



St Mary Magdalen Church, Knighton

Sunday 5th June 2020
Fourth Sunday after Trinity



**Join us in prayer this Sunday
and through the week,**

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.

Anniversary of the founding of 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.*

Prayer for the NHS

*Everlasting God,
at this time we lift to you
those from all nations and backgrounds
who work on the front line in healthcare.
Give them skill and wisdom in their work.
Be their strength and their shield
as they give of themselves in the care of others.
Amen.*

For carers and health professionals

*Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve:
bless all who, following in his steps,
give themselves to the service of others;
that with wisdom, patience, and courage,
they may minister in his name
to the suffering and the needy;
for the love of him who laid down his life for us,
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

*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.*

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 Mary's PCC had agreed that we would move cautiously towards opening the church building for private prayer but, given the changing situation, we have decided to review our plans shortly after the 18th – 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 in the air, 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



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 2, 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 Mary'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. The times I have mooted the idea of meeting specifically to pray, I have been met with an almost universal and resolute silence. The very few who have responded with enthusiasm have encouraged me to believe that praying together *could* still 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



Listening to God's Word

Our Bible readings for this Sunday are:

Zechariah 9.9-12 and **Matthew 11.16-19 and 25-end**

"This generation"

Jesus said "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

¹⁷ "'We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;

we sang a dirge,

and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷ "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

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

Reflection: 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*



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*

InSPIREd

The campaign to save our spire

UPDATE and GOOD NEWS!

Thanks to the generosity and fund-raising efforts of so many people in the St Mary's and the wider benefice community, by the end of May we had raised £40,489 towards the cost of repairing the spire. This means that we have achieved our initial target, despite the very unusual circumstances, in only about 8 months! This certainly exceeds our expectations - but we cannot rest on our laurels.

Our plans have been based on the assumption of substantial contributions from charitable trusts and foundations. Applications have been submitted, but their success is not guaranteed, particularly in these very uncertain times, So if you have been meaning to donate but just haven't got round to it, please give now. Details are on the St Mary's website,.

We look forward to emerging from the lockdown hibernation so that we can resume our programme of social and fund-raising events.

Best wishes and thanks,

Nigel Siesage, Chair of the Appeal Group

Adrian Jones, Vicar



Church Family News

Our stained glass: Although the Church building is closed, we are keeping a close eye on maintenance and repair needs. You'll be pleased to know that work has been completed on replacing the stained glass in one of the Lady Chapel, windows which was broken last year.

A Thought for the Week

"Above all, we must not be discouraged by difficulties, but must remind ourselves that the more difficult a work is, the slower and more unrewarding it is, the more necessary it is to set to work with great dispatch and make great efforts."

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916)
French explorer and priest



Diocesan Calendar of Prayer: We can join our fellow Christians across the diocese in prayer by using the new Diocesan Calendar of Prayer, just published, to cover the months July-September. You can download the Calendar by clicking here:

<https://leicester.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/1593600588.pdf>

If you would like a printed copy, please do let me know. *Adrian*

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Keeping in touch and sharing worship together remotely.

On-line worship Each Sunday we aim to have a short recorded, reflective act of worship by members of St Mary's congregation on both the website and our Facebook page—do have a look and join in worship together.

Wednesday Compline (Night Prayer) - Each week we are meeting virtually for Compline at 8pm on Wednesday. It has proven to be a meaningful way to have fellowship and prayer together as well as being quite good fun, especially as we find our feet with the technology and with more people joining us every week.

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 on Wednesday.

To join by phone only, call this number **0131 460 1196** and when prompted input Meeting ID: 746 767 4408

To join by Zoom on the internet, go to this address and click 'Open Zoom' <https://leccofe.zoom.us/j/7467674408>

PLANNED GIVING SCHEME

Regular giving is an integral part of our church life supporting our day to day costs, ministry and mission. A good way to achieve this is through a weekly envelope or a monthly bank standing order as part of our Planned Giving Scheme. Scheme details can be obtained from Lorna Pollard, Planned Giving Scheme Secretary: telephone 01162704272 or email: stmarysknighton.giving@gmail.com. If you are a taxpayer and gift aid your giving, our church can claim an additional 25%.

During the current Coronavirus pandemic please put aside your weekly offerings ready to bring to church when things return to something like normal. The costs of the church are largely unchanged even though we cannot meet, so your regular giving is extremely important to our collective 'health' and the mission of God here.

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Please pray..... "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
(*1 Thessalonians 5.16-18*)

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.*

Special Prayers: please pray for those who lead the Church of England locally, especially as they face difficult decisions in the next weeks: for Bishops Martyn and Guli, our Archdeacon Richard Worsfold and Area Dean Anthony Lees-Smith,.

We pray for all those who are unwell at the moment, whether in body, mind or spirit, and all those with troubling investigations and diagnoses. Please do continue to pray for **Anne Squires, Ed Groves** and their families. We pray for all those on our parish 'Continuing Prayer' list. May they know the power of God's healing love at work in their lives today.

We give thanks for those who have been healed and restored. We remember those who have died recently and pray for their families and friends.

Jesus said "Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11.28.