

SFS

De Trinitate

Slimbridge, St. John

Purton, St. John

Sharpness, St. Andrew

JULY 2020



50p

Trinitate 2

MINISTRY TEAM

VICAR: Revd. Bill Boon Email: bill.boon@btinternet.com
The Vicarage Sanigar Lane, Newtown (01453) 811 360 *Day off - Monday*

COMMUNITY CHAPLAIN: Revd. Mary Tucker
Hinton Cottage, Hinton. (01453) 811 105
Email: marycountry12@gmail.com

READER: Mr. Stilman Davis
Orchard Lea, Churchend, Slimbridge. (01453) 890 783
Email: stilman.davis@tolutim.co.uk

WORSHIP LEADERS:
(*Slimbridge*) **Mr David Carrington**
Email: davidwsp1@yahoo.co.uk

(*Sharpness*) **Mrs Carol Bailey** (01453) 810 850

**For Baptisms, Confirmations, Home Communions,
Wedding Arrangements etc...**

Please contact the Vicar.

Benefice Website: www.heuristika.co.uk/lfgdiscussion/

CHURCHWARDENS

Mrs Margaret Price (*Purton*) The Mill House, Purton (01453) 811 250
Ms Katrina Bailey (*Sharpness*) 8 Jubilee Way (01453) 810 850
Mr David Carrington (*Slimbridge*) 8 Lancelot Court (01453) 890 031
Vacancy - Slimbridge Warden

Parochial Church Council Officers

Sharpness with Purton

Mrs Carol Bailey (*Secretary*) 8 Jubilee Way (01453) 810 850
Mr Peter Crews (*Treasurer*) 67 Oldminster Road (01453) 811 370

Slimbridge

Mrs Jill Joyce (*Secretary*) *Fieldview, St. John's Road* 07871732691
Email: joyce762@btinternet.com

Mr Pieter Koole (*Treasurer*) April Cottage, Shepherds Patch
Email: koole.pieter@googlemail.com

As I put 'pen-to-paper' – although actually I don't, because just like 'Scotty' of 'Star Trek' fame I simply say "computer" and the wonders of modern technology kicks in and everything I say appears on the screen. I digress. As I put 'pen-to paper' I note that this is the fourth month that I've been producing the parish magazine under lockdown conditions. On the whole I think that the online edition has served reasonably well, although I know that not everyone has the facility to receive an electronic version. However, things are changing. From this month I will be publishing a printed version of the magazine – you may be reading this from a paper page – which initially is going out to subscribers in the Sharpness and Purton area of our benefice. My particular thanks to Mary Tucker, who as has kept in touch with many folk during the lockdown, for organising the distribution.

It is great news that from the 4th July many businesses that have been forced to close will be reopening and among those will be churches. Currently our churches are open daily for a restricted period, not for visitors but for individuals who wish to use the space for quiet personal prayer – I hope that you have had opportunity to make use of the chance to go in. From the 4th July it will be possible to gather again for Sunday worship and no doubt many churches will be making every effort to ensure that they can do this. As I write this we are waiting for instructions from our bishops as to how parishes will be allowed to proceed. I would guess that it will be a little while yet before we see the return of Sunday worship, and even then, it will still be with restrictions.

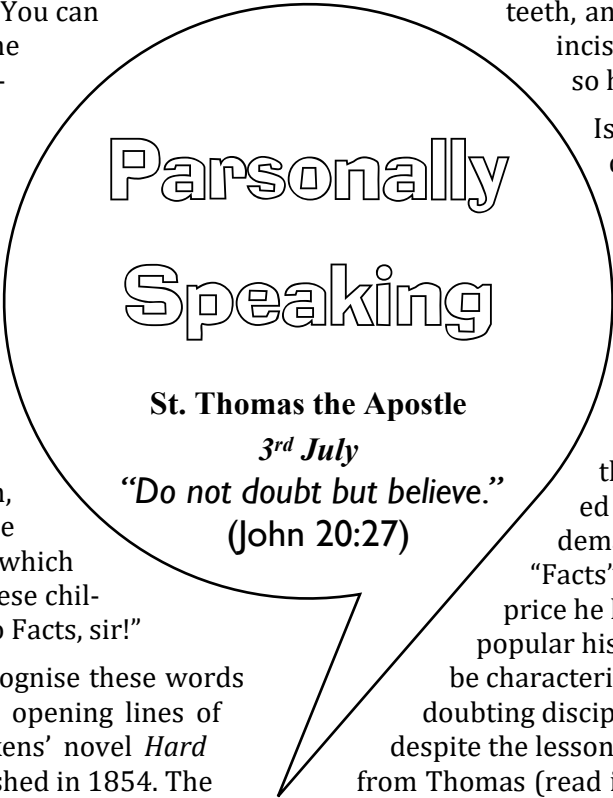
Churches Open Daily. . .

Sharpness – 9am – 2pm
Purton – 10am – 2pm
Slimbridge – 9am – 12noon

“Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else - root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!”

You may recognise these words they are the opening lines of Charles Dickens’ novel *Hard Times*, published in 1854. The story is set in the fictitious Victorian industrial Coketown, and the speaker is the schoolteacher Thomas Gradgrind. In Gradgrind’s world there is no room for imagination or, as he calls it, Fancy – the enemy of Fact. The father of one of his pupils, Sissy, is involved with the circus – to Gradgrind the epitome of Fancy. When Gradgrind asks Sissy (whom he insists on calling “girl number twenty”) to define a horse,

she is stumped. Another pupil, the colourless Bitzer, offers a zoological definition: “Quadruped. Gram-inivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye teeth, and twelve incisive...” and so he goes on.



Parsonally Speaking

St. Thomas the Apostle

3rd July

“Do not doubt but believe.”
(John 20:27)

Isn’t it wonderful then, how the apostles teach by bad example? Like the Utilitarian Mr Gradgrind, the flat-footed St Thomas demands the

“Facts”. And the price he has paid in popular history is to

be characterised as the doubting disciple. And yet despite the lesson we learn

from Thomas (read it in John 20:24-29), it’s arguably the most common and enduring misconception - and possibly the most off putting thing - about the Christian faith, that it all boils down to having to accept certain things as historical fact.

That’s not to say that Christians don’t believe that Jesus truly died and rose again. Indeed, many maintain that every single word of the Bible has been inspired by God and,

as such, is 100% true. But unless you're a professional specialist in the field of archaeology, history, or theology, no Christian life is profitably spent raking over the past or trying to prove the finer points of ancient Middle-Eastern history. And that's not to undermine the work done by historians and theologians.

But the Christian faith should live, breathe and exist fully in the present and the future. If we become caught up in the game of historical accuracy, we risk deadening our faith and passing over aspects of Christianity which are infinitely more pressing and valuable – such as learning how to pray, growing richer in deep faith, and finding new ways to love and enact love towards other people.

Isn't it wonderful to look at the work done by some of the great modern scientists? Because it seems that the more facts they produce, the greater the mystery which emerges. Again that's not to undermine the work they do but, just as it's impossible to visualise a horse if we go by Bitzer's definition, life simply eludes factual definition. Yet, the human urge to try to limit life by shoehorning it into a factual context is very common, as the two Thomases – Gradgrind and the apostle – demonstrate in their different and particular ways.

Faith in the 21st century needs imagination, vision, creativity and even fantasy to thrive – but, at the same time, if we don't anchor it in reality, it becomes disembodied and floats free. In this way, we run the risk of ending up like one of Dickens' other famous characters – Wilkins Micawber of *David Copperfield* fame – who, though constantly in financial crisis, is ever optimistic that “something will turn up”. Predictably, he ends up in debtors' prison. Faith is no fanciful circus ride but needs expression in reality.

What part do we allow vision and imagination to play in our lives and in our faith? Are we running too fast to take notice of them or, like the apostle, stubbornly demanding evidence before we'll believe anything other than what's before our eyes? We might well envy Thomas' apostolic privilege – that Jesus stood before him and gave him the proof he hankered after. But then again, perhaps we are the privileged ones; because without evidence, facts, or proof, we have to fly by the seat of our faith, keeping it alive, un-deadened by factual or historical certainty.

Stick to Facts, sir!” was Gradgrind's response. Ours is to echo Thomas' simple words: “My Lord and my God!”

Historical Snippets

*Taken from the Parish archives
held at St Johns Church Slimbridge;*

*Years ago, each of the local parish churches submitted their news to a publication called 'The Parish Magazine'. Contributors came from quite a large area including: Lower Cam; Coaley; Eastington; Frocester; North Nibley; Stinchcome; and *Slymbridge. (Old English spelling) It was printed by: O. E. Hill, Cam, Gloucestershire, for the cost of 2d (tuppence) per copy.*

This month's historical snippet is taken from July 1938

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

Slymbridge: St John the Evangelist:

Rector: Rev. W.H. Thomas, *M.A.*
Church wardens: Mr. R. C. Compton and Mr. P. J. Wherrett;
Church Council: Sec. Mrs. R. C. Compton;
Organist: Mr Oliver Hill;
Deputy Parish Clerk. Verger and Sexton; Mr. Hobbs.

Acknowledgements – Gifts

We desire to acknowledge, with grateful thanks the receipt of the following further gifts for our Church: -

- 1) A book for the children's corner, entitled "Scenes from the life of our Lord", and
- 2) A number of Cassocks and surplices for augmenting the choir.

The donors wish to remain anonymous. Both gifts are useful. We are glad to find that the children's corner pleases the children, that they use it for reading and prayers, that they love to come regularly week by week to clean it and bring fresh flowers for the vases and pitcher, and generally appreciate it very much.

Through the kindness of the donors of the Choir Robes (Two friends of the Rector, in Bristol), we have already been able to admit and robe four fresh choir boys, to furnish our young men who had outgrown the cassocks they were wearing, with larger robes, and whose services we shall now be able to retain in the choir, and we have several gentleman's full size cassocks. For gentleman in the Parish possessing the necessary vocal talent, who would like to offer themselves to the Rector for admission.

Open Air Service

The annual August Bank Holiday Open Air service this year on Sunday, July 31st, will take place as usual on the Canal Bank at Shepherds Patch about 7.30pm after shortened evensong. The service will be conducted and addressed by Mr. J. W. Rowbotham, (Diocesan Reader of The School House, Eastington.

The Annual Garden Fete.

Balance sheet has been made up and will be presented to the Church Council at their meeting on Monday, July 4th. After that, it will be pinned up in the Church Porch, where it can be seen and will be published in these columns in next month's magazine.

Catechism Outing

Arrangements have been made for the children entitled to do so, to go to Weston Super Mare for their annual outing on Saturday July 9th, leaving Coaley Station at 8.25am. Any parents wishing to accompany their children may do so, and indeed, we shall be most pleased to welcome them on the trip; and they will procure their own Railway Tickets at the Ticket Office. Tea is again being provided by Messer's Huntley, at the Beach Restaurant on the Sea Front at 4.30pm. We hope all will spend a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Church Finances

I am glad to be able to say that there has been some small response to the Appeal on behalf of the Council, which was printed in last month's magazine asking for additional subscribers to the Church Envelope scheme. There are still many parishioners and Church of England members, who might belong, and so contribute a little share towards the upkeep of their old Parish Church. Any whose eyes scan this, and who feel they could, and would like to do a little, however small, please send in their names to me, as soon as possible.

Mother's Union Festival

In spite of very bad weather on May 31st a very happy party of mothers set out for the Deanery Festival at Cirencester. The heavy rain did not damp our spirits in the least and a most enjoyable outing was spent. The service in the most beautiful old Parish Church at Cirencester was conducted and the address was given by Canon Westmacott, the Vicar. After the service, as it still continued to rain heavily, we were driven to Bingham Hall, where we all enjoyed a really excellent tea. Continuing on our journey to Cheltenham, we spent the evening looking at shops and various places of interest in the town, arriving home about 9.30pm. G.M.T.

Rev Bill Thomas. - Rector

NB: Access to our Parish Archive records: Our records are not complete, this may be because the records were not strictly kept month after month, (bearing in mind there was a war on at that time) or sadly, some have disappeared for one reason or another. Therefore, anyone who may wish to view these archive records will be by supervised access by arrangement. Please contact the Vicar, me or indeed, any of the PCC members when access can be arranged but sadly, not to take away.

David Carrington [Vicar's Church Warden]

Many during lockdown, have enjoyed making bread; working with yeast and dough is very therapeutic!

Our Daily Bread

*Give us we pray
Our bread for today
Or, Lord, at least
Provide us with yeast!
We'll feast our eyes
To see the yeast-dough rise
And no fun we will lack
As we then knock it back,
Once more it proves,
When to the oven it moves
That it shouldn't be made in haste
For when it comes out
We can let out a shout
What nice fresh bread to taste!*

By Nigel Beeton

From the Registers - May 2020

	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Gift Aid</u>	<u>Envelopes</u>	<u>Cash</u>
<u>Sharpness:</u>	0	£75	£0	£0
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	SURPLUS (+ / -)	
For the Month:	£75	£317.12	-£242.12	

From 1st Jan. 2020 St. Andrew's has spent **£1,726.40** more than it has received

<u>Purton:</u>	0	£60	£0	£0
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	SURPLUS (+ / -)	
For the Month:	£60	£113.65	-£53.65	

From 1st Jan. 2020 St. John's has spent **£1,867.35** more than it has received

<u>Slimbridge:</u>	0	£415	£0	£0
Land Rents:				£261.94
Interest on Investments:				£283.08
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	SURPLUS (+ / -)	
For the Month:	£960.02	£1,394.66	-£434.64	

From 1st Jan. 2020 St. John's has spent **£680.13** more than it has received

*The above figures reflect the fact that our churches are closed
and therefore not receiving their usual funding.
However, as can be seen there are still bills to pay.*

FUNERALS:

We commended to the Lord's keeping:

HENRY EDWARD REEVES (*Berkeley Cemetery*)

5th June

**Shortened funeral - Quarantine restrictions in place*

Creature Feature



Close Attention to Text

Written by Julia Mourant

Luke 14:25-end. . .

Now large crowds were travelling with Jesus; and he turned and said to them, 'Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish."

Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

'Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure heap; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!'

This is uncompromising teaching, yet there is liberation here. the invitation is not to unwilling sacrifice of what we hold dear but to joyful freedom. Think of a time when you gave something up, whether possessions or an attachment to an idea, aspiration or position. It happens in stages, as our grip is loosened. as our 'treasures' finally fall from our grasp, so often we wonder what made it so hard.

A nun described going from her community, after a life of study and teaching, to a simple hermitage, divesting herself of books, papers, and the talks she had given. Recognizing how much this represented her achievements and her learning, the tough process brought inner

cleansing, new availability and clarity. We rarely engage voluntarily with such stripping back.

Following Jesus will be hard if we can't travel light. He invites us not to wait until change or circumstance rips our security blankets away. Travel with luggage can be stressful and exhausting, but what do we really need? Sheri Hostetler's poem 'Instructions' invites us to live only with one or two things that will fit 'lightly in your pocket'.

Every spiritual tradition understands the wisdom of non-attachment. Jesus invites his followers to cut the cord that binds us to what is not truly life giving. When we try to hang onto things, people, status, personal ambitions and agendas, following Jesus is constant compromise and struggle. Let it go.

Faithful Creator,
whose mercy never fails:
deepen our faithfulness to you
and to your living Word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.



New Archbishop of York to be confirmed

Bishop Stephen Geoffrey Cottrell will be confirmed as the 98th Archbishop of York this month.

The service, at 11am on Thursday 9th July, will be broadcast entirely via video conference due to the Coronavirus restrictions.

The service, which had been due to take place in York Minster, will be in two parts. A legal ceremony with readings, prayers and music, will be followed by a film marking the start of Bishop Stephen's ministry as Archbishop of York.

Bishop Stephen Cottrell says: "I am looking forward to beginning my ministry as the 98th Archbishop of York. This isn't quite how I imagined it would begin. It is certainly the first time an Archbishop's election will have been confirmed via video conference. But we're all having to re-imagine how we live our lives and how we inhabit the world.

"These are difficult times. My hope is that through this service the love of God that is given us in Jesus Christ will shine out, perhaps even to those who while never attending a service in York Minster, might have a look online

Following in the footsteps of my many predecessors, I look forward to serving our nation and bringing the love and peace of Christ to our world, especially here in the north."

The service will be available on the Church of England website. Arrangements for Bishop Stephen's enthronement service will be announced later in the year.



Smile for a While!

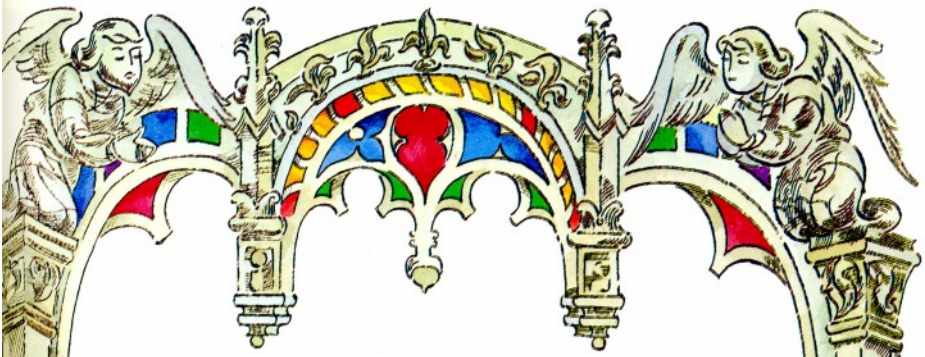
On the first day, God created the dog and said, "Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. For this, I will give you a life span of twenty years." The dog said, "That's a long time to be barking. How about only ten years and I'll give you back the other ten"? So God agreed.

On the second day, God created the monkey and said, "Entertain people, do tricks, and make them laugh. For this, I'll give you a twenty-year life span." The monkey said, "Monkey tricks for twenty years? That's a pretty long time to perform. How about I give you back ten like the Dog did"? And God agreed.

On the third day, God created the cow and said, "You must go into the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer's family. For this, I will give you a life span of sixty years." The cow said, "That's kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. How about twenty and I'll give back the other forty"? And God agreed again.

On the fourth day, God created man and said, "Eat, sleep, play, marry and enjoy your life. For this, I'll give you twenty years." But man said, "Only twenty years? Could you possibly give me my twenty, the forty the cow gave back, the ten the monkey gave back, and the ten the dog gave back? That makes eighty, okay"? "Okay," said God, "You asked for it."

So that is why for our first twenty years, we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves. For the next forty years, we slave in the sun to support our family. For the next ten years, we do monkey tricks to entertain the grandchildren. And for the last ten years, we sit on the front porch and bark at everyone.



Quotes of the Month

Miscellaneous thoughts on our Christian pilgrimage

God can do wonders with a broken heart if you give Him all the pieces. - *Victor Alfsen*

Most of our comforts grow up between our crosses. -
Edward Young

Prayer is not an argument with God to persuade Him to move things our way, but an exercise by which we are enabled by His spirit to move things His way. -
Anon

We forget that we do not inherit the earth from our parents, but we borrow it from our children. This world is not ours to despoil and destroy. It is the gift of God, and through its fecundity and beauty, is one of the chief ways in which God speaks to all nations. -
Andrew Dotchin

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger. - *Anon*

Signs & Symbols: a 'Holding Cross'

The Revd Dr Jo White reflecting on symbols in our churches.

Many churches today are using social media to hold public services – either together at the same time or uploaded so you can listen and watch at any time and worship in your home when it is convenient for you.

I find that having a 'prayer space' when I join, as well as when I pray alone, enables me to enter into that time of holiness quicker and more fruitfully.

It's like when you physically go to a church building for a service. Your hand holds the door handle and you choose to enter into a sacred space.

Not many of us have the luxury of a separate space where we currently live, and in many ways, I prefer not to distinguish prayer life from everyday life. After all, where does one end and the other begin? God is everywhere, in every room in the house. He's no less in my home or yours than He is in our locked church buildings. He's with me when I pray and when I eat, or cook, or watch TV and so on.

One item I appreciate is a cross that I can hold. Ideally one that completely fits into my hand.

There are wooden 'Holding Crosses' that you can make or buy especially for this purpose, but you can use any material. Perhaps you could make one out of felt and stuff it, to give it form and solidity.

I have one made from an old plastic book binding strip, which I cut to size. One-piece slots into the other, to form the cross shape.

What I appreciate about the holding cross is its firmness, it reminds me that Christ is my firm foundation; that God is solid and dependable. It reminds me also that whatever happens I will cling to Him. And it tells me that as I hold that cross in my hand so I pray that He will hold me forever, never letting me go or fall.

See what materials you have from which you could make a Holding Cross. What feelings and thoughts come to you as you use it in your prayer and worship time?

Out of the Silence . . .

The monthly journal of the journey of a Priest, Contemplative and Community Chaplain beginning to emerge from lock-down!

I'm writing this in late June to get it to Bill in good time for publishing but also to be as up to date as possible and, who knows, by the time it's in the magazine it may be a 'real' one as well as on-line. If/when it is a paper version please be assured it will have been delivered by suitably cleansed and probably 'gloved' deliverers – if you have any worries leave it somewhere for 72 hours by which time any stray viruses will have given up and expired!!!

Once again I'm using my latest journal as the source of these thoughts – all our experiences of this 'unprecedented time' (one does get a little tired of that phrase!) are different but I think it's good to share them.

Sunday 21st June 2020

You give us this day with your blessing. We give it back to you as your special day with thanksgiving.

'This is the day that the Lord has made,
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.'

from Morning Prayer

Today, after I've said Morning Prayer down at the little church in Purton and rung the bell to tell everyone that I'm there praying for them, I shall leave the building open! Today for the first time in a long time the church here will be open for private prayer for 4 hours – let it be well used, Lord, let its prayerful spirit and heritage be a comfort.

Wednesday 24th June 2020

Only the second time this year I've come outside in the 'cool of the day' to spend this time with you and your twittering, cawing, mooing, roaring creation. The roaring? Well things are beginning to return to normal – an airliner crosses above heading for Heathrow and because of the easterly breeze I can hear distant traffic on the A38 and M5 as many more people re-join the rush hour (does 6am count as rush hour?). Yesterday came the announcement that, with suitable spacing and safety procedures, pubs, restaurants, hairdressers (thank God!) and churches (even greater thanks to God) can open for business from July 4th – less than a fortnight away. There is still risk, care is still re-

quired but if not ‘the beginning of the end’ then perhaps it is the ‘end of the beginning’ as a great man once said in a very different context.

I thought I’d be madly rejoicing at this time but I’m actually quite nervous, reluctant even to step out, to emerge from my safe solitude and ‘hermitage’, so I need to get out and get on with it – I’ll do some ‘garden visiting’ to some of those I’ve been keeping in contact with by phone (I’ll check with them first of course). After all, I don’t emerge unprotected – if it is your will, Lord, you will keep me safe,

‘Call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you and you shall honour me.’

Psalm 50

You are, of course, as ever our very practical and homely God – you understand our fears – I love the fact that in today’s reading from Mark 5, the healing/raising of Jairus’ daughter, your first instruction is ‘to get her something to eat.’ “Whatever tough times or difficult circumstances we are going through now, may we have the faith of Jairus . . . God will surely deliver us.” (words from Scripture Union Bible reading notes).

‘. . . we offer you the life of this new day, give us grace to love and serve you.’

from Morning Prayer

Here comes Freddie the pheasant chuntering past me and sending me in to begin the new day.

Thursday 25th June 2020

And here I am again, sitting in the golden early garden with a dawn chorus of more chuntering pheasants who are remarkably tame and un-phased as long as I sit still here sipping my tea and slowly turning the pages of Bible and Prayer Book. Today I will do another ‘garden visit’ and it’s a wedding one – what a joy – we can have weddings again and this one so nearly got in before lock-down and then not quite – I’m so pleased for them! But again a slight nervousness – it’s only 3 months since I was ministering (if that’s a word?) but it feels an age! My job, in a moment to go and dig out all my ‘wedding stuff’ which hasn’t seen the light of day since last year!

Mmmm – a cool breeze rustles through all the leaves – hearing a slight noise I glanced round to check I didn't have a family of pheasants marching in through the open back door and got a lovely view through my 'new' back lobby and sunny kitchen and it strikes me that 'getting back to normal' is something I've been doing, or trying to do, for over a year now. February-June last year we were battling the flood as water bubbled up through the kitchen floor leading to major rebuilding and 3 months living without a bathroom or kitchen. Then in July the beginning of a long distance parental care saga which ended with me living away from home for half of most weeks until February this year. Then March . . . well we all know what happened then. None of this is earth shattering for me, all of it much less than many people cope with all the time, but it sort of explains to me why this little safe shell we've been living in since then is a little hard to leave. Just to encourage me to do so however a cuckoo calls from the copse and a bevy of noisy nesting sparrows chatter to me from the rooftop reminding me to get back to Morning Prayer and you, Lord. Yet I feel sure that my distracted and meandering thoughts have been a gift from you too, helping to explain me to myself whilst giving me a firm kick back into the world of community chaplaincy which is where you have called me to be.

'In God I trust and will not fear . . . '

Psalm 56

Some time later . . . I rarely return to this journal after my early morning stint but want to record, in joyful thanks to you, Lord, the fact (unsurprisingly of course) that once I got my wedding meeting preparation done I realised (unsurprisingly of course) that I hadn't forgotten what to do and that I was excited (unsurprisingly of course) as usual about going along and helping a couple fulfil their dream and, as if that weren't enough, you capped it all with words from Joshua 23,

'You know with all your heart and soul that not one of the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.'

More next month

Keep safe enjoy your 'bubbles' if you have them

With love and many blessings

Mary Tucker



Keep the Doors Open!

Church buildings: Times of national crisis show that they offer something precious to society, says John Inge.

Our churches shut their doors on the 23rd of March. They have been closed this year for longer than any other time since the interdict in the reign of King John, When Pope innocent third banned services in England between March 1208 and May 1213. This is likely to have very significant long-term effects, good and bad. On the positive side, the closure of our churches has catalyzed an extraordinary burst of creativity as far as online worship is concerned. a report, 'Everybody Welcome Online', observes that the church has been catapulted from an 'Odeon' Culture of the 1950s - one film only, like it or lump it - into a 'Netflix' culture, in which an extraordinary range of online worship is available at the press of a button. I have been delighted to hear of several accounts of people coming to faith as a result. no one wants to lose what is being gained through this new ministry.

I would proceed to say that the downside is that we are likely to see the closure of many churches because of the financial crisis into which the pandemic has thrown them. Some people, however, feel that this is good news, perceiving it as a *Kairos* moment, which will enable us to abandon all the buildings that they see as millstones around our neck.



One senior cleric published a piece on the ViaMedia website: “We can’t go back. . . to preserving bricks and mortar”. She yearns for congregations and weary wardens to be “released to *be* church, rather than being burdened with the responsibility of preserving bricks and mortar”, so that “the new life we have seen emerge in lockdown might blossom and flourish”.

Ranged against this approach, presumably, are those who like the 500 clergy who signed a letter pleading for clergy to be allowed to live stream from their churches, feel that even observing worship in churches, rather than stand at kitchen tables, is an important spiritual gift. Are they mistaken? I agree with Bishop Stephen Cottrell, who has observed that we have spent too long telling people off for loving their church buildings. Rather, we should fan that love into a fuller faith.

Our wonderful churches offer something far more profound than their architectural merit, which is unique and hard to define. It's perhaps best captured by novelists and poets. A church is “a serious house on serious earth” as Philip Larkin put it. The fact is that there are no other such places, and however, infrequently public worship takes place in them, they offer something very precious to our society. We shall lose that at our peril.

Dogcollar



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
1 Samuel 24

God chose Saul to be the King of Israel, but Saul chose to disobey Him. God said that the next king would not be Saul's son.

Saul didn't know that God had chosen David to be the next king.



David was very successful as a fighter and very popular.



David had to go on the run and hide.



One day, Saul and his army were in En-Gedi. Saul needed to pee, so he went into a sheep fold built next to a cave...

David and his men were hiding at the back of the cave!



David crept over and cut a piece off Saul's robe.



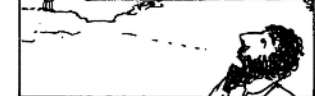
Then David felt bad.



David waited until Saul was far enough away then he shouted to him.



Your majesty, I could have killed you today, but I knew it was wrong. I want to prove to you I'm not trying to harm you.



David, you are better than me. I would have killed you but you were kind.



Now I know you will be the next king, but please look after my family.



David promised, and Saul and his army went home.



The Way I See It

Richard Harries considers the miracle of life.

Scientists have announced that there could be 36 advanced civilisations in the universe capable of communicating with us. This is not just a random guess. It is a statistical prediction based on the number of stars being formed and the fact that it takes about 5 billion years for life to evolve after a star has come into existence.

If some kind of communication ever did take place it would not surprise or shock religious believers, for they have never thought that God's creativity was limited to this earth. On a Biblical view human beings take their place with angels, archangels and the whole company of heaven. Moreover, theologians have sometimes speculated about how God would relate to another kind of world, perhaps one where things had gone better than ours?

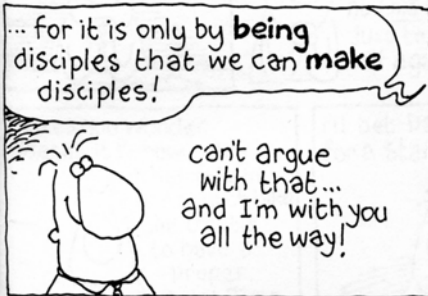
Whatever surprises there might be in discovering another advanced civilisation however, this is nothing, I think, before the sheer astonishment that there is rational life at all, whether on this earth or any other. I sometimes think that the big divide is not between believers and atheists but between those who remain amazed by the fact of being alive, able to think and choose and love, and those who take life for granted, as though it is somehow normal, and who are not brought up short before the wonder and mystery of existence.

In fact, during this lockdown, in which many people have slowed down and had more chance to enjoy nature I think there has been a general heightening of this sense. People have taken time just to look and listen, to experience the unique "thisness" of things, whether it is a leaf or bird song. Like many others I think there has also been a much deeper sense of how we belong together as human beings, - symbolised by the singing of Vera Lynn's song "We'll meet again".

Walt Whitman the American poet captures this sense well in his poem on miracles when he writes: "To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle, Every cubic inch of space is a miracle, Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same".

What stranger miracles are there? If we ever did communicate with another advanced civilisation it would be fascinating - but meanwhile, as Whitman says about our own life, here and now, on this earth-what stranger miracles are there?

DISCIPLES...



ROY MITCHELL



BONUS BALL SWEEPSTAKE



Bonus Ball Update. . .



As you will be very much aware, we suspended the bonus ball at the end of March due to the current lockdown situation. Please be assured that if you were in credit on that date your money is safe and will be moved to the date we can recommence play.



With this in mind, it would be good to start up again at the beginning of September. This will only be possible if everyone makes the effort to get their £4 either to the person who usually collects it or to the Vicarage. As this raises much needed funds for our church here in Sharpness, it would be great to get it back up and running as soon as practicable.



THANK YOU!

for your continued support



LETTERS TO UNCLE EUSTACE

Beware the spell-checker on your special service sheets!

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

When producing material for your magazine or church services, beware the computer spell-checker. We once let our own system check a Christmas carol sheet and, on the night, found ourselves obliged to sing “away in a manger”, mangers apparently being unknown to our machine.

If you use special sheets regularly, it seems a law of nature – as with metal coat hangers - that they all intermingle while no one is watching. Thus, on Easter Day, half the congregation will have been issued with sheets for Harvest, which will only become obvious once the service begins. The first hymn will be entirely lost while sidesmen scuttle about looking for replacements only to find that there won't be enough of them anyway and then the second hymn will be lost while others helpfully wander about church donating their sheets to those looking helpless and then trying to find someone to share with.

Never, ever, print on them ‘Do not take home’ as this will only ensure everyone does so. I have sometimes wondered if the instruction ‘Take this sheet home for reference’ would ensure that they stayed neatly arranged in the pews after the service. And if it is a service where babies are likely to be present, be assured that many of the copies will be returned half chewed and coated with bits of whatever the infant had for breakfast. There must be a market for paper treated with a child-repellent flavour for such occasions.

Anyone who thinks we are an unimaginative nation should visit a church after a special service to see how many places members of congregations can invent to hide the booklets: under kneelers, neatly folded and hidden inside hymn books, among flower arrangements and behind heating pipes so that no one can quite reach them. They then lurk there reproachfully for the next ten years until mice solve the problem.

No, stick to large, hard bound books. They are resistant to teeth and are too substantial to be hidden in pockets. Their only drawback is that they tend to fall victim to the pull of gravity at the quietest moments.

Your loving uncle,



Sue Gibson School of Gardening

Shepherd's Patch, Slimbridge

3-Term Courses in:

- **Garden Design (beginners)**
- **Garden Design & Management (improvers)**

Saturday Workshops on:

- **Pruning Shrubs & Roses (spring)**
- **Pruning Shrubs, Roses & Perennials (summer)**
 - **Growing & Training Fruit in Small Spaces (summer)**

**Call Sue Gibson
on 01453 890820
www.iteachgardening.co.uk**

'De Trinitate is published monthly By Revd. Bill Boon at Sharpness Vicarage
A an electronic version of this magazine is available in pdf - contact Bill Boon for details.