

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



Parish Church of St Guthlac
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Sunday 5 July 2020

Fourth Sunday after Trinity

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.

How do we live as the Church now?

- Praying Together

‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.’ (Acts 2.42)

I find the discipline of personal prayer difficult – much as I aspire to a regular, relaxed and meaningful habit of prayer, I have always found it hard to discipline myself to pray as I should and as I want to. I hold this struggle alongside a deep belief that prayer is God’s gift to us – an opportunity to join him in changing the world.

The early Christians in the first church, as described in Acts chapter 4, also knew that prayer was important – a ‘Holy Habit’ that they needed to practice and make part of their daily lives. I’m sure they used personal prayer, alone and in a quiet place just as Jesus described and practiced himself. However, Luke, the writer of Acts, tells us that they met *together* and *‘devoted themselves ...to prayer.’*

We don’t know how easily this came to the diverse church in first century Jerusalem, but we do know that twenty first century Anglicans find it a very difficult thing to do. I was once part of a vibrant and growing Church that was mature and busy in many ways, but always struggled to get people to the monthly prayer evening; this despite working hard to make it interesting and informative and to help people pray.

At St Guthlac’s we also find praying together difficult. In services we use liturgical prayers but the riches of other less formal, types of prayer are largely a mystery to us. I am encouraged however to believe that regular praying together *could* be part of our church life. These verses from Acts persuade me that we *should* make great efforts to make it so, as we ease out of the corona virus lockdown and consider what sort of church we really want to be.

Prayer can change the world, but I believe that meeting and devoting ourselves to prayer together has another critical function too. As in the first century, it will help to *form* us as the church, to *create* the body of Christ in this place. When we pray together we will learn to become *real* with each other and to give up some of the masks and pretences that are part of our *un-holy* habits. We will admit to each other our weakness and need of God, and we will begin to see how we can be the answer to our own and to each others prayers.

Prayer changes the world, it changes us and it changes the church – for the better. It is a holy habit that we need to build into our life together. It may well take time and effort before it feels natural and part of our ‘comfort zone’ but it will be well worth it – as we read on in Acts we see clearly how the Holy Spirit begins to move when the people pray. Prayer releases the power of God around us, and after corona virus we certainly need that power to heal and to re-make our world.

In the meantime, keep safe and stay well.

Adrian

Sunday Faith becoming Everyday Faith.... ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching’

Our new discussion and Bible study group begins on Tuesday 7th July. We are meeting at 7.30pm fortnightly through Zoom, and you can join by telephone if you prefer. ‘Christianity Explored’ takes seven sessions together to look at the seven big themes of the Gospel of Mark—there are film clips and questions to consider before we meet and then plenty of time to discuss. It’s not too late to join—please do contact me and I will give you more details. *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 keep their family and friends in your prayers. For other prayer requests, please contact a churchwarden.

Brian Small would like to express his gratitude for all the messages of sympathy that he and the family have received since Veronica's death.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN MALAWI. 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** and **Katherine Swanson**.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE NHS

The National Health Service came into being on 5 July 1948. During post-war reconstruction, improving the healthcare of the nation was seen as crucial to the nation's recovery.

During the current pandemic, there has been immense national and local support for the NHS and its frontline workers. The emergence of the Thursday 'Clap for Carers' was a significant experience in the lockdown. Thanksgiving binds communities together, turning 'I' into 'we'.

This week please use these prayers to thank God for the NHS and all those medical and care workers who give so much for the sake of our well-being.

For the NHS

God of healing and compassion,
we thank you for the establishment of the National Health Service,
and for the dedication of all who work in it:
give skill, sympathy and resilience
to all who care for the sick,
and your wisdom to those engaged in medical research.
Strengthen all in their vocation through your Spirit,
that through their work many will be restored to health and strength;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For carers and health professionals

Lord Jesus, who healed the sick and gave them new life,
be with all carers and health professionals,
as they act as agents of your healing touch.
In desperate times, keep them strong yet loving;
and when their work is done,
be with them in their weariness and in their tears.
Amen.

NEWS OF MATTHEW'S ORDINATIONS AS A PRIEST

Now that Matthew is a year into his curacy with us it is time for him to be ordained not just as a Deacon but also as a Priest. The ordination service (usually at the end of June) has been rescheduled for either 12th or 13th September so do please pray for Matthew and his fellow deacons as they wait in anticipation.

Leicester Lockdown: what does it mean for our churches?

Whilst the rest of England moves into a new phase of the pandemic and restrictions are eased, Leicester, as you will know, continues in lockdown – in fact, since the recent spike in cases we have been put back to an earlier and more restrictive phase of lockdown.

This applies to church life as much as other areas. We are not able to open our church buildings at all now, even for the Minister to enter and pray alone. Urgent and essential maintenance can continue but only under the very strictest of conditions. Plans to begin opening for private prayer, then later for funerals and weddings and eventually for Sunday services, have all been put on hold – at least until the Government's review on 18th July.

The St Guthlac's PCC this week agreed that shortly after that date we too should review our cautious re-opening plans – and obviously this will be in the light of whatever is decided about the city's continuing lockdown. Until then I'm afraid we just have to wait.

Around the city I sense on the one hand a feeling of intense disappointment – many of us had made plans to meet with more distant family and friends, or for holidays – but also on the other hand a resolve to do whatever is needed to reduce the number of infections and get things back on track. Like me, you may very well feel both these things at the same time!

The Bible verse that comes to my mind for this time is from Hebrews 12: *"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."*

This is not a path we have chosen but it is marked out for us. So once again can I encourage you to persevere in a regular pattern of

- prayer,
- Bible reading,
- worship (with our own online Sunday service, midweek compline or other television and internet services),
- exercise and creative activities,
- and doing good to others.

It is tempting to think that, with change around us, these things are less important – in reality the opposite is true. The race is not yet over but we know the finishing line is ahead. If we keep our eyes on Jesus then, even in these most challenging of times, our faith can be strengthened and we will be ready for all that's asked of us in the future too.

Adrian

Collect & Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Trinity

The Collect

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may so pass through things temporal
that we lose not our hold on things eternal;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

Romans 7:15-25a

¹⁵I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

At that time Jesus said, ¹⁶“To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

¹⁷“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!” Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.

²⁵I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no

one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

REFLECTIONS:

Come & join the dance! *The Rev'd Alison Roche*

Have you ever been at a barn dance or Ceilidh or party, and someone's bounced over and said, "Are you dancing?!" What do you do? Regardless of your physical ability, do you want to grab your dancing shoes, throw on your feather boa and leap up?! Or would you rather sit it out and observe from the sidelines, or even slope off having had enough? Perhaps *you* are one of those bouncy people who's already up dancing and does the asking!

In our reading today Jesus is talking to his disciples about the generation of people around them. He's at a gloomy & frustrating point in his ministry. He's saying, I can't win! John the Baptist came to tell the people about God in an old-style prophet-way, all hair-shirt and fire-and-brimstone preaching, and hardly anyone took any notice.

And then Jesus came, *not* doing those things but with Kingdom joy, having picnics, talking about God's feast, God's compassion for all, and still hardly anyone took any notice. In fact, they said he was a greedy drunkard because he hung out with sinners & tax collectors.

The trouble was, neither John or Jesus were the kind of saviour people wanted or were expecting – you can't win! It was like

children in the street wailing but people didn't mourn, or playing the flute but people wouldn't dance.

But with the coming of Jesus, the world shifts on its axis. Even the least of Jesus' friends and followers are more important than John himself. What counts with Jesus is not fame or power or wealth, but being a loyal friend of his, a committed participant of the Kingdom of heaven - members of the Sunday school class are more significant than political leaders or royalty or celebrities.

When we eventually emerge into life again beyond this virus, we have some choices:

- will we take notice of those who wail that life's so different, I can't do this or that in the same way, I can't have exactly what I had before?
- or will we take notice of those who are already saying, 'look at the good that's coming out of this – stronger communities, neighbours helping each other; putting poverty right, celebrating the creativity that's popped up all around us?

It was my Dad's 80th birthday recently and we could have dwelt on how miserable it was not being able to be together to celebrate in the same room. But in fact we had a great time in a Zoom party, showing video greetings from his friends and family around the world, blowing 20 candles out each in the 4 countries we live in – much more creative than we might have been normally.

If you feel weary Jesus says 'Don't sit it out on the edge of the dance, get yoked with me. Because the things I'm inviting you to do will feel light, compared to struggling on your own.' Team up with Jesus for the changed life ahead.

Your kingdom task may be to pray more, to give more, to lead more, to join a new team, to welcome more ... and all of us are

called to share with others the hope in Christ that's kept us going.

Things in our world can get in the way – we can make excuses for not joining in the dancing, for not getting involved in the life of faith.

“Life's too different now”, “I can't do this anymore”, “I want to be able to do that again” “It's not like the old days”.

Or even “Those Christians, they're too bloomin' cheerful all the time”; “They'll let anyone belong to church these days!”

Jesus promises he's going to be with us, whatever life throws at us. Let's make sure nothing in our world gets in the way of our loyalty to God. Let's make sure God doesn't end up saying, “I'm *trying* to give them my love but they just won't listen *however* I express it - I can't win!”

Be someone who, when Jesus invites you, throws on your dancing shoes and hits that dance floor!

See you soon. *Alison*

Ekklesia...Part 2

Revd Canon Dr Stephen Foster

About now Bishop Martyn is celebrating 25 years as an ordained minister, having been made a Deacon in 1995. For me, it is 42 years since my own extraordinary diaconal day in Chester Cathedral...not least because I returned to my street parked VW to find my windscreen covered in parking tickets. The blue sign had said parking was restricted to half an hour... I had left it the best part of three days!

That embarrassment aside, it got me reflecting on the more local expression of 'ekklesia', that is, the 'Church of England' since before 1978 and the changes made in our own parts of the worldwide vineyard to the present day.

Before Ordination at 24yrs and before two lots of University, I was a church-going teenager in Crewe. In common with a number of other railway towns, Crewe was almost monochromatically Anglo Catholic. Anglican priests there were

unerringly addressed as Father N. and by far the most common service was the Eucharist celebrated daily and with 'bells and smells' on a Sunday. This actually reflected the widespread predominance of the Communion Service from the Parish Communion Movement, moving away from Sung Matins with a said Communion Service earlier in the day.

The 60s, 70s and 80s also saw a whole host of liturgical revisions centred much on modifying the language of all forms, away from the 'thees and thous' of the Book of Common Prayer- the idea being, that acts of worship would be more readily understandable and therefore accessible and attractive to the newcomer. (I remember as a monk that with Latin plus 'thees' and 'thous' being the norm, Series 3... as the modern form of the Eucharist was initially called...was not embraced with the wholeheartedness you might expect!)

In the 70s 80s and 90s the influence of a more evangelical theology and its matching styles of worship began to become very much stronger. At University in London, from my Anglo Catholic roots, I went along to the Christian Union. Theologically, I thought I had jumped into a different Universe! Certainly by the last five years of the 20th century, as I realised from being on General Synod for 8 years, Evangelicalism was becoming very strong indeed. Conversely, this was also contributed to by the huge weakening of the Anglo Catholic constitution due to the Ordination of Women. Despite many wise and unwise moves to maintain an ecclesial balance, the High Church movement in the mainstream Church of England became very weak very quickly. The numbers of Anglo Catholic Ordinands all but dried up...and as a Director of Ordinands, there were many more Conservative Evangelical candidates coming forward than any other churchmanship, and because of the many many women who exhibited a strong call to Holy Orders.

It also became very apparent very quickly that theology had shifted to the 'givenness' of a conservative Bible based theology which characterised the Church, and where, for example, liberal biblical criticism within an academic theology was and is often treated with a good deal of suspicion. Certainly being a theologian as a Bishop is not of prime importance these days... Bishops almost unerringly being selected from the evangelical constituency, which of course you might expect given its general ecclesial predominance.

The other enormous change is to do with the parish system. 'One priest /one parish' especially in rural areas, with the priest in one sense being the priest of a whole community, by and large has disappeared with one priest often being pastorally responsible for many churches and communities. This has been happening for as long as I can remember, where a dearth of finance within the whole Church governs deployment and prevents the Church of England maintaining the broad national responsibility it once had.

I guess we can all add our reflections from our own experiences over a similar period of how the 'locus' of the Church seems to us. We make our own judgements... whether for the greater glory of God, we appreciate the changes of the Church over, say, the last half century... or we don't.

But it can hardly be doubted that 'ekklesia' as expressed by the Church of England, has changed dramatically and very quickly. How long it can remain as the national church serving the myriad of communities big and small, urban and rural is a huge question.

WORSHIP INFORMATION

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 the BBC Sounds app.

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. 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



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.

FINANCE UPDATE

I thought that it was about time that I gave you a brief update on our financial position. I have provided similar information to the diocese. We are very fortunate in having a fairly healthy bank balance going into this pandemic, unlike other PCC's in the diocese. We have reserves put aside for decorating the inside of the church building and the outside of the hall and, if necessary, both those activities could be deferred if we have to call on those reserves. As things stand at present, I can see no difficulty in us being able to pay both of our commitments to the diocese this year in full. BUT this is only because of the generosity of our donors, mainly in the stewardship scheme, who have continued with their donations in full during this time. Our Vicar and our PCC are truly grateful for your continued support.

During the current Coronavirus pandemic, if you normally bring your weekly offering to church, please put it aside ready to bring to church when things start to approach normality. Whilst we have done all we can to reduce our costs, many still continue, so your regular giving is extremely important, to both preventing the erosion of our reserves (so that decorating, etc. can still happen); and to our collective "Health" and the mission of God here. If you do not use a Standing Order for your giving, why not consider it at this time? Please contact me if you are interested.

For many banks, this can be set up on-line, or I can give you a letter to send to your bank. A Standing Order keeps you in complete control of your donations, you have the ability to increase or decrease donations or to stop them altogether as your circumstances dictate. Also, if you are a tax payer, I can give you another piece of paper to sign that allows the church to reclaim 25% of your donation from HMRC. Apart from the signature, you don't have to do anything. *David Hunt, Treasurer*

REQUEST FROM KATHERINE SWANSON Due to Covid, my ward have had to move all our furniture around to make sure patients were able to socially distance whilst with us. Today while moving furniture to create further space, our much needed and years old filing cabinets fell to pieces. We do not have enough cash to purchase more at this point so if anyone has a spare filing cabinet or storage that they could donation to our ward we would be very grateful. Thank you

A NEW ARRIVAL Many of us will know the Rev Leigh Greenwood, the Minister of Stoneygate Baptist Church. Leigh and her husband are pleased to announce the birth of a daughter , Miriam Henrietta, sister to Eddie.
Our best wishes to them all.

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