



St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter



Parish Room Bookings:
Emily Millar
Mobile: 07929934367

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Church enquiries to:
Revd Jonathan Gordon
01442 871547
revjagordon@googlemail.com

Thinking about the Past

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to make its impact, I was thinking this week about how previous generations have dealt with these types of challenges. A few years ago, I found a reference in the St Mary's burial register in the 1820s to a number of burials for parishioners who had died of cholera. The main impact was felt in London which endured a devastating cholera outbreak between 1831 until 1860. In 1849 it was estimated 53,000 Londoners died of the disease. It took a while for it to be accepted that the cause of the disease was polluted water. The breakthrough was provided by Dr John Snow who in 1854 identified that many of the victims in the Soho area had one thing in common, the use of a hand pump on Broad Street. In 2003 a poll of doctors in a magazine voted Snow the greatest doctor of all time.

John Snow had to deal with a huge amount of skepticism from medical and even religious opinion. One such perspective was that the epidemic was a punishment from God for the sins of the people and this view was held by the local curate of St Luke's Church, the Reverend Henry Whitehead. Whitehead wanted to help the local people and although he believed in the idea of divine wrath, he also thought that God's anger could be turned and the disease taken away. Although he disagreed with Snow, he worked with him and was able to help him track individual cases of the epidemic through his knowledge of the people of the parish. Whitehead provided a detailed report that proved Dr Snow was not only correct but that the cause was not God's anger, but rather, the consumption of polluted water. Whitehead recognized that it was primarily a

disease of the poor and actively campaigned for the repair of sewers and drains, alongside the provision of clean water. He was a sincere and caring priest whose response to the crisis was shaped by the evidence.

We are living in different times and the coronavirus is bringing its own challenges. As in the past, it is likely that the poor and those in urban areas will be having a different experience of the lockdown to others. For those working on the frontline in the NHS and in Care Homes their safety is dependent on the reserves or availability of PPE. There is also a rise in reports of domestic abuse and the ongoing mental health challenges of isolation, financial uncertainty and ongoing anxiety. These are very tough times. The present crisis has also led to the closure of the churches although this has led to a new appreciation of the opportunities provided by social media and putting services onto the facebook page.

One thing that I do believe from a faith perspective is that the whole experience of going through the lockdown has shown that despite the very real challenges there is a sense of empathy and compassion that unites us together. The generosity of volunteers in helping strangers, or the dedication of essential workers has once again shown that love and compassion and the desire to do something for others is a deep-rooted human instinct. As each generation has faced its own challenges and responded, we also have to dig deep and hold onto the God given gifts of faith, hope and love.

Rev Jonathan Gordon

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Reading the Psalms

For two thousand years, the psalms have formed the backbone of Christian worship. I was introduced to them as a child, singing metrical psalms. Some of them I know by heart. I knew the 23rd psalm before I could read; and we all learned psalm 100 at the request of the new queen, for her coronation. I recall learning psalm 121 at school and psalm 27 at Sunday School. Lines from the psalms people my memory: "Taste and see that the Lord is good"; "O send your light forth and your truth, let them be guides to me." You won't find the last words in the Bible: but they will be familiar to those who know the old metrical settings.

Recently we have let things slip. You could attend church for weeks on end without hearing a psalm. I regret this. "As pants the hart for water brook, my soul pants..."

In his blog yesterday, Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, commented that "The thing about reading the psalms every day, regardless of how we are feeling, is that the poets provide people with a vocabulary for the spectrum of human experience. From exuberant joy to the depths of despair, there is something for everyone."

Yesterday the psalm for morning prayer came from a group known as the hallel psalms, because they begin and end with one of the few words of Hebrew most of us will ever know: Alleluia! Praise the Lord! It includes one of those happy pictures of which the psalms are so full, of God, seated on high, looking down on the his creation in love, and seeing people in their need. "He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes... he gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children."

This is not the experience of everyone at every time. But it was the experience of the poet and his words have repeatedly given expression to the experience of God's people down the centuries.

We are in the days following Easter, the moment of God's great reversal, when by raising Jesus he turned our perception of life and death upside down. The psalmist had words for it: "Praise the Lord!" Or, in Hebrew, "Alleluia!"

David White

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The privilege of time to do things that are more meaningful

One of the lovely things about being at home everyday is the opportunity to be creative and to do the things we want to do, but never find the time to do them.

How many of us have a few projects on the go that are half finished? I certainly have more than two! As you probably know by now, my passion is sewing, all hand crafts, gardening and home baking, apart from being part of the ministry team at St Mary's Church. There just doesn't seem to be enough time in a day to do all this!

One thing we can do is start a rota for doing things and keeping to a routine in the house gives a valuable order to everything. Perhaps you have one too?

Without it, life can get a little bit muddled and we end up not knowing whether we are coming or going.

Just like routines and activities to keep order in our lives as we keep coronavirus contained by staying at home, we are learning to expressing ourselves in new ways. Seeing our families in a new found way through the technology in our homes. If you are a little older, like me, you have the facility, but haven't a clue in how to use it! But thankfully there is always someone happy to help and put us right. There is always the possibility that seeing our families this way might be more often than we might have done in our way of life before the confinement.

keeping healthy in body and in spirit when we engage in a variety of activities is good for us all. As much as we need to be active, we also need time to rest and have space to think. Whilst we enjoy this wonderful weather, resting in the garden and getting some warmth from the sun, it is a perfect combination. God has given us all the privilege of time to do the things that are more meaningful. I know of a few folk who have picked up their bibles and read for the first time in ages. They have been joining in discussions with friends on Skype, Facetime and Zoom. Something that is new in their lives and hopefully will be carried on.

It's a time where we can come nearer to God and He can come nearer to us.

We have just had a very different Easter time than we would have had normally, but Jesus is still our risen Lord from all those years ago and we still know that He is with us in everything we do, even to the end of time. His message of hope is for each and everyone of us and He is here with us in this time of isolation.

Perhaps there is a question that you have been pondering on? and would like the answer too? We are always here to support you and answer if we can.

We would love to hear from you. Contact details are on this website and very easy to find.

God bless and keep safe!

Peggy Sear

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2020 Choral workshop:

A Festival of Psalms.

Saturday July 25th

St Mary's Church, Northchurch.

Time: 1pm-5pm workshop.

Informal performance 6pm-7.15pm.

Contact Jenny Hoare on 07957498947 for booking and for more information:

music@stmarysnorthchurch.org.uk

A Flying Visit

Being so close to Heathrow and Luton airports the people of Northchurch are quite used to hearing aircraft flying high above them. The appearance however of a huge, grey aircraft flying extremely low over the village in early April came as a big (and noisy) surprise. It turned out to be an RAF Boeing C-17 Globemaster transport plane which was based at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire and was on a training flight. The pilot was practicing a series of landings and emergency take-offs on the deserted runway at Luton airport which at this time of year is normally occupied by aircraft taking holidaymakers abroad. The C-19 practiced this manoeuvre several times, swinging round after taking off to complete an elongated 360-degree circuit, the flightpath of which took it directly over Northchurch at a height of some 2,000 feet on two occasions. Fortunately, for those who missed it, Luton Airport recorded the C-17 landing and taking off. See below for a link to the video.

What many people do not know however, is that in 1912 another aircraft, albeit somewhat smaller, actually landed in Northchurch. The pilot was one of the great British aircraft pioneers, Geoffrey De Havilland, and he landed his bi-plane on a field at Durrants Farm whilst on a visit to two of his friends, Cecil and Alick Burney, who lived there with their widowed mother. De Havilland and the Burney

brothers had worked together a few years earlier whilst they were engineering apprentices at Messrs Willians & Robinson in Rugby, their common interest at that time being the development and building of motorcycles. De Haviland was later to sell his plans for his own motorcycle to the Burneys and move on to aircraft engine design; the rest is history. The Burneys would later develop and improve De Haviland's motorcycle designs and create one of the first commercial award-winning motorcycles. His visit to the Burneys over, De Haviland took off from the field watched by a crowd of intrigued villagers, many of whom had probably not seen an aircraft before.

Richard North



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMVxkPPGKp8>.

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No words to pray



A candle prayer

God,
Wherever you are,
I have no words to pray.
I am in the darkness,
Aching,
Lost,
In pain.

As I light my candle,
I reach out to you,
For my family and friends,
For the world around me,
For myself.
Give me strength
To face another day.
Shine your light into my
dark places
And help me to know
I am not alone.

Amen

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Hello from



everyone at St Mary's Northchurch and we do hope that everyone is safe and well.

Please do remember that we are here to help and support our community. If you or anyone you know is isolating or experiencing difficulties during this time, please do get in touch.

- ✂ Our Sunday morning service is now live on Facebook at 10am every Sunday morning.
- ✂ Every evening at 10pm, we have a short Night Prayer (Compline) service, live on Facebook.
- ✂ Both services are subtitled. Both will be available to watch afterwards.

Look at our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/stmarynorthchurch> for these services and for more information.

Stay well and keep safe!

A message from Terry Douris

If a group is undertaking a specific project related to and supporting people as a result of CoronaVirus COVID-19, I have some funding available. There are some rules relating to the allocation of this but I would be happy to discuss with any group.

Terry Douris

*County Councillor for Bridgewater Division
Cabinet Member for Education, Libraries and Localism*

Hertfordshire County Council

Phone: 01442 402273

Mobile 07818 580087

Email: terry.douris@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Church Fete Update

We are currently unable to make any decisions about the Church Fete until lockdown has been lifted, but it looks increasingly unlikely that the Fete as planned will take place in July.

We are still collecting items, possibly for a smaller event later on in the year.

Important: the items must be in good condition and suitable for a tombola. We have very limited storage space.

Please leave any good quality donations for the Fete in front of the Rectory.

Contacts for the Newsletter

Distribution to Valerie Clark, 07821 896734. Advertising & editorial by email to the Editor, Jill Hipson Jill.hipson@live.co.uk.

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