

All Saints Church, Kempston
St James's Church, Biddenham

Virtual Church News

2 May 2021

5th Sunday of Easter



Welcome to Virtual Church News. 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 email stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or call Jacqui on 356993.

This Week's Services

- Sunday 9.30am: Service at St James's, Biddenham
- Sunday 11.00am: Virtch (Zoom)
- Monday 9.00am: Morning Prayers (Zoom)
- Wednesday 6.00pm: Virtch (Zoom)

Services in Church

This Sunday we warmly welcome you back to St James's Church with a service at 9.30am. There is no need to book. Please remember your face covering (unless you are exempt from wearing one). You will be asked to follow a one-way system in place in both the church and churchyard.

We look forward to seeing you in person!

A Reading for the Week

John 15: 1-8

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the keeper of the vineyard. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, and every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes to make it even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.

I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are gathered up, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, proving yourselves to be My disciples.

Message from Revd Eric Lomax

In the last twelve months I have had to do an awful lot of writing, and as we have been prevented from moving away from the four walls, it has been difficult finding inspiration for the things I have to write. It feels, sometimes, like the bucket is running dry, and rainbows of inspiration are few and far between. It often feels like I am digging for gold that is not there. How do I find the fruit that I so long to bear in my writing?

On Friday afternoon a mobile coffee van is driven down our road, and local home-bound workers come out of their front doors with the same enthusiasm as we used to when, as children, we would run to meet the ice cream van. Clutching a fist full of coins, the queue of people order their exotic combinations of coffee, flavoured syrup and frothed milk, to add taste and imagination to the banal magnolia walls in their routinely constructed new-build palaces. Their lives in the office had been banal, but much more banal since Covid drifted in on the trade winds. These people, like the rest of us, have been doing community on MS Teams and Zoom, so the fact that they are wearing baggy jogging shorts beneath their business shirt and tie is of little relevance. One woman wearing slippers speaks to me while I am waiting for my Americano with milk; 'At least,' she said, 'I am out of bed, and my computer is switched on. What more do they want?' Where can these people get their inspiration when they are locked at home? Equally for them it must be like the bucket has little left in it.

Read the fourth Gospel (John), and you enter another world. You find yourself as an observer through the shadowy streets of the ancient Near East, and the people you meet there are real, flesh and blood individuals. Continued on next page...

Virtch (Online Church)



Zoom services are held at 11am on Sunday, 9am on Monday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.

Message from Revd Eric Lomax continued

The fourth Gospel seems to focus particularly on women who lived in a hostile patriarchal world in which femininity is diminished in the shadow of Eve's reputation. One woman, for example is about to be stoned to death at the hands of religious abusers, who have lost all connection with the God of love they are meant to be serving. Another is a Samaritan woman who has been the subject of patriarchal abuse for the whole of her life, and her race deprives her from an encounter with the living God.

The other person we encounter is Jesus and, for him, nobody is beyond redemption. Eve walked and talked with the living God in Eden, and here again, these men and women encounter the Living God in Jesus Christ. All are pointed by this man, in the direction of redemption and even the outcast Samaritan woman is empowered to go back and transform her own community.

In John 15 Jesus says; 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the Gardener.' (John 15:1)

The religious people of Israel had always believed themselves to be the vine, the source of life (Psalm 80:8-16, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21.) Even the Church, that should understand Jesus much better, has shown itself to be arrogant and oppressive. I suppose the consequences can be seen in our failure to bear fruit, to transform lives and demonstrate the love of God to those around us. Jesus points to himself and says that he alone is the source of the fruit that we should bear. He reminds us that we cannot do anything without him (John 15:5).

Really, we have to remember that the strength of ancient Israel, the strength of the Christian Church, the strength of the Samaritan Woman, and our strength does not come from ourselves, but from Jesus himself. He is the real source of love and peace. He will empower us, he will give us strength, he will help us bear fruit, and he will give us everything we need if we only connect ourselves to him. (John 15:7)

God Bless
Eric

Let us pray...

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen



St James and Charitable Giving in 2020/2021

As with many organisations the finances of our church have suffered during the pandemic and the lockdowns. We have a clear idea of what our priorities are as a church in our relations with our communities. As part of our demonstration of God's love we aim to be a support of people, families and groups who are in difficulties, poverty, or who are suffering. However as good citizens we have to prioritise paying the necessary bills. Examples of organisations we have supported as a church over recent years are:

- 1) CMS (Church Mission Society)
- 2) Open Doors UK
- 3) Bedford Food Bank
- 4) Hebron Soup Run (Bedford)
- 5) Langley House Trust

So that we can continue during this difficult period (2020/2021) to support the great work these organisations carry out we have decided to ask people to give to a separate fund for Charitable Giving and Mission work. A special fund has been set up to carry out this aim and a generous member of our congregation has offered to match any giving pound for pound up to £1,800.00, making a total therefore of £3,600 for the two years ending 31 December 2021.

We would be very grateful for any donations to this fund which should either be handed to the Vicar or one of the Churchwardens **or** paid by transfer into the church bank account, using the details:

Bank: Nat West
Account: Biddenham PCC
Sort code: 60-02-13
Account number: 51317710

Very important

On the transfer details line please put "M & G" so the money goes to the correct fund.

Very many thanks for helping us to continue helping those in need.

Edwin Martin, Deputy Churchwarden

Prayer Group

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome.

Contact John Lambert for login details or if you have any prayer requests.

John.c.lambert@gmail.com



Bible Study Groups

If you are interested in joining a bible study group please contact John Lambert by email at john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Electoral Rolls & Annual Meetings

St James

Notice is given that the Church Electoral Roll of St James Biddenham will be revised by the Parochial Church Council. After such revision, a copy of the Roll will be exhibited for not less than 14 days in the Church porch.

Forms of application for enrolment can be obtained from stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com or by calling Jacqui on 0778 6886 710. Completed forms should be returned on or before 4 May.

The Electoral Roll is akin to a membership list for the church. Being on the roll enables you to take part in the proceedings of the Annual Meetings, which will be held on Wednesday 19 May at 7.30pm.

Please contact Jacqui if you have any queries.

All Saints

Notice is given that the Church Electoral Roll of All Saints Kempston will be revised by the Parochial Church Council. After the revision a copy of the Roll will be published by the Parochial Church Council for not less than 14 days in the Church Porch. A copy of the Roll will be available for inspection on a reasonable request being made to the Council.

Application forms for enrolment can be obtained from Shirley by calling 07469 205938 or emailing shirleybrown2227@yahoo.com

In order to be entitled to attend the annual parochial church meeting on Wednesday 26 May at 7.30pm, and take part in its proceedings, your application form must be returned on or before 11 May. If you have any queries please contact Shirley.

Volunteer Vacancies

St James's Church is seeking to fill two volunteer roles - Website Manager and Barn Bookings Manager. Both roles can mostly be carried out from home and in your own time. They can be as big or as small as you make them!

If you are interested in either role then please contact Jacqui on 0778 6886 710 or at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

Diocesan Job Vacancies

The Diocese has vacancies for a part-time Assistant Communications Officer and also a full time Estates Administrative Assistant to work at Holywell Lodge in St Albans. If you are interested in either of these positions, further details can be found at <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/other-vacancies/>

The All Age Bit!

This week we are looking at the story of the Vine and Branches in John 15 verses 1-8. This reading can be found on the front page, or alternatively if you have a bible you might want to read it from there.

God wants us to be connected to Him. Have you ever noticed that you have habits or phrases that you use because you have picked them up from the people around you? When we spend time with people, we can become more like them. When we spend time with God the same thing can happen.

The branch of an apple tree connected to the trunk will produce apples. When we are connected to God and filled with His love the love is the fruit we produce. We can bring a flavour of God and heaven to those we meet on the earth. The Holy Spirit in us helps us to produce good fruit.

If you have a bible, have a look at Galatians 5 verses 22 and 23. It teaches us about the Fruit of the Spirit - the godly character and behaviour that the Holy Spirit helps to grow in us. When we are connected with God and the Holy Spirit our behaviour and character become more like God's. This passage says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Activities

1. *Three Legged Race:* have a three legged race with your friends/family/carers? Get a scarf and (loosely) tie your left ankle to someone else's right ankle. See how quickly you can run (together) a certain distance, or complete an obstacle course.
2. *Tree Craft:* Collect some twigs or branches to put into an empty jar or bottle. Decorate your tree with little labels showing the names of people you want to pray for or the fruit of the Spirit to remind you.
3. *Fruit of the Spirit:* Think about the ways you can show the fruit of the Spirit to your family/carers/friends this week.

Song

God is the vine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gET4P4ZQsCQ>

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the picture of the vine and the branches which reminds us to stay connected to you. Thank you that you love each one of us and want us to be part of your plans in the world. Help us to be producers of good fruit in the world, sharing your love with others so that they can come to know you too. Amen.

Resources from Together at Home.

For more free resources visit tath.co.uk.

Suggested Music for this week

You are the vine, we are the branches
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=301PlhiRNx8>

Remain in me
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUh3e5be8gE>

I the Lord of sea and sky
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgLwH5RdtPk&t=75s>

Love divine all loves excelling
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPbD2G3i-7Y>



Daily Hope

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line. **0800 804 8044** Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

Tel: 01234 328452
Mob: 07805 879537
Email: Rev.ejlomax@gmail.com

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

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

Sunday 2 May

- 8.00am Three Counties Radio - weekly service.
- 8.10am BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship.
- 1.15pm BBC 1 - Songs of Praise.
- 3.00pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Wednesday 5 May

- 3.30pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.



Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. Join in from 13 to 23 May to deepen your own relationship with Jesus Christ, pray for five friends or family to come to faith in Jesus and to pray for the empowerment of the Spirit to be effective in your witness. For more details and to order a free prayer journal and other resources go to thykingdomcome.global

Time to Pray

Time to Pray App and Podcast presents everything you need for prayer. Available as an app (with integrated audio) or as a podcast. Listen and subscribe at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/time-pray-app-and-podcast> or download the app from your usual app store.

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: 328452 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695