

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



Parish Church of St Guthlac
Knighton, Leicester LE2 3LF

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Sunday 3 May 2020 Fourth Sunday of Easter

A prayer for the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy,
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Guidance in Tough Times: “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16)

In the newsletter last week I encouraged us to add Bible reading to our daily routine, with the conviction that the wisdom and teaching of the Bible is a key way that God brings reassurance to us, even in the worst circumstances. I suggested that we all find, open, use and even memorize our Bible (or at least certain key scriptures!). This week I want to add a note of *caution*.

I say *caution* because the Bible is a powerful book. It has brought peace and purpose to many millions of people but it has also been misunderstood and misused. Over the centuries it has been banned, burnt and vilified. It has also been used as a justification for oppression, violence and prejudice. So we need to tread wisely and with some care when it comes to reading *and understanding* the Bible for ourselves.

Most of us read the Bible because we want to have some guidance and encouragement for our own daily life in the world as it is today, with all its complexities, uncertainties and challenges – and the Bible can certainly give us that! Before we get to that point however we have to learn to ask some basic but vitally important questions.

Firstly, we have to ask ourselves why we are doing this! If our intent is faithful and genuine then God will certainly honour that and help us to grow in our understanding, and this should be our prayer as we start. If, however, we are simply looking for reasons to dismiss or ignore the Bible, then we are unlikely to find any help for life in its pages.

Secondly, we need to ask ourselves if we appreciate the big picture, the whole story of God’s dealings with humankind and his rescue plan for us. If we have the big picture in mind then we will more easily make sense of the smaller part of the story that we are reading today.

Then there are three simple questions about the passage in front of us:

- what does it actually say?
- what did it mean to the writer and the first readers?
- how can we apply it to our lives today?

Each of those questions needs rather more unpacking, but even as they stand they provide us with the first steps towards finding the treasures of wisdom and grace that the Bible offers.

There is a final question too: what do other Christians make of my conclusions?

During the coronavirus epidemic and lockdown we are discovering afresh how important it is to be part of the church, the household of God. We need each other for support, encouragement, friendship and for shared wisdom – however much we may feel we are a Bible ‘expert’ or ‘novice’, we need the God-given wisdom of others to help us understand the Bible. It is a task we are given together because we are called to share life together.

Under lockdown we cannot meet as we would like to, but these conversations can still continue – we just need to say “I’ve been wondering if What do you think?” These are tough and extraordinary times, but God is with us and wants to shape us through his Word, ready for the new world that awaits us.

Keep safe and stay well.

Adrian

FOR YOUR PRAYERS Please remember those whom we have been asked to keep in our prayers. Please remember those who have died recently and their family and friends in your prayers. For other prayer requests, please contact a churchwarden.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN MALAWI.

As of 29 April, the World Health Organisation reported sporadic cases in Malawi with a total of 36 confirmed cases and 3 deaths. Please continue to prayer for our sisters and brothers in Northern Malawi and across the world as the nations of the world deal with the pandemic. Let us pray that the remoteness of many of these rural communities will provide an effective shield to the spread of the disease in areas where medical facilities would struggle to cope.

PRAYERS FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Please pray for all our local doctors, nurses, care workers and support staff, especially those who worship with us.

PRAYERS FOR USE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Please remember the booklet of prayers from the Church of England which you may find helpful.

FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND MEETINGS

All services and meetings are cancelled for the foreseeable future. The church is closed until further notice. Benefice wide plans for spiritual, pastoral and practical support during these difficult times are being put in place. We have set up contact between members of the congregation. **If you would like to keep in touch by telephone with others in the same situation for a chat and support please contact Tina.** Email: churchwardens@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk

ON-LINE WORSHIP

Virtual Sunday Service for the Knighton Benefice. Please look out for the email giving the link to this week's Sunday Service which will be available on YouTube from Sunday.

Sundays at 10am. Every Sunday at 10am on the [@DioceseofLeicester Facebook page](#) there will be a short pre-recorded video providing an opportunity to engage with the Gospel reading of the day. There will be simple prayers, a reading, a brief devotional homily and a creative interpretation of the Bible story by an artist, and a closing blessing. Just follow the Diocese of Leicester Facebook page and join with others around our diocese in experiencing God's word in a slightly different way.

The Community of the Tree of Life, our own Diocesan prayer community based near the Cathedral, is praying three times a day at 8am, noon and 9pm with a short and very simple service. www.leicestertreeoflife.org or www.facebook.com/LeicTreeofLife/

The Church of England also has a dedicated web page for information about a range of options for praying and worshipping together: www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online. 'Pray As You Go' (www.pray-as-you-go.org/) each morning for a simple Bible reflection

Don't forget to visit the St. Guthlac's website!

'Church is Changing' on the home page includes copies of reflections and links to the You Tube recordings of virtual services. Newsletters can found on the news page.

<http://www.stguthlac-knighton.co.uk/>

Each week we are meeting virtually for Compline/ Night Prayer at 8pm on a Wednesday.

It has proven a meaningful way to have fellowship and prayer together as well as being quite good fun, especially as we find our feet with the technology and more people join us each week.

You can join by just **phoning up** and inputting the code **or** using **'Zoom'** online. It has been democratic with several voices joining in with a line of liturgy each. If you would like to participate with a speaking part, please do contact Matthew by 4pm each Wednesday (revgough@gmail.com).

For Phone only: telephone this number **0131 460 1196**

When promoted input Meeting ID: **746 767 4408**

For internet using Zoom:

Join Zoom Meeting <https://leccofe.zoom.us/j/7467674408>

Input Meeting ID: 746 767 4408

BBC 1 Sunday Worship 10.45am (time may vary please check TV guide). This is also available for catch up on BBC iPlayer. The order of service is available at bbc.co.uk/orderofservice.

BBC Radio 4 Sunday Worship 8.10am

You can listen to the Sunday service on the radio at the given time, or if you have the 'Sounds' App you can listen to it whenever you want.

Collect & Readings for the Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Collect

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him,
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above,
where he reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

Acts 2: 42-47

Many were baptized and were added to the community. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

'Thought for the Day' ...

This week, I thought I would leave the 'Johannine Shepherds' to others, and concentrate on the reading from the Acts of the Apostles... Acts 2:42-47.

To think that in the Acts, St Luke is writing a 'history' of the early Church is largely mistaken. Here, he is giving us a clue to his intentions which span the whole of this, his second volume. In these few verses he paints a picture of a fledgling Church, a Church blessed by God, a Church 'ideal' in every way and a Church which

those who are 'looking through the windows' should really be part of! In the power of the Spirit post Resurrection of Jesus, in modern parlance, this is 'where it is at.' Theologians call this and similar works 'apologia', or 'apologetic' in character.

The picture painted is an 'ideal' one, one very attractive to the prospective Christian. Indeed, it may be based on a Church which had some, or all, of these characteristics and was perfectly flourishing in its infancy. But, that being said, Luke does seem to 'gild the lily' in painting a near perfect institution which history and even Luke himself suggests was not always the case. The Neronian persecutions and Paul's fallout with Barnabas(Acts 15:36-39) are examples of each.

But, what a fabulous picture nevertheless, a picture the early Church and we today would want to promote as the essence of the Church of which we are a part.

In some sense, we feel we will naturally fall short of this lukan ideal. For example, unless we are, say Benedictine Monks and Nuns, it is very hard for us to hold all things in common and distribute to others, as is suggested in the text. Also, miracles 'through' us...('by' is a mistranslation) ...are not hugely common as they seemed to be then. But nevertheless, there are features of sharing and commonality which on reading the text we find very attractive as indeed we should, and those who are looking for faith should too. So, the question is, what sort of picture of the Church, should we be showing to those who are looking in from the outside and to each other? Something akin to this passage is a good starting point and one which obviously needs adapting to the world of the 21st century. Our outward appearance and how we relate to each other paints a sort of picture which at its best, should draw others to the wonderful faith of which we are already a part.

SAF

Gospel Reading: John 10: 1-10

Jesus said to the Pharisees: ¹'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the

sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.’

A Reflection from Revd Aphro McCullough

I wonder how many of you watch the programme called A Yorkshire Farm? It’s about the life of shepherdess Amanda Owen, her husband Clive and their nine children (Yes I did say 9) on their sheep farm in the Yorkshire Dales. It’s a truly inspirational story that takes us through all the seasons showing us the beauty and the hardships of being a hill farmer and parents of a large family. All the children look after each other and share in all the joys and sorrows of life on the farm. The children, like the sheep are free to roam but when mum or dad calls they know it’s time to go in for tea, or to get ready for school or to help with chores. They hear the call and they respond.

Sometimes Amanda and Clive use quad bikes to get around the fields and moors, sometimes they walk. At lambing time they are outside at all times in all weathers looking for yews who might be in difficulty but otherwise allowing nature to take its course. Their sheep know them and trust them. Like the children they hear the voices of Amanda and Clive and they respond.

I see so many links between the Owens life and these two parables in John’s gospel and I could go on all day but I’ll try to stick to my 3 minutes.

The single point I want make today is this, if we hear Jesus’ voice, if we respond, if we walk through the gate of life into God’s presence

we will have life and have it to the full. In this very strange time when we all seem to be frantically filling our days with activity, when we may have become human doings and not human beings, let's try once again to listen for and hear the voice of Jesus in the quiet of our hearts and find the hope, the rest and the peace that he offers us today in this pandemic and beyond into the future.

I am reminded of the words of a hymn, familiar from childhood.

I heard the voice of Jesus say 'come unto me and rest

Lay down thou weary on, lay down, thy head upon my breast'.

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad

I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.

May Christ the good shepherd enfold *you* with love, fill *you* with peace, and lead *you* in hope, to the end of *your* days; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you* and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2020: 10th-16th May

I would normally be busy with Christian Aid week preparations now, but for obvious reasons there will be no door to door collection this year. Instead, you are encouraged to consider making a donation through the Christian Aid website or by phoning 020 7523 2269. Your donation would be very welcome **now**: no need to await the start of the week proper.

"As the Covid 19 virus spreads across the world, love rises up in response. You've already shown incredible kindness to your neighbours. Now is the time to reach out to your neighbours both near and far. Your love protects: From storms, from drought, and now from coronavirus. Your love protects our global neighbours battling the spread of this illness. Your love protects: With soap, clean water and medical supplies."

By supporting us this Christian Aid Week, you can reach out and protect more of your neighbours today. Thank you! **Lesley Meakin, Christian Aid organiser St Guthlac's**

BENEFICE MAGAZINE The benefice magazine is still planned for early May so do please let Nigel Siesage have contributions by Sunday 3rd May if possible. stmaryknighton.magazine@gmail.com

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING: this has been postponed. Three PCC members and two Deanery Synod representatives will be elected when the meeting eventually takes place and new people are encouraged to get involved. If you would like to stand for election to the PCC or Deanery Synod, or would like to find out what is involved, please speak to Lesley Meakin .

JIGSAW LOAN Are you desperate for a different jigsaw puzzle to do? Do you have a complete puzzle that you could lend out? If you do, please contact Matthew 07754 961997 or his [email revgough@gmail.com](mailto:revgough@gmail.com). We have been donated a range of landscapes, city-scapes and iconic images-500-1000 piece. Matthew can deliver or you can collect from his house. The puzzles are left in his garage for 5 days for any potential hazardous bacteria to die off, then bagged up for delivery or collection.

WELLBEING TIPS

MIND have produced a range of really helpful tips and factsheets to support us during the Coronavirus situation.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse80ef2>

FEAR NO EVIL Please enjoy this performance by Andrew Oldershaw accompanied by Charles and Julie McDermott all from the St Mary's Worship Band, "Fear No Evil" which you may find an encouragement for a time such as this.

<https://youtu.be/I27MqrDR6uA>

A touch of humour in our dark days: A spectacularly uninformed visitor to the organ loft once asked the composer and organist Widor why some of the keys were white, others black.

'We use the white ones for weddings', replied Widor, 'and the black ones for funerals.' *Thanks to Margaret Bonney for sharing this with us.*

FOR THE NEWSLETTER Please send material to be included in the next newsletter by **Thursday 10pm** to administrator@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk