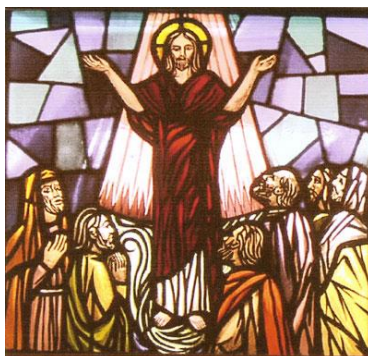




Taken by Robert Pargetter May 2020

**UNITED BENEFICE OF CORLEY PARISH
CHURCH & ST MARY & ALL SAINTS
CHURCH, FILLONGLEY WITH FILLONGLEY
METHODIST CHURCH**

Anglicans and Methodists in Unity.



*Hail the day that sees him rise.
Alleluia!*

Dear Friends,

How are you? In this eighth week of lockdown with no immediate return to some sense of business as usual, interestingly, it is Mental Health Week (MHW). Usually MHW slips by us fairly unnoticed. Of course, there would normally have been items on national and local media highlighting the amazing work that goes on 'under the radar' day in, day out in the NHS and by many incredible charities. Largely though, unless you have been personally effected by mental health issues, it is one of those weeks that we might pass through without it impacting on us in any way.

This year it is a little bit different, we are all living through an unprecedented time of pandemic. There are very few people alive who can remember the last global pandemic of 1918, so to all intents and purposes this is new. How we react to the pandemic, the lockdown, the restrictions put on our lives, these are all factors which will affect our mental health. I am very fortunate. I live in a lovely house in Hatton, there are beautiful countryside walks on my doorstep, I have a good Internet connection and lots of family and friends that I can keep in contact with. But the pandemic is still affecting my mental health. I can't do the things that I want to do, I can't see my family and friends except through a screen and work has changed enormously too. All these factors, these unbidden changes can and will have an impact on our mental health, so perhaps this MHW it is important to take notice and perhaps to access some of the services that are on offer.

The Church of England has a really helpful page on its website with links to other helplines:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/mental-health-resources>

Locally, the Diocesan website has a brilliant page of resources too:

<https://coventry.anglican.org/equip/well-being/wellbeingresources.php>

There are many suggestions of how we can help ourselves. Taking regular exercise, especially now that we can go out more than once a day. Eating well, now that the food supply chain and our shopping habits have regulated into a new 'normal'. Making sure we get enough sleep. It is surprising that even though we might be doing less 'work', we might be more tired – a result of being on heightened alert. Enjoying our hobbies, perhaps those things that in the busyness of normal life are pushed to one side. And of course, there is prayer. But sometimes it is hard to pray. Hard to know what to say and this is where it can be really helpful to go back to our roots. The rhythm of prayer that has always been at the heart of the Christian faith. Praying the daily office – morning, daytime and evening prayer can be really helpful.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>

Knowing that you are not alone - no matter what time of day or night you are joining in with daily prayer, there are thousands of people around the world saying the same words, praying the same prayers to our God who is always ready to listen can be so comforting. There is something so very special about being part of something bigger than ourselves. That is why we long to gather again to worship and pray together.

God loves us all as individuals, knows us all intimately and completely. God knows exactly how we are feeling and longs to comfort us with his holy presence. So perhaps this MHW a combination of earthly support and heavenly comfort is all that we need to help us all to have good mental health.

If you need to talk to someone, please don't hesitate to contact me, Revd Jane or any of the team listed in the bulletin.

God you are present here,
whether we recognise you or not,
whether we acknowledge you or not.
You are present,
within us, between us and around us.
Your Holy Spirit is holding us in being
and the energy of your love suffuses the universe.
May we become aware of your presence in this space and time,
aware of your heartbeat of love,
aware of your longing for us.
Speak to us through stillness and silence,
through music and word.
Give us grace to listen and hear you
in the depths of our selves. **Amen**

From Apprentices and Eyewitnesses; Creative Liturgies for Incarnational Worship by Chris Thorpe © Canterbury Press 2019.

With love and prayers Ali

LECTIONARY Readings and Prayers for Sunday 24th May 2020

Easter 7 Sunday after Ascension Day

Collects

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.

Risen, ascended Lord, as we rejoice at your triumph, fill your Church on earth with power and compassion, that all who are estranged by sin may find forgiveness and know your peace, to the glory of God the Father.

Readings

Ezekiel 36: vs 24-28 Acts 1: vs 6-14 Psalm 68 1 Peter 4: vs 12-14 – 5: vs 6-11

John 17: vs 1-11

A Reflection on this week's readings ~ from Revd Ali Massey

Waiting is not something we are generally good at. As children we count 'how many sleeps' until Christmas, our birthdays, holidays or other special events. As adults we sometimes do the same, how many weeks until our next holiday or until we see the grandchildren. We always want to know how long, especially at the moment, when our daily question might be 'how long until we get back to some kind of normal'.

We, as Christians, are waiting too - we are in an 'in-between time', not just the in-between time between Ascension and Pentecost, but the in-between time between Jesus' Ascension and his coming again in glory. At the end of Luke's Gospel, the reading for Ascension Day (Luke 24: 49 – 53), Jesus told his disciples to stay in the city until they had been clothed with power from on high. Or, in other words, to wait.

The Ascension is bit like a fulcrum: a balancing point between the end of one story and the beginning of another. The Ascension is the very last bit in Luke's Gospel, but also the first bit of it's the sequel, the Acts of the Apostles.

In our reading from Acts this week (Acts 1: 6 – 14), the disciples ask Jesus if all that has happened to him, and to them, is the sign that all the people of God have been waiting for - the restoration of Israel. Jesus replies, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority".

I don't know about you, but I always find waiting easier if I know what date I am waiting for – I think this is one of our current frustrations with the lockdown. We don't have a finite date to work towards. Back to the disciples, they do wait as Jesus instructed them, but their waiting wasn't passive. It was expectant and anticipatory. They went back to the city of Jerusalem and used their waiting time to pray together constantly: the eleven disciples, the women and Jesus' mother and brothers.

Wait and pray.

This is the key to everything really. If God says wait, then start praying. Jesus modelled this for us. In his last days, he knew what was coming. He knew that he would suffer and die, so he used the time he had left to pray. Jesus spent his last days praying for, and explaining to, his disciples what would happen and why it had to happen.

In our Gospel reading (John 17: 1 – 11) Jesus prays for two things, he prays that everyone who follows him, those first disciples, you and I, will know the one true God and God's only Son Jesus Christ. And then he prays for God's protection for all his followers.

It never ceases to amaze me how appropriate the lectionary readings can be, Jesus' telling the disciples, and us, to wait and pray. We don't have to wait passively for the pandemic to end, we too can be active and anticipatory like the disciples. Praying for a time when the pandemic is over or managed better, praying for protection for the most vulnerable in our society. Praying for government, the schools trying to work out the best way to welcome pupils back. Praying for energy for essential workers. Praying for the mental health of those key workers who have been stretched beyond their usual capacity to cope. Praying for ourselves.....

Wait and pray.

At the time of the ascension, the disciples were waiting for the gift that Jesus had promised them, the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit that will give them the power and strength to go out and spread the message of Jesus. We have the advantage of knowing what happens next. We know

that the Holy Spirit will come on the day of Pentecost, so our waiting can be shaped by that knowledge.

Each year, we remind ourselves of this time of waiting. The nine days between Ascension and Pentecost are a time to pray for the work of the Holy Spirit. To watch and to wait for the action of the Holy Spirit, not passively but expectantly. In his call for a wave of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost, Archbishop Justin has asked us to do just that. To pray actively and expectantly. There are great resources on the Church of England website: <https://www.thykingdomcome.global> – prayer resources, reflections and songs all designed for us to use wherever we are and whatever time we want to pray.

There is something so powerful about praying together at the same time, even if we are not physically together. Praying and waiting expectantly for 9 days is a relatively easy task, but in the light of the pandemic is it enough? Jesus, in our reading from Acts, reminds us that everything happens in God's time rather than human time, we just have to wait, trust and pray.

Wait and pray.

Waiting and praying will help us become familiar with the workings of God so we recognize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when we see it. But we need to wait actively, to do those things that help to build up the kingdom of God in this place in this time. To do acts of kindness, to campaign for a just society in which all people are valued. To make our voice count as a positive, life affirming voice in a wilderness of nay-sayers and doom merchants. To celebrate all that is good, and to allow ourselves to be beacons of Christ's light in the darkness.

We can't do this on our own, so let's thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers and strengthens. So that we can all work together, doing the things that God has put on our hearts to help bring about the kingdom of heaven here on earth. Waiting expectantly and actively for the day when Jesus comes again in glory.

Amen

HYMNS & WORSHIP SONGS

Here are the Hymns that we would have been singing in Church on Sunday ~

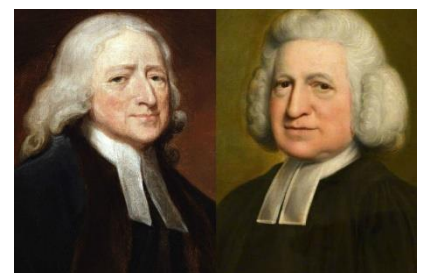
Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia! (StF 300)

The head that once was crowned with thorns (StF 312)

Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord (StF 710)

And finally.....

Sunday 24th May is **Aldersgate Sunday** – marking the anniversary of John Wesley's transformative experience in a meeting room in Aldersgate Street, London. In his journal, Wesley recorded that, during a reading from Martin Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans, he felt that his heart was "strangely warmed." This is regarded as a key moment in the beginnings of the 18th century Methodist revival. So what better hymn to sing along with this Sunday than



John & Charles Wesley

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? (StF 345)

https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-avg-fh_lsonsw&hsimp=yhs-fh_lsonsw&hspart=avg&p=and+can+it+be+hymn#id=5&vid=8d0bbd8435b287ffe4e679dc6114c53d&action=view

Words written by Charles Wesley, of course and sung in a modern version by Stuart Townend.

PRAYERS



Sundays @ 7pm.

A reminder that we are lighting a Candle every Sunday at 7pm during this crisis and putting it in our windows to be a sign of our solidarity and hope in the light of Jesus Christ that can never be extinguished.

This coming Sunday our prayers will be focussed on all those who have to make decisions about the re-opening of schools and devise strategies for keeping the pupils safe – whenever that will be.

Some words from Archbishop Justin Welby –

God made us for connection. He made us for relationship – with him and with each other. He made us for carrying each other's burdens, sharing each other's struggles and walking with each other through times of darkness as well as times of joy.

A Celtic Prayer

Lord, may the swirling storm clouds
remind me that I am a creature, not Creator,
that I am liable to suffer from the changes and chances
of this mortal life.

May the clouds teach me to look always to you,
the creator of both storm and sunshine.

May they teach me to maintain joy when life is frowning
and to maintain perspective in and out of season. **Amen**

Reflection on The Lord's Prayer - Easter to Trinity

Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.....

This is the time of trial: the season when our faith and character are tested, possibly more than ever before. It is right to pray for God's deliverance but also right to remember the help and strength God gives us when we are stretched beyond our ability to bear it. We need as well to beware of the particular tests and temptations that come even in times of suffering to abandon our faith, to give in to our selfishness or fear, to profit at the expense of others. In all of this we ask God's help and help is given.

READ Acts 14: vs 21-28 The return to Antioch in Syria.

The sixth line of the Lord's Prayer helps us understand that the Christian life will be difficult and to seek God's help in the trials that will come. Paul and Barnabas make a return journey and visit the new Christians in Lystra and Iconium and Antioch. Acts highlights just one feature of their teaching: the insight that the Christian life will be hard.

Jesus prepares his own disciples for these difficulties in the gospels. There is great joy in the faith but there are also deep challenges in living well. This line and the next line in the Lord's Prayer help us to remember this each day and to seek God's strength. 'Temptation', like 'trespasses', is not the best translation. The meaning is much closer to 'trials' or 'experiences which test our faith'.

When we understand that the journey may be hard, we are prepared and strengthened for the setbacks.

Jesus' parable explores three different kinds of hardship and distraction in the Christian life through the picture of the sower and the seed.

READ Luke 8: vs 4-17 The Parable of the Sower

Some may hear the good news many times but never give it serious consideration. The seed is snatched away before it can take root. Some begin well but, for whatever reason, are not able to bear the trials and tests which come in the early years of faith.

This reason might be genuine persecution – a reality in too many parts of the world. Or, it might be the gentle mockery of colleagues; the effort of living against the grain or simply expecting the whole of life to go well now a person is seeking to follow Christ.

The third kind of trial is the more subtle pressure of the choking thorns: life's cares, riches and pleasures which stop the seed from bearing fruit. The Lord's Prayer is like a garden hoe, helping us to be good soil.

All kinds of experiences in life will test us: comfort and need, and failure and success. We will often stumble and fall and take wrong turnings despite our best intentions. What should happen then?

READ Hebrews 4: vs 4-16 Jesus the Great High Priest

Hebrews is written to encourage the Church in times when we have stumbled and fallen. The letter draws us back again and again to Jesus in these times of trial. Jesus understands what it is like to endure testing and temptation. Jesus understands our weaknesses.

When we know we have surrendered or failed or turned aside, our natural response is to draw back from

God, as Adam and Eve hide in the Genesis story. Hebrews says we should do the opposite. In the moments when we most need God's support, we should approach God with boldness. Help is at hand.

Paul captures here something of what it means to know Christ and be called to Christian service, and yet also know your own weaknesses and imperfections.

READ 2 Corinthians Chapter 4 Present weakness and Resurrection life.

Paul uses the powerful image of treasure in clay jars. The treasure is Christ dwelling in the life of the believer. The clay jars are our own lives – still a work in progress.

There are difficulties on the outside which test us: it is hard to bear witness to Christian faith in an unbelieving world. There are difficulties within: not least, our own humanity as we grow older in years and, the greatest test of all, facing our own death with faith and confidence.

All of these trials are to be set in the context of the eternal weight of glory beyond measure. Each day, we are given glimpses of eternity. In the middle of the story, we need to understand the ending and draw strength.

'Now I know only in part,' says Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, 'then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.'

READ Psalm 139 O Lord, you have searched me and known me

As we pray, 'Lead us not into temptation', there is immense strength in understanding that God already knows us, through and through.

Psalm 139 is a powerful reflection on this theme. God knows us inside out and from beginning to end. God is present at the very beginning of our lives: 'You knit me together in my mother's womb.' God is present in every breath and every place, in the light and in the darkness. God knows my every thought, but I understand only a fraction of God's wisdom.

For that reason, I dare to pray with the psalmist, even in the midst of trials of every kind: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart'. Opening our lives to God, who is already with us, is the greatest defence against temptation.

A Prayer of St Columba

Be, Lord Jesus,

A bright flame before me,

A guiding star above me,

A smooth path below me,

A kindly shepherd behind me,

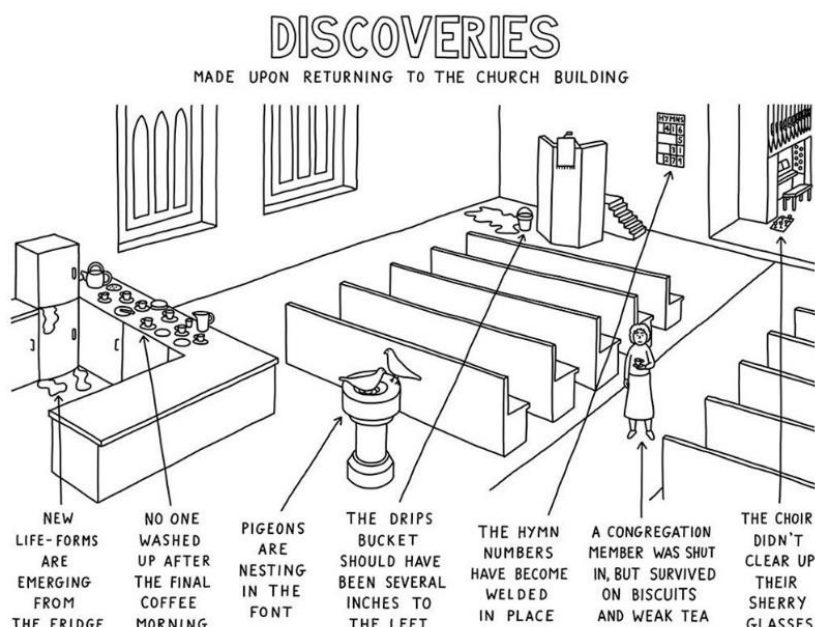
Today, tonight and forever.

RESOURCES

A short statement from the Church of England in response to the Government's paper on Recovery Strategy:

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, said: "We note from the Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy that churches could be open from July as part of the conditional and phased plan to begin lifting the lockdown. We look forward to the time when we are able to gather again in our church buildings.

"We are examining what steps we will need to take to do so safely and are actively planning ahead in preparation. We strongly support the Government's approach of continuing to suppress the transmission of the virus and accordingly, we recognise that at this time public worship cannot return in the interests of public health and safety."



Further details of the current advice can be found here -

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

Attached to this Bulletin are two items ~

- ✚ A Reflection from Revd Andrew Haines on The Ascension (part 2)
- ✚ Thy Kingdom Come 2020 – how to get involved

AND FINALLY DON'T FORGET

If there is anything that you need or know of someone who would appreciate being contacted or added to the mailing list for this weekly e-bulletin, please do not hesitate to contact Revd Ali, Revd Jane or any of the Churchwardens and Church Stewards listed below. ⁱ

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