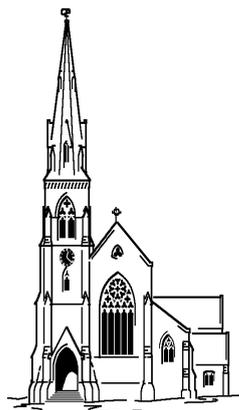


August 2020

St John's Church

Welcoming - Worshipping - Loving - Growing



Jottings

Honest to God

I expect August 2020 will not quite pan out the way you'd expected at the start of the year. Maybe you had a holiday booked that now won't happen, perhaps you expected to welcome visitors to Weymouth who are now unable to come. Some of us were booked into New Wine for a week of camping, worship and the usual downpours (both spiritual and physical). You might have been looking forward to watching the Olympics and you certainly wouldn't have expected to see the FA Cup Final being played in August. One way or another this August will be different.

The last four months have affected us all in both positive and negative ways. There have been positives and renewed appreciation of many things. Yet, however you've been affected, we can share a legitimate sense of loss - not so much over cancelled summer plans of course - but over the vast suffering,

grief and death that Coronavirus has bought to the world.

For all that we might give thanks for we must not shy away from prayers of lament through which we bring raw disappointments and questions to God. The Psalms are full of such prayers and they live side by side with the joyful prayers of thanks and praise.

To find some real examples of lament you need look no further than the book of Lamentations. In this work of the Old Testament Jeremiah is lamenting over the state and plight of God's people and God's seeming absence. Yet it is in this very context of doubt and pain that Jeremiah finds himself able to confidently and clearly articulate the truth of who God is. He writes,

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every

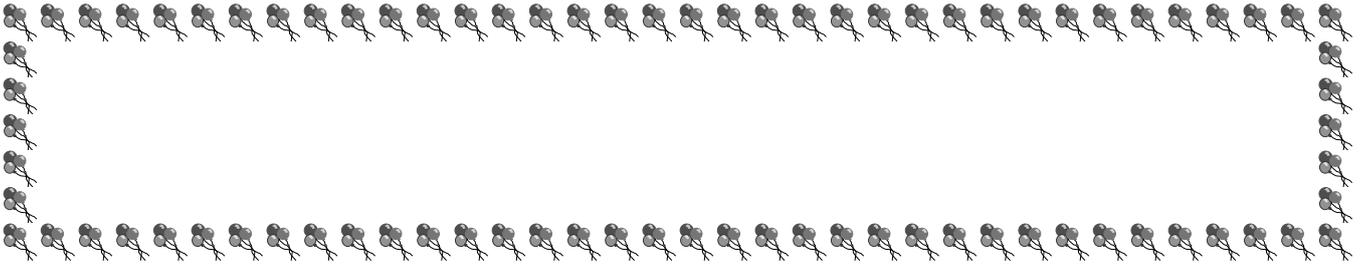
morning. Great is your faithfulness." Lam 3:22-23

It is healthy to express how we feel and when those conversations are directed at God we leave room for Him to speak, minister to us and to remind us of the truth. Seasons and circumstances change but God's love, His promises and His presence do not. Many of us know this but we need to rediscover it and often it's through pain and questions that these truths go deeper. As TS Eliott said,

"We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

So, whatever you're doing this August, make time to pray, to be with God, to be honest with Him and leave room for Him to speak to you and remind you of who He is.

Yours



WEDDING DAY!



William and Tessa were married at St Mark's Church, Kennington, on Saturday 11 July 2020 (only a month later than their original planned date). With the 30 permitted guests present, it was a really lovely and quite emotional ceremony. Others were able to join us on Zoom, including Tessa's family in Barbados. Natasha and Kate were bridesmaids. Afterwards, each with our own individual boxes, we were all able to enjoy a 'socially-distanced' picnic on the grass near the church. The whole afternoon was really special and will hold a special memory for us all. Hopefully, there will be a blessing in church and a larger celebration next year. Although for work William will be based in London, he is now living in Godalming Surrey.

Jean Halford

An Empty Church?

Alex and I volunteered to be on duty to welcome people during lockdown. It was only just beginning to open again and so we had the church to ourselves for the first hour. Alex kindly agreed to keep watch and pray by the door so I could walk and pray around the church for a while listening to a CD which contained singing and declaring the words of Psalm 34. The words from Psalm 24, "swing wide the gate that

the King of glory may come in" came into my head. I was able to write these words on a post it note and leave it at the cross. What a blessing!

I had said quite forcefully I didn't want to go in the building if we can't meet normally or sing. However, maybe God is opening my eyes to bring a sacrifice of praise in a different way. I had to admit I was wrong and say sorry because I have changed my perspective. I

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Visiting the church for the first time since it was cleared of everything but chairs, my first reaction was WOW, what an amazing space! I wondered what sort of congregations

gathered there when it was first built. Was the space filled every week? Why was the church built on such a large scale?

believe that this is a time to press in to Him and hear what He is saying to the church. Awesome.

Pauline (and Alex) Neels



When we get back to 'normal' will there be less clutter?

Anne Bond

Book Reviews

I am a dipper into books now and have enjoyed bits from books on my shelf. **John Burningham** has put together a **Compendium of Childhood** which consists of

childhood memories from a diverse range of people with very different backgrounds - John Major, Jeffrey Archer, Sylvia Sims, with quotes from Charles Dickens and Oscar

Wilde among others. All good for bed time!

It was first published in 2004 supporting UNICEF.

Anne Bond

Journey into God's Heart by Jennifer Rees Larcombe

I have just finished reading this book.

Brilliant. Made me smile, laugh and cry.

It's about the author's life.

Jennifer, who had been in a wheelchair for 8 years after an illness was prayed for by a young new Christian who felt God was telling her to go and pray.

Think we can guess the rest. Yes she got out of the wheelchair and walked.

It's a very good read.

Les Mould

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The Salt Path by Raynor Winn

This is an inspirational true story of a remarkable journey displaying all kinds of human feelings - sadness, kindness, love, strength, endurance, fear, happiness, surprise, anger, loneliness and despair.

It is the story of the author

and her husband, of 32 years, who has a terminal illness. They lose their home and their livelihood. With nothing left they decide to walk the 630 mile South West Coast Path. Living frugally, sleeping in a tent they are at the mercy of the

sea and sky.

An amazing read.

Linda Miles



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Before lockdown, I ordered a book from Waterstone's, which I am still reading. It is in bite sized sections but there is quite a lot to reflect on. It's good to think about it through the prism of the Lord's Prayer - 'Thy will be done on Earth as in Heaven' - though the book itself is not specifically religious or Christian. I have been wondering if Heaven is like the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

The authors are **Ingrid Newkirk & Gene Stone** and the Title is **Animalkind**:

Remarkable Discoveries about Animals and Revolutionary New Ways to Show Them Compassion.

Ingrid Newkirk is the founder of the charity PeTA and is proactively involved in alleviating animal abuse and suffering.

What I like about this book is that instead of merely drawing our attention to what goes on, Ingrid has been instrumental in bringing together people who are committed enough to be effectively proactive. We are not left in a vacuum thinking,

'Oh, dear, but I can't do anything about that.' The book is well researched and offers those who share her concerns a way forward, regarding the necessary changes to our informed lifestyle choices. There is much to be positive about in terms of recent developments and in how our eyes can be opened so that we can learn to live out being really compassionate in so many different ways.

So I would recommend this book.

Val Collings

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The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Lefteri

This is the story of a Syrian beekeeper and his family forced to leave their home in Aleppo when the city was destroyed by war. They escaped from Syria becoming refugees, enduring a dangerous journey,

seeking to reach Britain and the possibility of a safe home.

As the story unfolded I found it very emotional. Throughout the story you will find courage, despair, love, hope,

the very best and the very worst of people. Read it.

Michael Miles



Why Lockdown has been so good for the Church

I've just come from a Zoom Prayer Meeting with people from India, DR Congo, Slovakia, Thailand and Uganda – as a direct result of COVID-19. This global menace has changed what we do, how we think, and opened our minds to all the amazing things that the Lord can do, especially when we feel isolated or under pressure.

Over the last few weeks, I've been reminded that the greatest impact of Paul's ministry came out of 'lockdown', or rather 'lockup' – in prison, where he remained isolated for many years. Paul was hugely frustrated that his prayers for release were not answered: that he could no longer preach the Gospel, plant churches, disciple leaders.

Out of all his frustration he started to write, to individuals and to churches, on scraps of parchment. Those frail letters were carried on donkeys, horses and boats, across nations. He had no idea that his written words would survive even a decade and would have been shocked to see them read by over 2 billion people today.

Because of lockdown, Paul became the world's first Virtual church leader, Virtual teacher, Virtual evangelist and Virtual Apostle. And today, as a result, Paul is still the most influential Christian who has ever lived.

Breakthroughs are happening because of lockdown in Weymouth. For

example, St John's Virtual Sunday services are often viewed by twice as many as would normally turn up to services.

We're also seeing positive impacts on global mission. For example the work of ACET, which Sheila and I started as a Christian organization in our own home in 1988, to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS across the world (eg High Schools and Colleges) and to care for those affected. HIV is a similar story to coronavirus: it jumped from animals into humans and so far has killed 45 million with no vaccine in sight. ACET began because AIDS overwhelmed my own medical work as a hospice doctor looking after people dying of cancer at home in London. At that time, we also learned of massive problems in places like Uganda, where a third of all younger adults were already infected. So we began to train church members as volunteers to go into schools, colleges and homes, at a time when communities were very afraid. Many have found faith through this ministry as a direct result of a virus.

Jump forward 31 years and ACET has teams in 15 countries such as Uganda, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, India, Thailand, Belarus, Ukraine, Ireland and UK. Normally we might gather maybe 40-50 leaders every 3-4 years to pray together, share experience etc. But lockdown made that impossible. In May, the leader of ACET Uganda challenged us all to have a

global Zoom Day Conference instead. Within four weeks, it was all organized at zero cost. 130 people from 15 nations took part, many in very remote rural locations in the poorest nations.

It was so amazing to see each other, to encourage each other, to worship together in our different languages, to share stories of hope and faith. We were most of us isolated at home in our own nations, yet united in heart and mind, in the name of the one Lord Jesus Christ. An amazing, inspiring, moving and faith-building experience. As a direct result, country leaders are now meeting to pray together on Zoom every week, which Sheila and I join in.

So let's continue to look for every opportunity to share the Hope of Jesus that is in us, to encourage each other – whether through personal texts, or WhatsApp messages, through writing cards, or letters, or FaceTime calls or other means. The smallest things often make the greatest difference. A brief phone call out of the blue, from a close friend, or a hand-written note pushed through the door with a timely word of encouragement. Who knows what impact there will be on our nation from a hundred million small acts of kindness every week? Small things we would never normally have bothered to do, have the power to touch and change our whole world.

Patrick Dixon

Homegroup during Lockdown



During the first 3 months of lockdown, The Lightly Salted Housegroup were unable to meet.

However since the beginning of July, members have met up twice in Radipole Gardens to enjoy a picnic lunch and fellowship.

A Blessing for Everyone

This blessing was developed by Ffald y Brenin (a Christian ministry and retreat centre in SW Wales) and sent from the Lydia Fellowship to Diane Blackwell.

Heavenly Father, we take upon ourselves the mantle of authority that Jesus delegates to His disciples and in His Name we speak to every household in this community and we say to you:

“We bless you in the Name of the Lord. We bless your marriages that they may be strong and whole. We bless the partners in each marriage that the relationship between them may be loving, forgiving, merciful and strong. We bless every relationship within each household that there may be peace and love and understanding flowing between each one. In Jesus’ name we bless every network of wholesome and supportive friendship.”

“We bless your health that you may be well and strong. In Jesus’ name we resist any sickness or disease which seeks to invade this area, and to every person in this community we say, be well, be strong, be healthy. To any who are sick right now, we say we bless you in Jesus’ Name with a speedy recovery.”

“We bless your wealth that you may have plenty to replace scarcity. We bless you to have enough to live and enough to give. We bless the work of your hands that whatever you turn your hand to which is wholesome may prosper. We bless each enterprise that it may benefit the whole community.”

“We bless the grass of the fields that it may be strong and nutritious throughout the year. We bless the flocks and herds that they may be well and strong and that they may multiply. We bless the

cultivated land that it may yield rich harvests.”

“We bless our schools that they may be secure, safe places for teachers and pupils alike. We bless the children’s capacity to learn and develop relationships and we bless their simple trust in Jesus, that their trust may grow and become enriched.”

“We speak to the churches and all other places of worship and we say we bless you in the Name of the Lord that the Holy Spirit and the word of God may flow out from you in power. We bless the hearts of all who live in this community that you may be quickened to hear and respond to the voice of the Living God. We bless all who live and work here, that the overflow of the blessings of the presence of the Kingdom of God may fall upon you.”

Amen

After lockdown I will keep on appreciating the simple things in life such as breathing in the fresh air.

Sue Akerman

6
After lockdown I'll keep on enjoying our wonderful countryside and wild birds and animals.

What I hope to do never again is wear a facemask.

What I'd love to do soon is to hug family and friends.

Linda Miles

News from Alison and Malcolm



We have had a very busy and blessed lockdown but have missed being able to see our friends at St Johns regularly. We thought you might like an update on what we have been up to.

We have managed our businesses, Malcolm selling garden machinery spare parts online, with his sales going through the roof from March to June, averaging 70 sales rather than 3 or 4 a day. He continued to work full-time in his job as a workshop manager, managing an increased workload with less staff, as some of his colleagues were furloughed.

Alison's counselling business saw a huge increase in demand, as she supported many anxious and depressed clients. Fortunately, unlike most counsellors, she already had a lot of experience working via video call. However, going from 2 video calls a week, to on average 18 a week, has been very tiring. She was very happy to be able to start to meet with some clients face to face again, about a month ago.

This was possible because during the fantastic weather in April & May, Malcolm built a new garden building. This was originally going to be used for creative hobbies and relaxation but has been commandeered as a therapy room. It is bigger than Alison's usual consulting room and allows for 2m social distancing. It has not been an easy task, because initially, it wasn't possible to get the materials needed and has taken many hours ensuring all the relevant protocols are in place, to keep herself and clients safe, whilst operating within the UK government guidelines.

We have supported many people through our LPA & Chaplaincy connections both at St Johns and throughout the Diocese. This has included shopping for people who were self-isolating, providing occupational therapy and bringing encouragement to neighbours, friends, and family.

Alison has continued to run Dorset Anti- Bullying Service (DABS) throughout lockdown and raised £91 selling plants she has grown and handmade cards and jewellery she has made.



Father God has blessed us with the gift of hospitality and a joint healing ministry. He gave us a vision, when he called us to Weymouth 5 years ago to open parts of our home and garden to bring refreshment and healing to others. Following His lead, we launched a new business, Tranquillity Retreats Weymouth on the 10th July 2020. This offers self-contained, self-check in B & B, weekends only. If you or somebody you know would like to know more, please free to contact us.

Like many others we have experienced a lot of loss this year, Alison's only Uncle & Aunt and 2 very close friends have died, and we have both had several health issues. It has been very difficult and at times life has felt like an uphill battle.

However, we are grateful for the beauty of our surroundings, the opportunities we have had to minister and be ministered to and have felt upheld in prayer and encouraged by **Psalm 12: I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber.**

We hope we can see you in person before too long and in the meantime send you our love and prayers.

Malcolm & Alison Fox