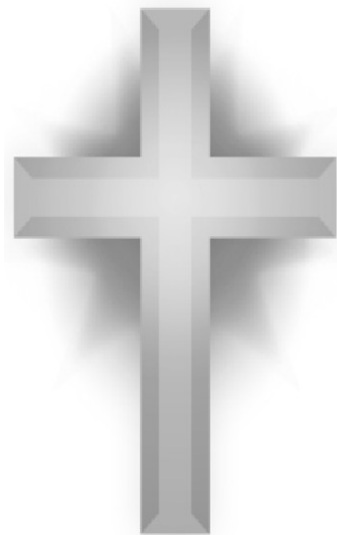
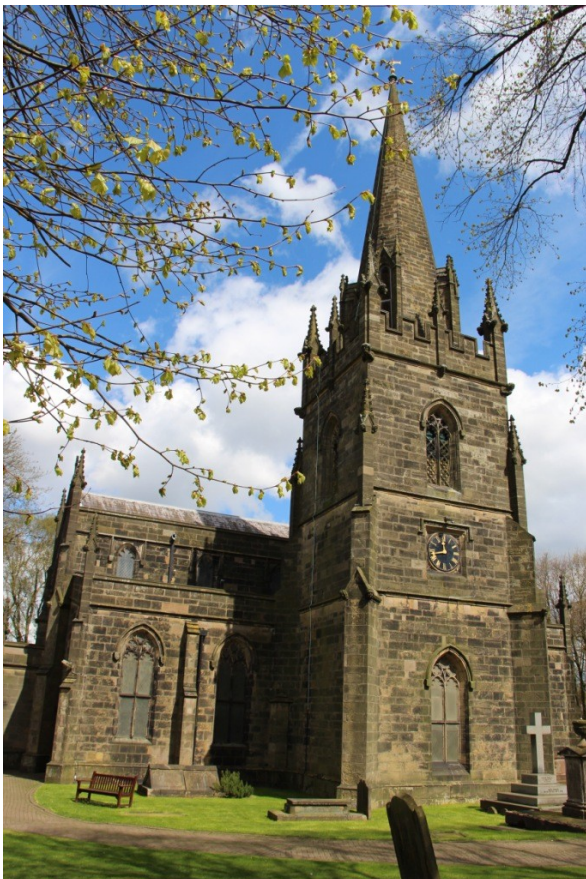


THE BEACON

THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS, SEDGLEY
ST. ANDREW'S THE STRAITS & ST. PETERS UPPER GORNAL

Registered Charity Number 1179471



Kingdom People
love • compassion • justice • freedom

50p

May 2020

WHO's WHO

Team Rector	Revd Guy Hewlett	01902 295164
Team Vicar	Rev Catherine Mitchell	01902 677897
Licensed Lay Minister	Canon Jan Humphries	01902 661275
Parish Safeguarding Officer	Barbara Baker	01902 882847
Pastoral Care	Tracey Bate	01902 680727
Worship Leader	Suzanne Bradley	01902 880055
Youth Leader/Children's Advocate	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
PCC Secretary	Kath Apperley	01902 663253
Vestry Clerk	Chris Williams	01902 672880
Parish Office information baptisms, weddings, funerals and hall bookings.	Gail Griffiths	01902 540289
Parish Wardens	Keith Tomlinson	01902 673366
	John Anderson	01902 677666
Treasurer	John Anderson	01902 677666
Caretaker	Pam Pugh	07860 256535
Server / Verger	Len Millard	01902 676339
Junior Church	Barbara Price	01902 676591
Brownies	Heather Churm	01902 674709
Ladies' Society	Geraldine Baker	01902 674608
Men's Society	Roger Berry	01902 881374
Mothers' Union	Liz Williams	01902 672880
Noah's Ark	Linda Edwards	01902 672556
Parent & Toddler Group		
Rainbows	Liz Naylor	07827 629648
Web Editor	Martin Jones	01902 884461
Youth Group	Laura Robinson	01902 678572
Bell Ringer	Keith Williams	01902 672585
Organist	Martin Platts	07941 173252

St Andrew's Who's Who

Warden	Paul Cox	
Treasurer	Alan Turner	01902 670938
DCC secretary	Rosemary Reed	01902 679007
Little Angels baby & toddler group	Canon Jan Humphries	
Singing Angels	Claire Cox	07812 010108

St Peters Who's Who

David Moss	Church Warden	01902 893570
Edward Grist	Church Warden	01902 682786
Sheila Moss	Treasurer	01902 893570

Parish Prayers at 9.15am - All are Welcome

Tuesdays at St Andrew, Wednesdays at St Peter and
Thursdays at All Saints.

CANCELLED

Altar and Pedestal Flowers

If you can help please contact Linda Watkins Telephone 01902 678830

Funerals

27th March Andrew Ward
16th April Gwendoline Wilkinson
21st April Eugenia Valerie Rhodes
22nd April Leonard James Harding
24th April Anthony David Williams
24th April Nancy Prudence Wakefield
All taking place at Gornal Wood

High Days & Holy Days for May

1	May Day
1	Philip the Apostle/James the Less
2	Athanasius
8	Julian of Norwich
9	Pachomius
10	Comgall
14	Matthias the Apostle – called by lots
16	Caroline Chisholm
17	Rogation Sunday
19	Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury
21	Helena, Protector of the Holy Places
21	The Ascension
24	John and Charles Wesley
26	Augustine of Canterbury
30	Joan of Arc
30 NEW*	Josephine Butler, social reformer 1906
31	Pentecost

THE BEACON

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Karen Evans: 01902 678056

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admin@allsaintssedgley.co.uk

by

Friday 22nd May

and needs to be in Arial typeface, size 18.
Do not send files in pdf format

WEBSITE: www.gornalandsedgley.org.uk

CHURCH OPENING



**Friday mornings from
10.30am to 12.30pm**

The church is open for quiet prayer & coffee and a chat.

VESTRY HOUR

Vestry hour will take place on the first and third Sunday of the month for all enquires on weddings and baptisms from 12 noon to 1pm

A letter from the Bishop of Dudley

These are strange times. I'm the new Bishop of Dudley, and should be living in that area, but I'm writing this letter from under 'lockdown' in our old house in Oxford, unable to move.

It feels as though everything is disrupted and where nothing can be taken for granted. Our church buildings have been closed, and just when we want to gather together and encourage one another, we cannot.

We live in a world filled with fear, attacked by a virus we cannot cure. We can fear death and disease, poverty and unemployment; we can fear for loved ones isolated and far away. We can feel powerless and alone.

When Jesus was taken to be crucified most of his friends ran away, fearing for their lives, afraid that they would be next. But others stayed, mostly women like Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. And then at the foot of the cross, James, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and Mary, Jesus' own mother. They must have been filled with grief and fear, but their love for Jesus was stronger still. Their love was stronger than their fear. They just had to be present with him.

I thank God for shopworkers, health workers, cleaners, carers, foodbank drivers and everyone else who set out to be present for others during this crisis. All those whose love for humanity proves stronger than their fear.

This is the Easter season when we celebrate Jesus risen from the dead. The fear and isolation of Holy Week is past and a new age has begun. In these days between Easter and Pentecost we stand confidently in the warm sunlight of the resurrection, knowing that suffering and death will never have the last word; that God's love is real and unshakeable and in the end will prevail. The bible says, 'Underneath are the Everlasting Arms' and that is true for us as Christians, both in this life and, I believe, when we die.

As we move towards Pentecost we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit to bless and inspire us for the road ahead. We pray 'Thy Kingdom Come' not with big gatherings and events this year, but online, in prayer, alone or in family groups. We pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as it already is in heaven.

A kingdom of love, compassion, justice and freedom. Where the people we all depend on in these days: health and care workers, shop staff, drivers and crop pickers, cleaners and refuse collectors and all the rest will no longer be seen as menial or unskilled, but celebrated members of our society on whom we all depend. We need to find a new way of living in tune with the earth and creation, where global riches can be shared and where all can be fed.

I am living through the only global pandemic I have ever known. Its effects are tragic for some, and far reaching for us all. When all this is over we will need to build a better future. And that is something we can all be part of.

The voyage of HMS Beagle

Two hundred years ago, on 11th May 1820, the British Royal Navy sloop HMS Beagle was launched. It was the ship that took Charles Darwin on the voyage around the world between 1831 and 1836 that led to his putting forward the theory of Evolution.

HMS Beagle was one of 100 ships of its class, known as coffin brigs because they handled badly and were prone to sinking. But its captain on Darwin's voyage, Robert FitzRoy, made some critical changes to its superstructure and weaponry.

This was the second voyage of the Beagle; the first had resulted in the suicide of its depressed captain. FitzRoy was able to recruit Darwin, who was intending to be a clergyman, though he had recently graduated as a naturalist, as someone of a like mind who could be relied upon to research geology and natural history ashore.

The voyage lasted five years instead of the intended two, and Darwin became famous after publishing his journal, usually known as *The Voyage of the Beagle*, which was an intriguing travelogue as well as hinting at Darwin's theories on species.

The ship itself was believed lost, but in 2004 its remains were thought to have been located beneath an Essex marsh

Like Tower Bridge, Up and Down – ‘Good Days and Bad Days’

from Guy Hewlett

If I asked my Dad ‘How are you today?’ he would have a number of different answers! One of his favourites was ‘Oh you know, like Tower Bridge, up and down!’.

Probably like most of us at the moment with the crisis brought on by the Coronavirus and Covid-19 – we have good days and bad days. Sometimes full of energy and sometimes feeling shattered with no clear reason for the difference! This I am sure you will be pleased to know is ‘quite normal’ in such extreme conditions as this crisis; the lockdown and all that goes with it!

One of our Bible readings from the 19th April was from 1 Peter 1.3-9. The letter was written to Christians being persecuted. Well we are not being persecuted but we are suffering various trials. Have a re-read of the passage here:

‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.’

In essence Peter is reminding us that although in our Christian journey we will suffer various trials, some of which are very serious, we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading; **the promise of an eternal life** beginning in this life and continuing to a day when there will be no more suffering, no more tears. Kept in heaven for you and me!

Peter encourages us to, in fact tells us that we do, rejoice in this promise that will come after this life.

But it is difficult to rejoice when things are tough – many of us can see many, many things to be thankful for and being thankful does lift our spirits. Thankful for friends and family, the NHS and all carers, health and healing and the good provision of food and refreshment and safe homes even in the midst of lock down.

But this time is tough, whichever way we look at it.

One of the things we cannot do at the moment is to physically share Holy Communion, the Eucharist. The word Eucharist comes from eucharisteo meaning to be grateful, to feel thankful, to give thanks.

A lot of us have more time at the moment than usual to be still with God and to seek the fullest life he offers us.
To do our best to live in the moment and to be thankful.

Jackie is reading a book written by a woman called Ann Voskamp, it is called 'A dare to **live fully** right where you are'.

Perhaps this title is a challenge for us at the moment to attempt to be thankful just where we are in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Ann Voskamp writes about eucharisteo, thanksgiving, as being the way to the fullest life we can live, about living fully in the moment.

She says ‘... my sister urges me when I get angsty and knotted about tomorrow, when I sorrow for what is gone ...’, ‘...**to stay right here - wherever you are be all there**’.

And so although we can not share Holy Communion we can work at being thankful which can change a down mood into an up mood; if you are feeling like Tower Bridge, up and down, try to be thankful in the moment.

When Tower Bridge is up, ships can pass through. When we are up, somehow the love of Christ breaks through (although remember His love is always there!). If you are feeling a bit down, try being thankful for small things, and look towards the hope which comes through faith. All things in this world (other than love) come to an end – and so will this crisis.

How are you today?

VE Day – the end of World War II in Europe

VE Day (Victory in Europe) – was celebrated 75 years ago this month, on 8th May 1945, marking the end of World War II in Europe. It was marked with a public holiday.

The previous day the formal act of military surrender had been signed by Germany, and celebrations broke out when the news was released. Big crowds gathered in London, impromptu parties were held throughout the country, and people danced and sang in the streets. King George VI and his family appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, and Churchill made a speech to huge applause. The two princesses Elizabeth and Margaret mingled with the crowds outside.

Many went into churches to give thanks – and to pray for those still involved in the war in the Far East, because the real end of the war, Victory over Japan, would not happen until 15th August. At St Paul’s Cathedral there were ten consecutive services giving thanks for peace, each attended by thousands of people.

The celebrations masked the fact that so many had lost family and friends, as well as possessions and homes. But for the moment normal social conventions broke down, strangers embraced, and love was in the air.

Coping in the Storm

‘Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.’ (Mark 4:39).

What started out for the disciples as a routine trip across the Sea of Galilee, ended up with a storm threatening to overwhelm their boat! Jesus was asleep in the boat, so little wonder they feared for their lives: *‘Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?’ (38).*

Who would have thought two months ago that the world would be overwhelmed by the Coronavirus pandemic and our lives turned upside down! Self-isolating and self-distancing are now part of our daily vocabulary, as we live in an uncertain world. What does this story say to us in our circumstances?

Firstly, we read that Jesus calmed the storm: *‘He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ (39).* He is the Lord of the storm and holds our circumstances in His hands. We are called to trust, not fear, being assured that He is with us to protect us. *‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ (40).* Nothing is outside of His control.

Secondly, despite the calm, the disciples were still terrified: *‘They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!’ (41).* Like us, the disciples were asking why Jesus, who loved them, had allowed the storm to happen! Our circumstances provide us with an opportunity to understand more deeply who Jesus is. We can’t control Him and we don’t always understand His bigger plans for us and His world. We are called to overcome fear and insecurity, by living lives of peace, faith and hope. How contagious can we be for Jesus in a stormy world?

Vicars Ponderings May 2020

**Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace to let me be my servant too.**

These are the words of the well-known hymn, often known as the “Servant Song”. It was written by Richard Gillard who was born in England in 1953 and at the age of 3 moved to New Zealand, where he has lived since on the northern island. His faith background is a mixture of the Anglican Church on his mother’s side and the Pentecostal Church on his father’s side of the family.

As I write this reflection, we have already been in “lock down” and self, or physically isolating, for three weeks, and it’s just been announced that the lock down will be extended for a further three weeks. Although the statistics are showing there is a decrease in hospital admissions, sadly the death toll is still a worry with many thousands having already lost their lives and many desperately ill in hospital with the Coronavirus.

It’s been quite a shock to all of us how quickly the virus has impacted so much of our lives in such a relatively short space of time. I can’t believe that it was only 8 weeks ago (at the time of writing) that I was in Spain, and preparing to travel home the following Monday with a broken shoulder! Thankfully the journey home wasn’t too traumatic, but it was the start of my healing and rehabilitation back home. I am so thankful that my sister Susan was able to stay with me for the first three and a half weeks, as I wasn’t able to dress or drive or look after Bramble properly. I had to get used to someone doing things for me as I wasn’t able to do them myself.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for the cards, flowers, messages, prayers and offers for help.

For someone who is so independent it was quite a challenge, (although quite nice!!) to be looked after in this way. Thankfully the arm is healing, but it will take some way to go with physio to get it back to the full movement I had before.

Changing the way that we live and interact with people for all of us is different from before the lock down, and for many of us challenging. Some of us have to physically isolate for 12 weeks because of health problems or age. For others, not being able to go to work, having been furloughed; others will be working from home, with the challenges that creates especially if looking after children and home schooling. Some, may have even lost their job. Routines have been thrown up in the air, and often when I speak to people, we will comment that we don't know what day of the week it is!

Going shopping or going to work trying to maintain a 2 metre distance is difficult, and interactions on daily exercise walks are also difficult. Many of us are now reliant on help from family and friends for shopping and picking up medications; doctor's appointments are on the phone, and also physio appointments which is interesting!

It's been amazing to see and hear the stories of so many people in our communities helping friends and neighbours. We see keyworkers working so hard in the NHS and Care sector; shop assistants, delivery drivers, pharmacists, volunteers helping the vulnerable, the police fire service and paramedics. So many people to be thankful for, all serving those in need and on the front line, often putting their own lives at risk.

It is often said that we learn our theology from the songs we sing. Reading the Bible, praying, and hearing sermons are obviously important in our understanding of God and how we, as followers of Jesus, can put that teaching and understanding into practice, but we also learn a lot from the songs that we sing, and "the servant song" is a great example, of a seemingly simple song to sing but with deep theological meaning.

There is a lot within the song, so I will pick up on a just a small part of it

The first verse gives us the main biblical background for the song from Matthew 20:26b-28 "... whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

“brother, sister let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you”.

We are seeing so much of this self-sacrifice across our local communities, and we will have all have expressed this servant heart both before and during this time. Many of you I know are helping those in need, being Christ to others, is a key expression of Christian faith and making Christ known through our actions, often in a self-sacrificing way as Jesus says in this passage in Matthew.

Many of us will also be experiencing people serving us rather us serving others during this time because we can't do things ourselves, this is a challenge especially when we are used to be so independent, “I pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too”.

Verse two expresses the Christian faith as a journey, and we are all pilgrims on that journey. Travelling this road together is important in many ways; first and foremost, we are companions encouraging each other, helping each other, bearing the load. The road that we travel through life can be hard, and we are probably travelling one of the hardest roads, many of us will travel or have travelled in our lives. For many generations we have not experienced a national emergency or crisis such as this, and it is times like this we need to support and encourage each other, and others. A good way to encourage each other is by phone, emails and social media. We are blessed in this age to have so many ways to keep in touch. And I have been encouraged through the conversations I have had hearing how many are keeping in touch with each other.

Verse 3 Speaks of “holding[ing] the Christ-light for you” which amongst others, reflects Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount “In the same way, let your light shine before others” (Matthew 5:16a); we can be light in the world, even in lock-down! We know these are challenging times, and keeping our eyes on Jesus and reflecting his light through our relationship with him, and how we respond.

Verse 4 reminds us that we are all connected as the body of Christ “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinth 12:26). The song says, “I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you; sharing joy and sorrow”.

We are all going through this pandemic together, from conversations I have had with many of you, we are all feeling many of the same emotions, and feeling that you are not alone, even when where physically isolated is a real support and blessing.

Verse 5 encompasses our worship from an eschatological (which means an understanding of the “end times”, what will happen at the end of the age) perspective. The joy that comes of making “harmony” in our ultimate worship together in heaven will offset the “agony” experienced in this life.

As Christians, we have the hope of experiencing life after this life, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, which we celebrate every day, not just Easter day.

It is in this hope that enables us to endure all things in this life through faith and trust in Jesus, and is the hope that we can proclaim.

Alleluia Christ is Risen, he is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Blessings

Catherine

Why Jesus walked on water

A tourist, planning a trip to the Holy Land, was aghast when he found it would cost £50 an hour to rent a boat on the Sea of Galilee. “Goodness,” he objected to the travel agent. “In England it would not have been more than £20.”

“That might be true,” said the travel agent, “but you have to take into account that the Sea of Galilee is water on which our Lord Himself walked.”

“Well, at £50 an hour for a boat,” said the tourist, “it’s no wonder He walked.”

The environment – we can still do great things to help

Before coronavirus, 2020 was to have been the year when the Church really made the environment central to its plans and actions. For although caring for the planet has been raised regularly at previous Lambeth Conferences, this year, Lambeth 2020 was to have brought the issues to the forefront of its agenda.

Whilst the virus has shut things down for the moment, clearly in future the Church *can*

do major things on a national and international level, but so too can it achieve much locally. Every individual in every congregation can play a part. Even the space around churches can become special by providing space for members of the local community to spend time gardening, bringing benefits to both body and spirit.

When our isolation finally ends, it will be a great time for our church to find space to make room for a garden to bring people together and share the glory of nature by planting seeds to bring new life, hope and a sense of wellbeing to our world. For church space which can be seen by passers-by it will be a 24-hour sign of hope and that we are back in business.

Meanwhile, this month, May, sees the 5th anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si*, a world best seller – not least in the Church House bookshop. Whilst many proposed celebrations have been postponed it is still a publication to be celebrated for the way in the way the Pope has provided help and encouragement to people of faith and no faith alike who all share this common home

St Mary the Virgin, Bearwood

Bible Study Wednesday 15th April 2020

Introduction

Although this is headed Wednesday, I have not started to write it until after today's (Thursday) Morning Prayer.

I am hoping to have it done in time for today's St Mary's Contact Group email, but knowing the speed of my typing and conscious of the amount of time the editors must need to spend compiling each day's, it probably will be Friday or Saturday before you actually receive it (assuming the editors think it fit to be included at all).

Because I do not know when it will be received by you, I have avoided day-specific quotations.

Reflection during Easter Week

(To avoid confusion [perhaps] references to today, this evening, etc., mean Wednesday 15th April 2020.)

It wasn't until after Reverend Catherine had zoomed me this evening that I had a thought – peculiar things do happen in my household at times! (Readers of my reflection for Holy Saturday will note the recurrence of that word.)

Anyway, back to this amazing thought!

Actually it became a series (tends to happen once brain allows itself to be roused into doing that which I expect of it):

Today is 15th day of month

Today is a Wednesday

Combine both and it must mean today is 3rd Wednesday of month.

Now St Mary's people (at least those retired enough to be available on Wednesday mornings will know where this leads – on the third Wednesday of the month after our 1030 Eucharist we normally have a bible study.

This week, with access to church forbidden, that obviously didn't happen; so I decided I would offer a reflection.

But hang on a bit --- by this stage I had had another thought: during our earlier zoom Reverend Catherine had said that on Thursday evening at 1930 she would do a test zoom to everyone in preparation for her proposed Sunday morning coffee zoom!

Now G&S people will know that 1930 on Thursday is normally when our Fellowship Group meets in All Saints' vicarage; and if we were actually meeting I am sure a certain young lady would already have commented on the peculiarity of my having had two thoughts in the same evening!!

Time for you to think.

Why is the name of the company which made my car significant in the history of our redemption and salvation?

(Most of St Mary's congregation, All Saints' Sunday evening congregation and Thursday Fellowship Group are aware that my car is a yellow Panda, so all you need to know to be able to answer the question is which Italian company makes Pandas, I mean the petrol consuming variety not the bamboo-shoot eaters).

If I wanted to ensure that you all did your homework properly, I would leave it here until you had provided your answers.

The car manufacturer is FIAT.

FIAT is the third person singular subjunctive of the Latin verb “esse”, the English of which is “to be”; and can therefore be rendered in English as “Let it be ...”, “Be it ...”, depending on the context in which it used. Depending on which translation of the Bible one reads this is a very well-known response (Luke 1: 38):

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” (Authorised Version)

“Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (Revised Standard Version)

“Here am I,” said Mary; “I am the Lord’s servant; as you have spoken, so be it.” (New English Bible)

“You see before you the Lord’s servant, let it happen to me as you have said.” (New Jerusalem Bible)

“Look, the Lord’s slave-woman. Let it happen to me in accordance with your word.” (Nicholas King)

FIAT!!!! Let it be!!! Be it!!!

Of course the Blessed Virgin did not actually say, “Fiat”; that is the translation into Latin from the original documents available to the scholars at the time of that translation.

These words also appear liturgically in the Angelus, and the Annunciation is the first joyful mystery of the Rosary.

And what is our FIAT? Your FIAT? My FIAT?
To what is God calling each one of us by name?

The closing words of Dewi Sant to the brethren of his community:
“Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things.”

The wisdom of afternoon tea

My wife and I were at one time missionaries with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. We joined them in 1975 after a period of training at their headquarters in London. While we were there, we met the hostess of the Mission Home, a matronly lady who had herself served overseas. She was a formidable person, but with a soft heart, and a depth of spiritual wisdom.

I remember her offering to our group of would-be missionaries this piece of sage advice: "The missionaries who stay the longest on the field are those who have their afternoon tea." It struck me then as being very profound, and it is a life rule that I have followed ever since, with great benefits.

This practice of course is typically British, but valuable none the less. For us, a cup of tea is the answer to everything. "Let's make a cup of tea," we say in any crisis. It soothes and refreshes and helps us get things in perspective. Somehow things seem much brighter when you have had a cuppa, especially if shared with friends or colleagues.

But there is more to the custom of afternoon tea. This little ritual gives us permission to stop in the midst of a busy day and rest a while. It enables us to make contact with others, and to step back from whatever is filling our mind at the time. And over time, these little oases are the way we care for our souls as well as our bodies.

We read that Jesus, when He was tired, sat down by the well at Sychar (John 4:6). He gave Himself permission to stop and have a break. I like to think on that basis He would heartily approve of afternoon tea.

Samsung Electronics Caller: 'Can you give me the telephone number for Jack?'

Operator: 'I'm sorry, sir, I don't understand who you are talking about'.

Caller: 'On page 1, section 5, of the user guide it clearly states that I need to unplug the fax machine from the AC wall socket and telephone Jack before cleaning. Now, can you give me the number for Jack?'

Operator: 'I think you mean the telephone point on the wall'.

A Time to catch up or a Time to Reflect?

As I write this we are four weeks into 'lockdown'. Four weeks like no other any of us have experienced. A time when there has been pain, grief and anxiety. The dedication from our NHS staff and all other workers and volunteers who are going above and beyond at this time is truly inspiring.

In the Williams' household we have been keeping relatively busy with jobs. However, there is a limit to how many cupboards one can tidy out or windows one can clean!! We have been blessed with wonderfully sunny days so coffee and lunchtimes have been spent sitting in the garden, listening to the birdsong and children playing in a neighbouring garden. The daffodils are a constant sign of Spring and the tulips are now also in flower. While gazing out of our bedroom window the other morning I noticed that the two foxes in the field behind us were practising 'social distancing' as they enjoyed lying in the sun!

We have done the Holy Week Pilgrimage and midday prayer time sat in the garden as I am reminded of the verse below by Dorothy Frances Gurney.

Kiss of the sun for pardon.
Song of the birds for mirth.
You're closer to God's heart in a garden
Than any place on earth.

We are lucky to have a lovely garden to enjoy (mostly thanks to Jonathan!) but have thought of those who live in high rise flats with no garden for children to run around in and to find solace in at this time. Like others we have been out to 'Applaud the NHS' which has been a very moving and uplifting experience.

We enjoy speaking frequently on the phone with family and friends, sharing our experiences and concerns, giving support to each other. Our days have taken on a new form – there is no clock watching, just amazement that it is only 10.30am when you thought it must be at least lunch time! Every day is the same, there are no events that mark out one day from another. There has been a slowing down and time to reflect – a peace.

Chris has just come in from the garage looks like we can cross another job off the list and surely it must now be lunchtime!

I leave you with this prayer from 'Easter Thoughts' by Eddie Askew.

Lord, I'm Rich

I'm rich because you love me, and I know it.

Rich beyond anything the world can give.

Rich because the world can't take it away.

It's there, your love, and nothing I will do will change it.

I only have to reach out and it's mine.

God Bless

Liz Williams

Fair Trade Update

Thank you very much everyone who so generously supported our Fair trade Coffee Morning in February -it seems a long time ago!

You raised £64. We are able to make this up to £100 to donate to Traidcraft Exchange who support all the valuable work in developing countries.

Unfortunately the monthly stall is closed for the duration of this lockdown, but hopefully we will be able to start up again, once church is open. We would be very grateful for your support as the many, many people who rely on the gifts of resources and training given by Traidcraft Exchange will still be in great need once this crisis is over.

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Thank you all for your support – see you soon!

Celebrating Ascension Day and Confirmation in another country by Suzanne E Bradley

As we are experiencing 'church' in a very different way at the moment, and, with Ascension Day usually falling in May, I would like to share with you my experience of a 'different' Confirmation service, which took place on Ascension Day in Germany during May last year (2019). (This was first shared with the people at St Peter's as one of my 'sermon slot talks' when I led Morning Prayer last July.)

I always seem to go to visit my German friend when she's been invited to an event – last year it was her great nephew's Confirmation – so I was invited too! This just happened to be on Ascension Day – in German – Christi Himmelfahrt – which literally translates as Christ's journey to heaven.

In Germany, unlike in the UK, Ascension Day is a national public holiday – therefore no shops are open at all – just as it still is on a Sunday – only restaurants etc. Ascension Day is also given a higher profile – for example, when it is mentioned in TV magazines schedules, advertising programmes on TV or the weather report it is called Christi Himmelfahrt (not just 'Donnerstag' – Thursday) – a bit like when it's Christmas Day, Good Friday or Easter Day here. Incidentally, Ascension Day is also the day on which Father's Day is celebrated in some areas of Germany. Some confirmation services (Konfirmation in German!) are also held around this time – as was my friend's great nephew's confirmation. This is evident in the shops with confirmation cards available to buy – or make – and suitable gifts to buy – although the norm is gifts of money as is the celebration meal or similar afterwards.

Confirmation is slightly different in Germany and seen as one of the milestones of a young person's teenage years – most are 14 years of age. It is not just for those who attend church regularly – those who are of confirmation age are usually confirmed in the church of the area they live – after attending confirmation classes for about a year and having to attend a certain number of church services.

I remember four years ago when I went to the evangelical (protestant) church where my friend lives in Nieder Woellstadt (about 15 miles or half an hour north of Frankfurt), three lads turning up and ‘signing in’!

The confirmation service was held in ‘St Michaelis Evangelische Kirche’ – a protestant church – where my friend was baptised and then confirmed over fifty years ago. The church, in the small town of Klein Karben (about 5 miles from where my friend lives) was an interesting Greek square cross shape with a balcony – parts of the church are at least 800 years old...! Like some things in Germany – built to last!

Besides a year of confirmation classes the young people not only have the Confirmation Day, but also the Sunday before they are requested to attend to recite the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed. The confirmation is carried out by the by the Pfarrer – the pastor or minister of the church, rather than the bishop. I think that on one hand this may decrease the grandeur of Church of England Confirmation services with a visit from the Bishop – or indeed Confirmation at the Cathedral – but on the other hand I think it could be seen as a more personable having your own minister to confirm you.

The service had all the usual elements that would be expected of a confirmation service – but had less liturgy than a usual Church of England service – songs, Collect, readings, Creed, talk and of course the Confirmation part. There were 14 young people who went up in groups of 2-3 to give a very short testimony and be confirmed.

The newly confirmed had their Communion first – a usual practice both in Germany and sometimes here. All of them stood in a circle around the altar to receive the bread and wine – then all held hands and a prayer was said. (It is becoming the norm in some German churches to stand in a circle to receive Communion.) Then the rest of the congregation came up in groups and again formed a circle around the marble altar which was followed by a prayer. However, quite surprisingly, the bread and wine were distributed by the newly confirmed themselves – including to the minister.

The bread and wine had already been consecrated (there was no part of this in the service) – small pieces of German bread –in a basket and you helped yourself and I think the wine was grape juice on this occasion – which is sometimes used instead of wine at certain times. Wafers are also sometimes used on other occasions.

The Lord's Prayer wasn't said until after Communion and, like the Creed, most people present seemed to be able to say this from memory – including my friend and her two daughters; there was no service book – only an A4 sheet of paper with the songs on – none of which I knew but were easy to pick up! It is common to stand for the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and other prayers and then sit for everything else – including the hymn singing!

Another German tradition related to Confirmation is to celebrate the 25th and 50th anniversaries of one's confirmation; there is a special service to attend at the church with everyone else who was confirmed at the time. A photo in the local paper also usually appears to mark the occasion.

It seems that we all have our own way of doing things in different Christian denominations and in different countries – and our worship and experience of 'church' is very different at the moment – the whole world over... One example, The Lord's Prayer – we all have our own preference (and sometimes aversion!) to either the modern or traditional version – however there is one version used in Germany, decided upon by most of the different church denominations in the land in 1971 and used ever since. But in the words of the welcome from the Church of England Baptism service:

'There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism... by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body... we are children of the same heavenly Father...'
Amen!

Passed On

Canon David Winter writes on Eastertide....

The Easter message is this: death is not the end but the beginning; the natural and unavoidable end of human life. But recently I have noticed people increasingly use the phrase 'passed on.' Apparently, no one 'dies' any longer. They just 'pass on.'

It's our latest attempt to avoid the word 'death.' We don't like the idea, so we try to eliminate the word. 'Passed on' or its more negative alternative 'passed away' are the current favourites. Just listen to the radio, or people talking.

'Passed on' sounds vaguely religious. The person hasn't disappeared, they've simply moved – but where? That left an open question. What we are saying, by implication, is that they have not ceased to exist. Heaven, hell, reincarnation or purgatory are all encompassed in the all popular notion of 'up there!'

As a Christian who believes in resurrection and eternal life, I suppose I shouldn't object to 'passing on,' but the truth is that before we can 'pass on' we have to die. There is simply no alternative.

So, let me summarise my personal and doubtless prejudiced conclusions. For me, 'passed away' is out because it is simply not true. Anyone who loses a loved one finds that they still exist – in love, in memory, in that photo on the mantelpiece. For many people death is not the end it is a beginning – a door which Jesus called 'eternal life.'

Died or 'passed on', there is light at the end of the tunnel!

Crosswords Clues

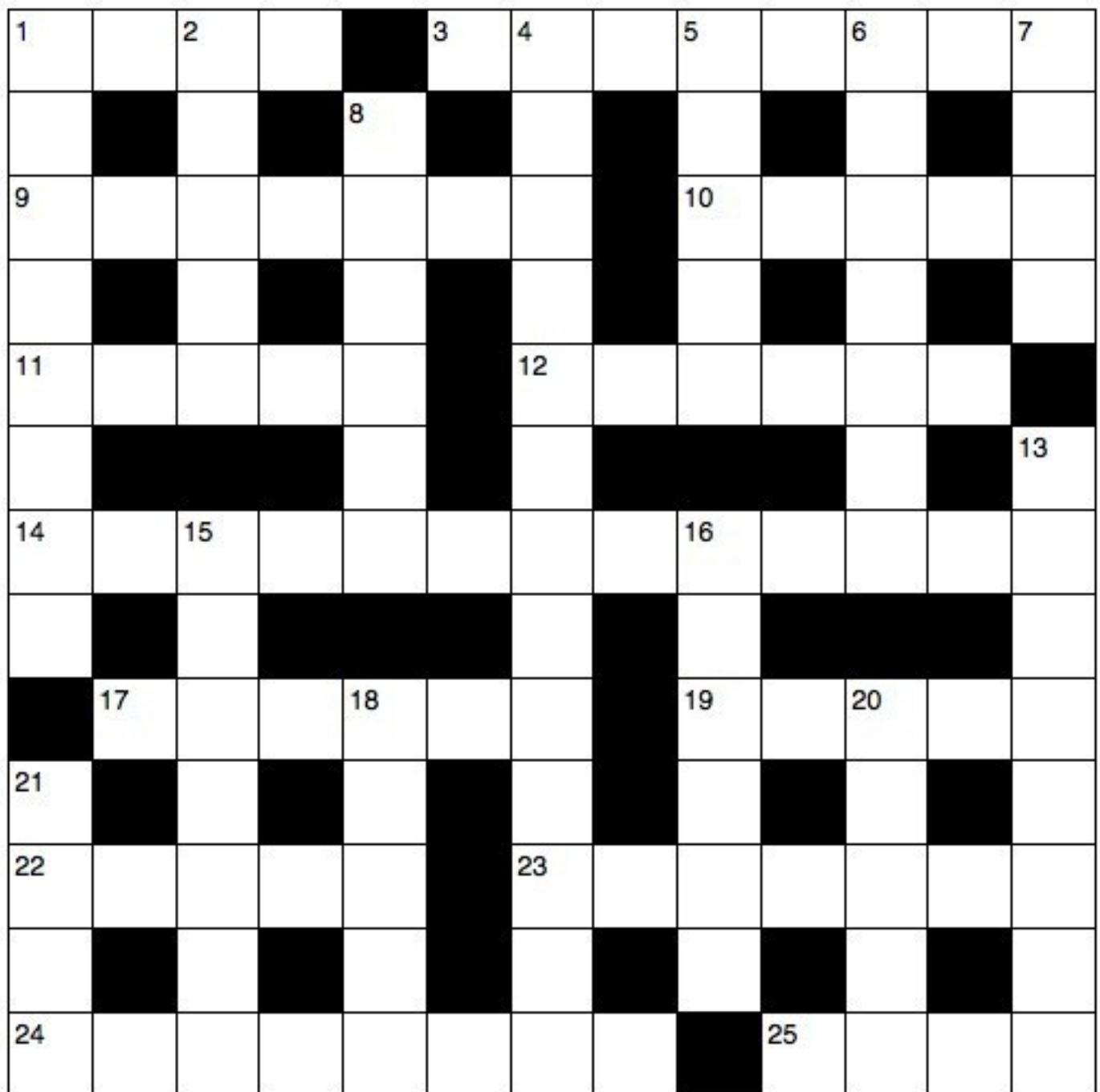
Across

- 1 'Therefore let us — passing judgment on one another' (Romans 14:13) (4)
- 3 'I — — these persons here present' (Marriage service) (4,4)
- 9 According to a prearranged timetable (Numbers 28:3) (7)
- 10 Group of eight (5)
- 11 The cell into which the Philippian jailer put Paul and Silas (Acts 16:24) (5)
- 12 — Taylor, pioneer missionary to China (6)
- 14 Otherwise known as the Eucharist, Breaking of Bread, the Lord's Table (4,9)
- 17 'So that after I have preached to others, I — will not be disqualified for the prize' (1 Corinthians 9:27) (6)
- 19 Attend to (3,2)
- 22 Approximately (Acts 4:4) (5)
- 23 Tea rite (anag.) (7)
- 24 Rule of sovereign (8)
- 25 Test (anag.) (4)

Down

- 1 The name of the street where Judas lived in Damascus and where Saul of Tarsus stayed (Acts 9:11) (8)
- 2 'The playing of the merry — , sweet singing in the choir' (5)
- 4 'We have been saying that — — was credited to him as righteous' (Romans 4:9) (8,5)
- 5 Dr Martyn — Jones, famous for his ministry at Westminster Chapel (5)
- 6 Port at which Paul landed on his way to Rome (Acts 28:13) (7)
- 7 Observe (Ruth 3:4) (4)
- 8 Minister of religion (6)
- 13 'I am — of this man's blood. It is your responsibility' (Matthew 27:24) (8)
- 15 'Greater love has no one than this, that he — — his life for his friends' (John 15:13) (3,4)
- 16 Archbishop who calculated that the world began in 4004BC (6)
- 18 'No one can — the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit' (John 3:5) (5)
- 20 Establish by law (5)
- 21 Product of Gilead noted for its healing properties (Jeremiah 46:11) (4)

Answers: on page 43 (no cheating!!)



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Reflected Faith: the Gathered Church

Doesn't the simple pleasure of going to church and exchanging the peace at Sunday worship seem long ago now? These days, we are not even allowed into our churches!

But we can take comfort when we think back to the Apostles who were commissioned to build God's Church. After the first Pentecost, what did they do? They didn't rush out and build church buildings. No! Rather the people gathered together, in their own homes.

Clearly, we can't physically 'gather' just now, but we have the technology to 'gather' together, both in real time and at a later time. And it is important to do so. There is something powerful when we pray together rather than alone. Try phoning a friend with the same written prayer and saying it together. How does that feel? Any different from saying it on your own?

So, THE Church, which is alive and well in you and me, will find new ways to be together. After all, the early Christians had the added complication of being persecuted, often to death, for their faith. And yet they persisted.

Perhaps we could each sit at our dining table at a set time, with one or two items before us, such as a small glass of wine, a lit candle, stones, and a cross. Indeed, anything that reminds us of our Risen Saviour. We could then 'share' this time in praying the same prayers and knowing that we are part of an eternal fellowship that is only temporarily divided.

This month: What will you use to reflect and encourage your faith? What items naturally around your home would bring others to your mind, help you to concentrate and allow your spirit to fly with the Holy Spirit? Who will you be connecting with to pray?



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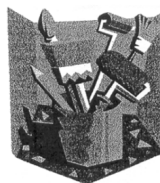
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Florence Nightingale

the founder of modern nursing

Florence Nightingale was born 200 years ago, on 12th May 1820. Best known as the Lady with the Lamp who saved many lives in the hospitals of the Crimean War, she was also a social reformer, a statistician and the founder of modern nursing.

She was named after the Italian city of her birth, but the family moved back to England the following year, and she was brought up in Derbyshire. Here – and elsewhere – she had several experiences that she believed were calls from God to devote her life to the service of others. She never married, but among her several close friends was Sidney Herbert, who became Secretary of War and helped to make her work in the Crimea possible. Some claim that she reduced the death rate in hospitals there from 42% to 2%. She introduced hand-washing and other hygiene improvements, but she never claimed personal credit for reducing the death rate.

Her work inspired nurses in the American Civil War, and in 1883 she became the first recipient of the Royal Red Cross. In 1907, she was the first woman to be awarded the Order of Merit. She died in 1910. Her image appeared on the reverse of £10 banknotes issued by the Bank of England from 1975 until 1994.

It is a fitting tribute to her that the emergency hospital just opened at the ExCel Centre in London is called the NHS Nightingale Hospital

Baby sitting

We encouraged our 18-year-old daughter to find a job to help pay for her college education. One day she came home with five applications, and later that evening we read them. Under 'Previous Employment', she listed 'Baby sitting'. And under 'Reason for Leaving' she wrote, 'They came home'.

Life in quarantine

Full marks to Jamie Oliver for his Channel 4 series, 'Keep Cooking and Carry On'. He showed us how to make tasty meals with basic ingredients and a minimum of fuss.

The pandemic prompted other encouraging responses. One mother in the 'at risk' category said her adult children thought she was immortal until now. Now they ring her every day to see how she's getting on. An elderly clergyman had offers to shop from two new neighbours whom he hardly knew. The whole nation stopped taking the National Health Service for granted and started showing gratitude. Telephone, television, the internet and email prevented many from going stir-crazy. Some even tried the cryptic crossword, though newcomers should be warned it takes years to learn its secrets!

The isolation was tough for many. Isolated families had to get used to each other's company and foibles for long periods, away from the park or beach. Couples were parted from each other by distance or illness. Those living alone were cut off from visitors and communal activities. Churchgoers missed Holy Communion at Easter for the first time. That should help us identify with millions of Christians across the world who have to pray in secret because their neighbours would persecute them if they did so publicly.

Alone-ness, rather than loneliness, can be productive. Albert Einstein valued time alone, when he could "go for long walks on the beach so that I can listen to what is going on inside my head." Isaac Newton's greatest discoveries began when he escaped the effects of the bubonic plague, by returning home to the family farm in Lincolnshire. He had time to observe what was going on around him and, yes, that did include watching the famous apple fall.

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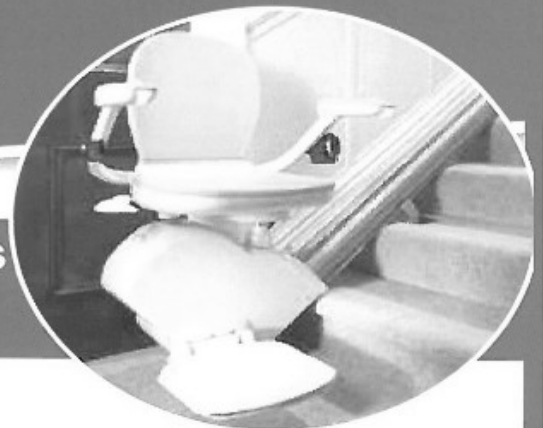
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My dear Nephew Darren



It seems that the basics of parish ministry are no longer taught in theological colleges. Don't you know anything about consulting your diary in public? When you are asked if you are free on a certain date, accepted practice is to open it so that the enquirer cannot quite see. You then shake your head sadly, saying you are committed to blessing a new tea urn, or on some other vital ecclesiastical activity that day. Then you regretfully give your apologies. You do not open the thing in full view of your enquirer, so he can see the blank pages! Really, it serves you right that you are now committed to going on Scout camp.

The last time I agreed to pay the Scouts a visit was when I found that there was a splendid restaurant only a mile away from their camp. I arrived and parked my car by the side of the river where they were all canoeing, wound down the car window and made encouraging noises for some minutes before explaining I had to find a garage for petrol.

Several hours later, after an excellent lunch, I drove to where they were now rock climbing, wound down the car window and made encouraging noises for some minutes before explaining that I had a standing committee to return to that evening. It was a splendid day.

You, however, will experience the charms of two days under canvas. Whatever site for your tent you choose, it will be the one that floods first. The early hours will undoubtedly find you wading about in water in the pitch dark, retrieving your sleeping bag and clothes – which you will then have to wear for the rest of the day. Watch out for the food, as well: all camp food contains grass and usually sheep droppings. This will make you ill, though for some reason Scouts thrive on it.

Whatever the weather and whatever activities you do each day, you will end up wet, chilled and bruised. At least your evenings will be warm, for you are bound to spend them at Casualty, with youngsters suffering from sprained ankles or dislocated shoulders.

My only advice is to use those hours in Casualty to practise the art of opening your diary in a way that only YOU can see it.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

As the lockdown seemed to become a certainty, the three musketeers (Tony, Diane and Judy) all moved in together to keep each other company. What a blessing that has proved to be – only one lot of shopping too! Tony has been gardening – painting fences, digging and planting flowers and fruit canes to grow for the summer, reminding us that God's gifts give us a promise of happier days.

We have also been crafting – 90 laundry bags for NHS staff plus lots of rainbow badges, magnets and keyrings as fundraisers for the NHS. We have been blessed with the good friends that have dropped things off when we needed them, and also with our local shops which have served us cheerfully and provided pretty much all we needed. It does make you realise that we need rather less than we thought we did. We have baked, sharing what we have made with friends and neighbours.

Above all, we have delighted in our grandchildren, albeit at a distance. We have played bingo and shared treasure hunts, all thanks to the magic of video calling. We have enjoyed their arts and crafts – rainbows a plenty. The weather has allowed us to sit in the sunshine, chatting and knitting, and drinking lots of tea. It has been a simpler lifestyle; less hectic than normal, with lots of time for reflection about what really matters. Stay safe everyone and look after each other.

God Bless

Judy Clements, Diane Spencer and Tony Steventon



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Leave your dandelions alone

When mowing your lawn, avoid cutting your dandelions. That is the advice of the president of the British Ecological Society, Prof Jane Memmott. It will help to save the bees.

She explains: “Dandelions are a fantastic source of pollen and nectar for the early pollinators in particular. If they were rare, people would be fighting over them, but because they’re common, people pull them out and spray them with all sorts of horrible things when they should just let them flower. If you leave the lawn to three or four inches, then dandelions, clover and daisies can flower and then you end with something like a tapestry, and it’s much nicer to sit there and watch the insects buzzing about.”

Prof Memmott encourages everyone to get a bee hotel for their garden. “There’s nothing nicer than being sat in a chair with a glass of wine and watching the bees going in and out of your own personal little beehive. Even just a potted plant on a doorstep will provide lunch for a bee or a fly or a butterfly.”

(Editor - I've put this in as I need all the excuses I can get!)

Crossword Answers.

ACROSS: 1, Stop. 3, Call upon. 9, Regular. 10, Octet. 11, Inner. 12, Hudson. 14, Holy Communion. 17, Myself. 19, See to. 22, About. 23, Iterate. 24, Monarchy. 25, Stet.

DOWN: 1, Straight. 2, Organ. 4, Abraham’s faith. 5, Lloyd. 6, Puteoli. 7, Note. 8, Cleric. 13, Innocent. 15, Lay down. 16, Ussher. 18, Enter. 20, Enact. 21, Balm.

SERVICES FOR THE MONTH

As we explore what it means to do church differently, we will continue to send you electronically the Sunday Readings for your personal use.

If you are aware of people at the moment who may benefit from receiving this readers sheet, please let us know.

Currently all church services and groups including all children's and young people groups are postponed until we receive new advice from the Church of England and the government.

Please Stay In and Stay Safe.

Visit the C of E online page

There is now a range of digital resources for to you connect with God at this difficult time. These include:

Time to Pray app: <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/time-to-pray>, which is free and has an accompanying daily audio offering on Sound-Cloud and iTunes.

Mental health reflections (<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/mental-health-resources/supporting-good-mental-health>)

Tips to tackle isolation (<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/mental-health-resources/dealing-loneliness-and-isolation-five-top-tips>)

Finally, there are the Church's smart speaker apps, which provide a range of Christian resources. <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/our-smart-speaker-apps> In March alone, the number of people using the Alexa app rose by more than 70 per cent.

More details at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>