

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



Parish Church of St Guthlac
Knighton, Leicester LE2 3LF

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Sunday 24 May 2020 Seventh 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.

Healing in Tough Times

“Jesus lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” (Luke 24.50-52)

During these tough times we have been focussed on stories of sickness, sometimes followed by death, sometimes followed by healing. We find death difficult to talk about but we also find healing a difficult thing. This is partly because when we pray for healing, the answer does not always come in the shape that we want.

In fact, health and wellbeing themselves do not come in the shape that we want. Human beings are very happy to have fit and healthy bodies – because then we feel less challenge to look to the health of our hearts and minds. In essence, we can avoid thinking about our deeper, more significant sickness if physically we are well.

Healing in tough times is not just about keeping safe and taking the advice and treatment recommended – although this is critically important. In tough times, when many of our usual supports and distractions are taken away, we have the chance to let the Great Physician examine us..... and to heal us.

In this sonnet, the poet Malcolm Guite reminds us that at his ascension Jesus ‘took us with him to the heart of things’ – having redeemed humanity he takes us into heaven too. There we find the heart of God himself now restored and hear a new song of healing ‘that rises out of weakness’. This is now our song too, the song of hope and healing in a broken and sick world, through the risen, ascended Christ.

Adrian

Ascension by Malcolm Guite

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
whilst we were rooted still in time and place,
as earth became a part of Heaven’s story
and heaven opened to his human face.

We saw him go and yet we were not parted,
he took us with him to the heart of things;

the heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
is whole and Heaven-centred now, and sings,
sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight.
Whilst we ourselves become his clouds of witness
and sing the waning darkness into light,
his light in us, and ours in him concealed,
which all creation waits to see revealed .

FOR YOUR PRAYERS Please remember those whom we have been asked to keep in our prayers. Please remember those who have died recently and keep 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 **Amy and Dan Barnes, Lesley Meakin, Katherine Swanson.**

FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND MEETINGS

All services and meetings are cancelled for the foreseeable future. The church is closed until further notice. If you would like to keep in touch by telephone with others for a chat and support please contact Tina. (see front page)

No change to lockdown restrictions for churches soon

Once again, my thanks to everyone who has done their own bit to keep us all in touch with each other, and to provide support for each other during the coronavirus pandemic. These are challenging times indeed and it has never been more important to be part of the fellowship of the church.

The lockdown restrictions that apply to church services have not changed however. Although one authorised person, normally the vicar, can now enter the church building to say prayers and celebrate the Eucharist on behalf of the whole congregation, there are no immediate plans to allow the people of the church to gather. We are at 'Stage One' of easing lockdown restrictions and there is no thought about any church services happening until at least 'Stage Three'.

The most hopeful timetable puts this date into July, and there would certainly be very many restrictions and precautions surrounding any re-opening of churches: we would have to maintain social distancing, refrain from singing and from using paper or books, take a register of all present, guarantee hand cleaning on arrival and departure, as well as deep clean the building afterwards. You will see that there are still very many hurdles to cope with before anything like Sunday worship as we know it could resume. Whilst this is disappointing it is wise and understandable caution of course.

I will endeavour to keep you updated with any changes.

Adrian

BBC 1 Sunday Worship 11.45am (time may vary please check TV guide). For the order of service: www.bbc.co.uk/orderofservice

BBC Radio 4 Sunday Worship 8.10am

BBC Radio 4 Daily Service each weekday 9.45am on long wave only

Catch up available for all these on BBC iPlayer or Sounds app.

Thank you for caring at home and in our community” : this is the message of appreciation that, as St Mary’s and St Guthlac’s, we want to send loud and clear to the staff of our local care homes and to all those carers who have been supporting clients, friends and relatives in their own homes during the pandemic. We are particularly conscious that we have at least nine care homes in our benefice, and that the staff will have been under extraordinary strain and pressure over the last two months—often, it seems, unappreciated by those who make key decisions, and perhaps also by ourselves, until now. To express our appreciation to these care home workers we are aiming to give a gift to as many as possible—probably a gift token to be redeemed when times are easier and leisure seems possible again. We have a generous grant from our Ward Councillors to start things off, but if each gift is really to convey true appreciation then we want to add to it substantially through our own generosity. Please do make a contribution to our Carers Fund to show your appreciation. We are collecting money through the St Guthlac’s bank account, so please make a cheque payable to ‘St Guthlacs PCC’ (no cash please) . Alternatively you can pay by Direct Transfer: Sort code 20-49-08 account 53861341 Reference "Carers" You can send a donation by post or drop your envelope through the door of 62 Elms Road (Matthew), 5 Church Lane (Adrian) or the St Mary’s Parish Centre, Church Lane (but not at St Guthlac’s Church please!).

Thank you, in anticipation, for helping us thank our care staff. *Adrian*

A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

0800 804 8044

Are you in need of some daily hope during this lockdown?

We have a new FREE telephone line for you to ring to hear comforting hymns, daily prayers and reflections.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND CONNECTIONS

Don't forget to visit the St. Guthlac's Facebook page

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

‘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.

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.

Virtual 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

Collect & Readings for the Seventh Sunday of Easter

The Collect

O God the King of glory,
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.. Amen

Acts 1: 6-14

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all

Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”⁹ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.¹⁰ While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.¹¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away.¹³ When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of [a] James.¹⁴ All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Gospel Reading: John 17: 1-11

17 After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you,² since you have given him authority over all people,^[a] to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.³ And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.⁴ I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.⁵ So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

⁶ “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you;⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours.¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them.¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

The Apostolic Waiting Room!

'Waiting' as a concept is part of our lives, a part brought very much to the fore presently as we await further safe relaxing of the pandemic lockdown. Here, normality, whatever that term will describe in future months and years seems some way off yet.

In past 'normality' , waiting is part of life which simply can't be got rid of, despite us living in a world where an expectation of immediate fulfilment with little or no waiting is almost expected. Waiting can be amongst other things, exciting, frustrating, positive, pointless, fear-laden, and any combination of these. For example, a visit to the dentist and sitting in the waiting room can be positive when the thought of toothache relief is 'just around the corner' . But this waiting is also fear laden as the sound on whining drills from 'just around the corner' does it's best to convince us that our toothache now feels much better and possibly liveable with!

A child on Christmas morning is rightly excited by the sight of a none too subtly wrapped shape 'under the tree', but when the paper has been ripped off, frustratingly, it isn't quite the desired article.

At an airport I love 'people watching' and this expectant waiting at the beginning of an exciting holiday is often mixed with the frustration of a delay due to an air traffic controllers strike nowhere near the route to be taken!

I wonder how the remaining 11 disciples and sundry others felt in their 'Upper Room' in one of our readings for today, at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, better described by scholars as the Acts of Peter and Paul or better still the Acts of the Holy Spirit? They were thrown together in one place and waited for what turned out to be ten days. We are presently having a taste of the same in lockdown if with others of our families and friends.

You can imagine therefore in one small Upper Room how individual traits and idiosyncrasies came to the fore and perhaps began to make them smile or even began to get under their skins. For the eleven, this waiting after such monumental events in their recent lives must have really really chafed. Many theologians, see the election of Matthias as a result of such frustration... simply something to do... and not much more... as we never hear of him again!

Perhaps, I suggest, they should have waited until St Paul happened along!

And so, I wonder how waiting and the spiritual fruit of patience listed by Paul in Galatians 5 and found in many other places of Scripture impacts on our spiritual lives? For myself, I am naturally very impetuous, and want to get stuff done 'yesterday', so in me patience has been a hard won growing of fruit by the Spirit ...so much so that I am not too sure that even now I react to things in the most patient of ways.

So, in these ten days alongside the enforced patience of lockdown, let us reflect on how we best deal with waiting in freer times and ask God to bless us each with patience and the remaining gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit this Pentecost.

SAF

Reflection, Sunday 24th May 2020, John 17.1-11

I hope and trust that you're still keeping well now that we're entering the tenth week of our 'lockdown'.

Two things in particular will stay with me when we get to 'the other side'. The first is the opportunity that many of us have had to be closer and more connected to the natural world....to hear birdsong more clearly, to appreciate our gardens.

The second is the ingenuity and creativity that lies innate in all of us and has had the chance to bubble up while we've been so much less busy (with apologies to key workers who have been so exceptionally busy on our behalf!). This creativity has shown itself in many ways, from the boom in home baking, to jokes and photographs on social media, to facemasks fashioned at home from scraps of material.

Significantly there has also been a recognition that now we need creative *thinking* as we start to look ahead.... not to a return to the life we knew before but to a 'new normal' where social distancing and a raft of health precautions will shape our Christian life together.

In our Gospel reading Jesus stirs us into new creative thinking about our life as the church in 'the new normal'.

In the first three verses, Jesus clearly understands that his mission was to glorify God and make God known in the world. How can we keep our focus on this primary purpose as the church? – to glorify God and make him known in the world?

We will only be able to meet together under difficult restrictions, but we have to remember that the point of our meeting is firstly to *worship and glorify God*, not as the branch of a social club. And to make God known in the world we will need to remember that our every conversation with our friends and neighbours carries a message about what is really important to us – is it self-focussed regret or God's loving care and purposes for us all?

In verse 6, Jesus shows he understands that the people he met, the people whose lives touched his, were each given to him by God. How will we respond in 'the new normal' to the people who are God's gift to *us*?

Are we ready to listen, to support, to encourage, to pray? To weep with those who weep and struggle with those who struggle? And at the same time can we recognise and nurture joy and hope when they spring forth anew? Each person is God's gift to us – and therefore infinitely precious and worthy of our time and care.

And then in verse 7, Jesus recognises that *everything* he was given in this world was given to him by God. Can we hold on to the truth that the church itself – the buildings, the money, the community of people – is given to us by God? It doesn't belong to us and God has a bigger purpose for the church than our own small ideas. Let's take this opportunity to let go of our possessive and controlling tendencies, and instead be more thankful, generous and outward looking as a church.

Jesus prays for us.... let's pray for each other as well. Let's pray that we might be people of worship, people who share God's love with others, people who value other people, people whose life together as the church is a message of hope to the world.

Amen

Revd Adrian Jones

MINISTRY TEAM NEWS During the coronavirus pandemic the Benefice Ministry Team have met regularly online using Zoom to talk and to pray. Much of our time is taken checking that everyone in the two churches is well and safe, and thinking about the best ways to help us all stay connected and worshipping together in some way.

We would love to hear from everyone else directly too:

- if you feel isolated or would just like a chat then do please let us know;
- if you are concerned about someone else then again please let us know;
- please give us feedback about the 'virtual services' and the Reflections in the newsletters;
- please let us know if there is something else you would find helpful- we are particularly interested to know if you would like a recorded Eucharist to follow at home;
- and please pray for us! Leading is a strange and unfamiliar task in these strange days.

Thank you – *Adrian*

THY KINGDOM COME-24 HOUR PRAYER-VOLUNTEERS WANTED For the last 3 years, the Church of England has led a global prayer initiative between Ascension and Pentecost for 11 days of continuous prayer. The focus of prayer is twofold-to grow the Kingdom for more people to have faith in Christ and for the Church's to deepen its spirituality with the focus on the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Could you commit to an hour of prayer? Please sign up below very simply or email/contact me for more information revgough@gmail.com **07754961997** <http://www.24-7prayer.com/signup/9e7297>

You can pray alone at home but we also want to encourage people to pray together online through Zoom-where we can be creative-more details to follow for those who are interested. We aim to pray through the night which is particularly great for those who struggle to sleep. Our 24 hours starts **May 27th Wednesday 7pm (1 hour before our corporate Compline-open to all at 8pm) and will finish 7pm with an online Eucharist 7pm Thursday May 28th.** Matthew

Ride+Stride 2019

- Last year's Ride+Stride was a great success thanks to the hard work of all the church and area organisers, helped by lovely warm and sunny weather for participants and welcomers.
- Over £42,600 was raised across city and county, an amazing 20% increase on the previous year

Ride+Stride 2020

For this year's Ride+Stride the coronavirus situation is being monitored carefully. Normally at this time of year, registration forms would have been sent out for this year's Ride+Stride, registration is postponed until the situation becomes clearer.

Christian Aid Week 10th -16th May Christian Aid Week is officially over but it's not too late to make a contribution. Now more than ever our gifts, prayers and action are desperately needed. "We invite you to join us in prayer for all those affected by this new virus, both in Britain and overseas, for all those working on the frontline and for wisdom for our leaders. Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all. The world's poorest countries have the weakest health systems, and many of the most vulnerable people will be exposed to this deadly virus. They will struggle to cope with any costs of healthcare, and the costs of being unable to earn a living while ill or quarantined. We have launched a Coronavirus Appeal to help us limit the impact on the communities we work with".

You can donate to Christian Aid either via the Christian Aid website (<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/givemoney/make-donation>) or by phone on 020 7523 2269. If possible please quote the Leicester committee reference number OR182430 when donating.

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