a substantial amount including the raffle. Everybody enjoyed the relaxing evening, with good food and entertainment.

On Sunday 11th December, we held a Christingle service which was well attended and the money raised went to the Church of England Children's Society.

The candlelit Carol Service of nine lessons and carols was held on Saturday 17th December, this was also well attended, and as usual we had our excellent readers, singers, and musicians to make it a special event. Not to mention the wine and mince pies.

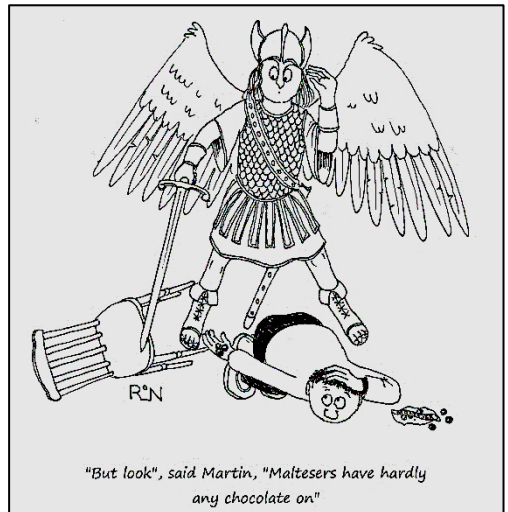
Sadly we had the funeral of Michael Boulton on the 21st of December. He was a really kind and loving family man, and he shall be remembered in our Church and parish, as a loyal supporter of the local committees in Hockliffe, such as the Good Neighbours, and St. Nicholas. Our condolences go to Ellen and her children – Jane, Andrew, Julie and Jenny and their families.

Epiphany will have finished with Candlemass, and it won't be long before we start on the Lent season. Many people like to give up something for Lent as Jesus did, when he was led by the Holy Spirit up into the wilderness, where he stayed for forty days and forty nights.

Lent is a time for praying, fasting, alms giving, self - denial, and reflexion.

We wish you all a Happy New Year.

Carol Speller



St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Sandra Brewin 373644;

Julia Haviland 850380



*Jesus, light of all the world,
light of all the world,
if too black my heart is dark
for thyself to handle,
light it with thy words,
spark for thy Christmas candle
(From an ancient Christmas carol)*

It is good to realise that even though comparatively few people from the village attend the services at Christmas time, the village itself becomes a beacon of light with many people displaying coloured and flashing lights on their houses. The church itself was floodlit once again with streams of small bulbs put up around the gutters by Edward Albertella (taking on from his father Peter's displays which he erected for many years).

We had a tree lighting ceremony in the village hall. Many gathered to watch the switching on of the lights on the Christmas tree (kindly partially donated by Nobby's Farm Shop). The event was accompanied by mulled wine and mince pies, all funded by profits made from Friday tea parties. It was accompanied by Christmassy music played on his electric piano by Carl Moulding.

We are very fortunate in having been awarded a grant from the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust. Some time ago it was highlighted in the Quinquennial Report that the cast iron gutters round the Church were rusting away and were not doing the job they were meant to do. The work to replace the gutters is now completed and we look forward to receiving the grant.

Thanks to Tina and David Thompson we are bringing back the Billington Winter Walk after 3 years of being unable to hold this popular event because of the pandemic.

Those walking will leave the Village Hall at 8am on Saturday 4th February and return to David and Tina's home for breakfast. It would be helpful to know whether you intend to come for breakfast (you are very welcome), so that Tina can calculate for catering 01525 378411. You can also make a last-minute choice to come! This will be a fund-raising event.



Sandra Brewin

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634

Paul Brown 751861



When the ice and snow arrived in December our church looked like a Christmas card. Unfortunately, the snow disappeared, and Christmas was warm and wet, more like we would expect.



Christingle was very well attended and made us all stop and think about the Christmas story. I am sure that many of us amidst the warmth of fires, good food and fellowship will also have remembered our fellow human beings in Ukraine, who were suffering the horrors of war at the time of peace and goodwill for us.

2022 was interesting due to all the significant events we experienced. The late Queen's Platinum Jubilee and then sadly her passing, also changes to our government. We hope that 2023 brings the world brighter and happier times, including peace.

In Eggington, we are starting to draft our village diary with many events to look forward to. We are looking forward to socialising at quiz nights, plant sales, the Hog Roast, and cream teas. The King's Coronation in May will be a milestone event that we will all remember.

We also have regular social events like the Elevenses held in the church on the first Wednesday each month.

Martine Tournay



SAVE THE PLANET WITH YOUR WEEKLY SHOP

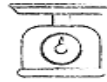


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14th February: Valentine's Day

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day -14th February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

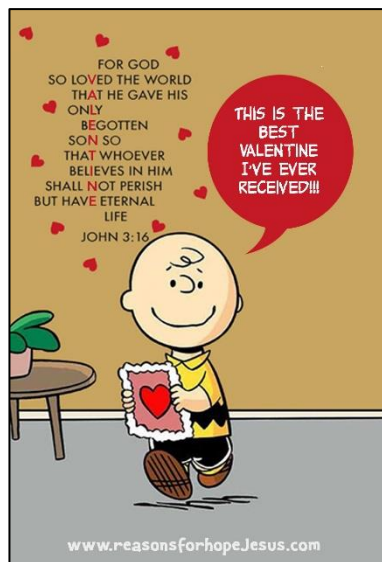
There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

The very first Valentine card, a legend

The Roman Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers. He suspected that marriage made men want to stay at home with their wives, instead of fighting wars, so he outlawed marriage.

A kind-hearted young priest named Valentine felt sorry for all the couples who wanted to marry, but who couldn't. So secretly he married as many couples as he could - until the Emperor found out and condemned him to death. While he was in prison awaiting execution, Valentine showed love and compassion to everyone around him, including his jailer. The jailer had a young daughter who was blind, but through Valentine's prayers, she was healed. Just before his death in Rome on 14th February, he wrote her a farewell message signed 'From your Valentine.'

So, the very first Valentine card was not between lovers, but between a priest about to die, and a little girl, healed through his prayers.



[From Parish Pump]



Tell out my soul:

*A series exploring elements of our worship,
what we do and why we do it.*

This month:

The Gathering...

by Rev'd Dr. Bernard Minton

In the clergy letter, I have explained that worship will be the subject of the articles in Team magazines this year. This article addresses the first part of the Eucharist, usually called 'the Gathering'. In the middle of the second century, St Justin the Martyr described Christian worship:

"... on the day called Sunday, all ... gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, ...when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons."

The structure of our Communion service today is essentially the same as the one he knew almost two thousand years ago. Firstly, we gather together. Then we have a Service of the Word, when scripture is read and a sermon preached. After that come the prayers, and then the Service of the Table, when a Eucharistic Prayer is made over bread and wine which are then shared, including with those absent. Lastly, we are all sent out from this time of worship, back into the world.

The central parts are clearly the Service of the Word and the Table. The first and last divisions are simply practical. If we are to worship together, we have to gather first, and we have to leave afterwards. But the Gathering also reminds us that worship is a collective activity in which we all share. Even if we are separated by distance, we are still worshipping as members of the same Body, and as brothers and sisters in the same family. We can't worship in isolation: we are all united in God.



The Gathering probably originally comprised only the part which now concludes it, which we call 'the Collect'. Here, the person presiding at the act of worship invites us all to pray, and then there is a period of silence, in which we all come to God with all our own hopes and intentions for this worship. Then, after the pause that allows us all to pray, the person presiding *collects* all of these intentions together in the prayer called the *Collect*, which of course

is so called precisely because it collects our individual prayers into one shared prayer. The Collect focuses the intention and purpose of our collective act of worship.

There are set Collects for each Sunday of the year, and for every feast day. These identify the specific nature and purpose of each particular act of worship. In the Church of England, many of the Collects that we still use are those translated or created by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer for the first English Prayer Book in 1549. They are remarkable pieces of English prose, and are well worth study. But the Collect and the silent prayer that precedes it are all one thing, and should not be separated.

The Collect is the pinnacle of the Gathering, and leads us into the Service of the Word. However, for many centuries the Gathering has also seemed to be a logical place to put acts of confession and absolution. These have been included elsewhere, such as just before Communion itself, or after the sermon. In some Christian traditions, the expectation is that you should go to individual confession before joining in collective worship. But the idea of beginning worship with an acknowledgment of our sins and God's forgiveness has gained wide acceptance. Even churches where individual confession is encouraged often have a 'general' confession as part of the Gathering. The Collect for Purity, the Summary of the Law, and the Kyrie, are all essentially penitential in nature. The Kyrie is by far the oldest, but all of these elements acknowledge that we are sinners, and are called to worship God not because we deserve to, but because He is gracious and forgiving.

As well as remembering that we are sinners, we must also remember that God's love is infinite and He always forgives those who ask. Thus our acts of penitence conclude with our being forgiven ('absolved'), and in response we sing a song of triumph and joy, based on the song of the angels in St Luke's Gospel. This Gloria is an act of adoration uniting earth and heaven in worship.



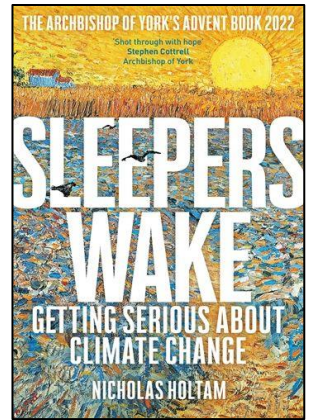
Moving backwards, the Gathering begins with an invocation of the Holy Trinity, in whose name we are called together. Then we share a simple exchange which is actually quite important: 'The Lord be with you. And also with you.' This phrase is a liturgical highlighter pen, marking important parts of the service. It reminds us that in Jesus each of us has been anointed by God's Spirit in baptism: we share His ministry as Prophet, Priest and King; we are united with all worshippers on earth and in heaven.

This then, is the Gathering. In some ways, a simple necessity. But also a reminder that 'though we are many, we are Body, because we all share in one Bread'.

Fr. Bernard Minton

Sleepers Wake

By Canon John Payne-Cook



This is the title of the Advent book which I used in the four weeks before Christmas, but it can be used at any time, maybe in Lent. Its subtitle is 'Getting serious about Climate Change' and is written by Bishop Nicholas Holtam, recently retired Bishop of Salisbury who has been the Church of England's lead Bishop on environmental issues and spokesperson in the House of Lords.

It takes its theme from Bach's great chorale "Wachet auf" and invites us to wake up to the devastation of the natural world that humanity is causing. We are invited to a daily meditation, prompted by art, poetry, theology, science and politics, so that we can better face the challenge that no-one can escape. The threat of destruction and doom is very real but here we find the spiritual resources we need to respond in faith and love.

The four weeks each build on the words of the chorale.

1/ Awake, because the writing is on the wall. The evidence of the increasing changes to our climate is there for all to see.

2/ We are called to take our part, so we need to find our place and discern how we can become active agents of change.

3/ What does it mean to be human? How can redeemed humans react to the divine voice calling us to live not for ourselves but for the good of all creation.

4/ Following the Magi, what can we bring him? How can our Gold, our financial giving; our Incense, our worship; and our Myrrh, our lifestyle and how we recognise our mortality; how can all these be offered in hope for a better world than is now in prospect.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, writes in the Foreword, 'Sleepers Wake confronts us with the harsh realities of the climate crisis, offering bite-sized chunks that we can process... the message, however, is not one of doom, for this book is shot through with hope.'

In his introduction Nicholas Holtam quotes an environmental lawyer. 'I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, eco system collapse and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy - and to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation - and we scientists don't know how to do that.'

This book challenges us, the church, to wake up to our calling.

Canon John Payne-Cook

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