

Virtual Church News

Sunday 24 May

7th Sunday of Easter

Sunday after Ascension Day

Welcome to Virtual Church News for the 7th Sunday of Easter/Sunday after Ascension Day.

Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email Jacqui.piper@btinternet.com

A Reading for the Week:

1 Peter 5:6-11

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Join us for Online Services

Zoom services are held at 11am on a Sunday and 6pm on a Wednesday. Login details are sent out in the covering email to members of our church community. If anyone else would like these, please do get in touch. Everyone is welcome!

The Love of Christ is not locked down

Virtual
Virtch
Church

St James, Biddenham, All Saints, Kempston



Kempston Woods
Photo taken by Richard Moxon

Hymns and Devotional Music



Tim Grant-Jones, organist at All Saints, and his wife Irene are live streaming hymns and other devotional music at 10am each Sunday (before the Zoom service). Find this and other music on Facebook by searching for Grant-Jones Musical Services or entering #gjmusicalservices. You can also request hymns in advance!

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

For God sake, do not be frightened of asking God for help, because he cares for you.

One of my favourite little books is 'The Little Prince,' by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. One of those wonderful texts, filled with wisdom, and packed with wonderful quotes that hit you between the eyes when you read them; "You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed." It reminds me of my dog, Nutmeg, who I always feel sorry for, because the only food, warmth and safety that she has, comes from what we give her. The trouble is that every time I eat, she has this habit of looking up at me with those pleading eyes. If we gave her everything she wanted, she would be enormous, but it does not change the fact that she is utterly dependent on us.

Continued on next page...

Christian Aid

If you would normally have attended one of our events for Christian Aid week, please consider making a donation to Christian Aid. Go to www.christianaid.org.uk



Message from Rev Eric Lomax *continued...*

Peter, the disciple of Jesus, chose, when he was fishing by the sea of Galilee, to lay down his nets and follow Jesus. Time and time again, however, in the Gospels, we see his failure to do just that. When Jesus was arrested and was about to be crucified, Peter was asked if he was a follower of Jesus three times, and each of those times he denied it. At the end of John's Gospel, we get the story of Jesus, after his resurrection, saying, three times to Peter; 'Do you love me?', and when Peter answers him three times, Jesus commands Peter again, 'Follow me!' (John 21:19)

It was many years later, when Peter wrote these lines in today's reading. It was during a time when many Christians were facing extreme persecution and isolation because of their faith and Peter was writing to lots of these Christian, scattered over the Roman Empire, to encourage them during those difficult times.

Reading through this passage, I see so much that meets us in this present situation that we now face. All our experiences of this pandemic are varied. I know people who are experiencing isolation, loneliness, being cut-off from friends and family, and even, in several cases, great personal tragedy. I think this reading from the Letter of Peter speaks as clearly to us today as it did two thousand years ago.

Peter begins by saying that we should humble ourselves. Sometimes one of the most difficult things for us to do, is to ask for help when we need it. An example of this would be struggling with issues of stress and anxiety; it is hard to pick up the phone and ask for professional help. Many people are too proud to say that they have not got the capacity or the personal resources to deal with something. I know, for example, if ever I am ill in any way, Liz has to give me a real kick before I go to the doctors.

Ultimately, the Bible tells us to have the courage to trust in God's grace. In the New English version of the Bible, Matthew 5:3 is translated as 'Blessed are those who know their need of God, for the Kingdom of God belongs to them.'

Peter, in the same way, wants us to have the courage to be like children who are not afraid to ask a teacher for help. He wants us not to be afraid, but instead, to have the humility to call on him.

The way to do that, Peter says, is to cast your cares onto him. This same phrase is used in Luke 19:35, where it says that the disciples cast their cloaks on a donkey, so that Jesus could ride this beast of burden into Jerusalem before he made his final journey to the cross. We throw our burdensome cloaks on Jesus, so that he can carry them to the cross. He takes those things in our lives that are heavy and difficult to deal with, and he takes them to the cross. Our pain, instead, becomes his pain. Our anxiety, instead, becomes his anxiety, and our fear, instead, becomes his fear.

Why does he do this for us? The Christian belief is that our great God does not need us. He could turn away from us and start his creative work again, but he does not. Peter says that we should cast our fear and anxiety on him, not because of anything else except that he cares for us.

There was a great Swiss Theologian called Karl Barth, who lived from 1886-1968. During WW2 he supported the confessing church in Germany and stood up against Hitler's terrible treatment of Jews, because he believed that the Bible story was the story of God choosing Israel as his people. Barth wrote volumes and volumes of deep, well researched, academic theology, and was one day asked to sum it all up in one sentence. He quoted an old children's hymn, 'Jesus loves me, this I know, because the Bible told me so.'

It is quite simple; do not be afraid to admit that you need help, and to ask God for that help. Though you may not receive the answer you expect, God will be there for you in your suffering and he will bear the weight of the burdens you carry; your anxiety, and your fear.

Why would he be there for you? 'He will be there', Peter tells us, simply because he cares for you. The simple, childlike language that Karl Barth used is all we need; You are loved by a God who, in Jesus, was prepared to lay down his life for you. Do not be afraid to ask, because he will answer.

God bless.

Eric



Church Finances

Some people have been asking about church finances at the moment so we wanted to give you an update for your prayers and consideration.

Income at both churches has been significantly affected, with no collection plates, no wedding/funeral fees etc. and no Barn/hall bookings. We remain committed to meeting our Parish Share for 2020 and as you would expect some outgoings have decreased, but unfortunately this decrease does not fully cover the drop in income.

We know that everybody's circumstances are different; some of you may be financially secure whilst others will also be suffering a fall in income.

We urge you to prayerfully consider your current planned giving (if any) to our churches and amend your monthly standing order if needed. If you would usually put money in the weekly collection, perhaps set aside an envelope and put your donation in it each Sunday? God always provides for his church and he/you know what is right for you!

If you would like details on how to give, either on a one-off or on a regular basis - including arrangements to enable your church to make a gift aid claim whereby the Government contributes a further 25% to the value of your giving, please contact Jacqui Piper (on 01234 356993 or jacqui.piper@btinternet.com). Also, do contact Jacqui if you need information on how to change your current level of planned giving (up or down).

Online Services

Join the Church of England on its website or Facebook page for this week's 9am Virtual Service.

You can also download the order of service and the sermon in pdf format from the Church of England website.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

Many other churches and cathedrals across the country are also providing online services.

Discovery Group

Meeting via Zoom on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays of the month at 8pm (after the clap!). Get in touch if you would like the login details.

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship - Living well while waiting.
- 11.45am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship from Bangor Cathedral.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise - Islands of Faith.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Wednesday 27 May:

- 4.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St David's Cathedral.

For the Children (& young at heart!)

Today's reading from the Gospel is about glory. It comes from the Gospel of John 17:1-5:

Jesus looked towards heaven and prayed. 'Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your Son, so that the Son may give glory to you. For you gave him authority over all humanity, so that he might give eternal life to all those you gave him. And eternal life means knowing you, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I have shown your glory on earth; I have finished the work you gave me to do. Father! Give me glory in your presence now, the same glory I had with you before the world was made'.

What do you think glory means? If you are not sure, look it up in a dictionary or ask a grown-up. How can we bring glory to God through our actions and our relationships with our family and friends?

Activity:

Write (and decorate) an acrostic poem using the word Glory. Can you come up with five things to describe glory using the five letters in the word?

Songs:

Jesus you're my superhero

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FY4C930M2Y>

Glory and honour

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=185IYNwF_OI

Prayer:

Glory and honour, and power and might, world without end, in heaven and earth, to God most high. Amen

Please pray with me

Loving Father,
we come to you,
knowing that we have no power to help ourselves,
give us the courage to call on you in our need.
Help us to trust that your grace and your love,
will satisfy our deepest needs.
In Jesus Christ's name,
Amen.



For your prayers

- People who have gone back to work this week;
- Those who are coming to know God for the first time as a result of the pandemic;
- Our families, friends and wider communities.

Our prayer group meets at 8pm (after the clap!) on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Get in touch if you would like the login details or have any prayer requests.

Hymns/Songs of the Week

Christ triumphant, ever reigning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=insbOCH6S1Y>

My Jesus, my Saviour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0X5Modh-Ag>

Lord I need you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ccwoj9VKL4>

Come Holy Ghost (Attwood)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQyOiO_Y7NE

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

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Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever.

Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets. Items currently needed include cup a soup, long life sponge puddings, UHT fruit juice, squash, tea-bags (160), tinned potatoes, spray cleaners, washing up liquid and washing tablets.

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>



Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 852241 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695