

# Southwell Leaves

from Southwell Minster

June/July 2020



NEAR THIS SPOT STOOD  
A WOODEN CROSS WHERE  
COMPASSIONATE  
CAME TO BE GRIN  
CROSSING  
LEaving  
B. SHIR

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News and Information

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## Worship Online

Although our building is closed, we continue to pray from our hearts and homes. We are developing new ways of connecting for worship and fellowship.

Please explore the resources that can be found at <https://www.southwellminster.org/theme/worship-online/>

They include:

### **Morning Prayer**

All are welcome to join the clergy at online Morning Prayer each weekday at 8.30am. To take part, please email [dean@southwellminster.org.uk](mailto:dean@southwellminster.org.uk). You will need a device with an internet connection, but little prior technical knowledge is required.

### **Services Online**

Sundays: 10.30am Holy Communion

Please see *Pew News* for weekly information

Thursdays: 7.30pm Reflection and Compline

A service for Thursday evenings. Each week there will be a short reflection on the gospel reading for that day, holding the light of the Gospel up to the strange times we are all living through. We then share in the ancient, short service of Compline, or Night Prayer; a thoughtful and peaceful way to bring the day to a close.

### **Virtual Junior Church**

Whilst the Minster is closed, Junior Church will become Virtual Junior Church, allowing children and families to come together to take part in themed activities that we would have otherwise done together on a Sunday morning. You can find activity sheets on the website

### **Stilling Prayer**

Stephen Ibbotson provides more details within, on page 10.

### **Prayer Resources**

These include:

- Daily Intercessions
- Guidance on Spiritual Communion when we are unable to gather for the Eucharist
- Prayer of the Week
- Personal Prayers
- Prayers about the Coronavirus outbreak
- Prayers with Children
- Worship from Home
- Worship materials from the Cathedral Shop

'Cover credits:

Front: Mompesson's Cross, Eakring, May 2020.

Photograph by Tom Middleton.

Back: Lockdown Collage. Compiled by Tom Hislop.'

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If you are interested in submitting an article for consideration for the next issue, please email your offering to [hugh.middleton@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:hugh.middleton@nottingham.ac.uk) by 10th July 2020.

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## Subscription

If you or friends you may know would like to take out an annual subscription and receive copies by post please send details of your name, address and telephone number with a cheque for £24:00, made out to Southwell Cathedral Chapter, to Christine Kent, 16 Halloughton Road, Southwell, Notts, NG25 0LR.

For more information please contact me on 01636 812750 or email: [chris.kent100@btinternet.com](mailto:chris.kent100@btinternet.com). If you live in Southwell I will be happy to deliver your copies by hand and the annual cost will be £15:00.

Christine Kent (on behalf of the editorial team)

# Welcome to the June/July edition of Southwell Leaves

Well, here we are. As the last edition was being assembled it became clear that our world was about to change in ways no one could have anticipated. In mid-March Alison and I met up with our son, daughter-in-law and their two-year old at Centre Parcs. As we parted and they returned to London I remember saying, "We are going on a journey and it is not clear where it will lead." Two weeks later Centre Parcs was closed, they had fled London because our daughter-in-law is pregnant, and at the time of writing they have yet to return.

We published the April/May edition of *Southwell Leaves* online and this edition is appearing in the same way. A few copies will be printed for those who may be unable to access it otherwise, for postal subscribers, and for the archives. It is almost exhausting to consider the many expressions that have been used to describe what we are living through; "unprecedented", "unusual", "game-changing" and more, and so it is right to have attempted something of a record for posterity.

In truth there is nothing new about plague, but almost by definition it strikes unexpectedly and disruptively. It demands an unprecedented response. That was William Mompesson's, when he arranged to quarantine a whole village. It seemed right to draw attention to him, his local connections and local legacy.

Dean Nicola and her staff have responded to the challenge in ways few would have foreseen some months ago. Many have been furloughed in order to protect jobs, whilst visitors' and other donations are reduced. For the rest, read about the clergy's experiences of becoming proficient in conducting worship online. Haven't they done a great job?!

One of our Lay Clerks practises as a civil celebrant, and he has provided an account of conducting funerals at a time when attendance is severely restricted. Unsurprisingly, the crisis has prompted a variety of theological reflections and some are shared here. Perhaps the more personal accounts will be of most interest in years to come. Oliver Gillinson gives a vivid account of what it was like to suffer COVID-19 whilst functioning as a single parent; others give more or less light-hearted accounts and some have even shared their experiences of hair-cutting. Tom Hislop has summarised his reflections in verse. We have news from our Mission Partners in Africa and a very thoughtful short reflection from Jerusalem. We have included an abridged version of Rowan Williams' Christian Aid Week sermon and, for a bit of balance, there is a handful of contributions that are *not* specifically 'lockdown' related.

One that is, is Naomi Kent's summary of research she and her team have been conducting. Perhaps the thing that stands out most clearly from this, is how varied experiences are. For some they amount to largely welcome change: for others, considerable hardship. Wherever you are in this respect, enjoy the offering and know that you are not alone.

*Hugh Middleton*

*Readers will see that this edition does not include the usual information about forthcoming services, for obvious reasons. Information about contacts has also been omitted because many are unable to respond. If you wish to contact a member of the clergy or have other urgent reasons for contacting Minster staff please call 01636 812593.*

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## Bible Verses for Reflection

### Choose life

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. I call heaven and earth to witness today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life, so that you and your descendants may live.

**Deuteronomy 30: 15-16, 19**

### Our life together

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. **Colossians 3: 12-15**

### Suggestions based on the ancient tradition of Sacred Reading ('Lectio Divina')

Read the verses slowly, perhaps more than once.

If any word or phrase strikes you in particular, stay with it, repeating it quietly to yourself.

Reflect about what God might be saying to you through this.

Move into quietness, resting in God's loving presence.



## From the Dean

### The Minster fully alive to the Holy Spirit in lockdown

First to say, please know of my daily prayers for you, your families and loved ones during these difficult and unsettling weeks. Conversations with many of you have revealed your stoicism, good humour, and concern for others despite the deprivations of daily life. I know many of you, like me, have enjoyed being with Bishop Paul and Sarah for their daily reflection on the Psalms, often recorded in their beautiful garden with delightful views of the Minster and the deafening sound of bird song! We have all needed moments in the day to pause and reflect on the Easter faith, and how it offers strength and courage especially in adversity.

The challenge in writing an article for bi-monthly magazine currently, is that it is likely to soon be out of date. In the days before 'lockdown' and the Government instruction to close churches on 23 March, we were receiving daily three or four updates from the Church of England responding to numerous questions; from grass cutting to bell ringing, construction work to couples planning a summer wedding. There is no doubt lifting restrictions will be even more complex and drawn out in gradual phases. As I write, Saturday 4 July is the date we may hope to reopen the Minster. There is discussion as to whether we will open during June for private prayer. Clergy are now permitted to enter their churches to pray and record services: this is a welcome concession. I suspect the novelty of seeing clergy dining rooms, mantelpieces, studies, gardens, and kitchens has now worn off, and you long to see the inside of the Minster and one of us in it again! It may be that when you read this it will already be out of date. We will either have moved on, or worse, gone back into a second 'lockdown' depending on the now much analysed 'R' rate.

There has been some disquiet about church closures and whether the Church of England has retreated at the time when the nation is most looking for spiritual comfort and hope. Letters in the national and church press have expressed anger, as have outbursts of fury vented on social media: all critical of the leadership of our bishops and archbishops. I do not share these views; I would not be a cathedral dean if I did not love sacred church buildings, or recognise how they point to the numinous, for the faithful and the faithless. These glorious buildings are containers of prayer, worship, praise, lament, and beauty, as well as telling in their very fabric the long story of our communities over centuries. Cathedrals pride themselves on being open to everyone every day. Hearts are lifted by soaring music, large gatherings of people in worship, and by welcoming visitors from near and far. Seeing the door closed and the Minster silenced on my evening daily walk has been deeply shocking.

History reminds us that it has happened before. In 1208 a five-year row between the Pope and King John over the appointment of an Archbishop of Canterbury deprived all clergy in England and Wales from celebrating the sacraments; during the Civil War and, as I have learned recently, in Southwell from 1884-88, to complete Ewan Christian's work on the new cathedral church. However – and there is big 'however', this time it was the

Government who ordered churches to shut, not the bishops. We cherish our freedom to worship (and to do many other things) but we understand that we have had to sacrifice liberty for the good of all. Someone has likened this time to a prolonged Holy Saturday – locked down in trauma, grief, and uncertainty about the future. When will we celebrate the Eucharist together or bring our amazing, dedicated cathedral staff back to work? We just do not know yet.

Nonetheless, by God's grace, we have discovered unexpected and creative opportunities during these last eight weeks. Worship has been maintained, choristers have sung in a virtual choir, pastoral care has been given lovingly over the phone through networks of the Minster community. Neighbourly acts of love and kindness have touched many who live alone. The Minster's connections across the town, diocese and with other cathedrals have widened. *Stilling Prayer* via email has over 60 people each week, the Minster's Easter Day Eucharist with Bishop Paul had over 1100 'views', and online Evening Prayer with East Bingham deanery one Saturday brought 70 of us together. We have made a special VE75 service, a Rogation Sunday worship and are working now on the Queen's Birthday Service for 14 June. We have had online Christian Aid week and a special push to support foodbanks through the *Big Picnic for Hope*. We have managed numerous meetings and even marriage preparation online. All this stretches my capabilities, but I know we can never go back. The integration of these innovative ways of digital communication into the Minster's life is here to stay. Thank you to my patient, talented colleagues who have made it happen. We must now progress and move ahead with our newfound skills and confidence. This is Pentecost faith: the Holy Spirit forever equipping the Church for a new venture.

I need internal space to reflect more deeply on how COVID-19 is reshaping our lives and the mission of the Church. Life at this moment is too full of screens, the email inbox, health and safety risk assessments, draft plans for managing reopening. There is little quality time for deeper thinking. I am longing to see you all in person again, but I am realistic that it will be some time before we are 'back to normal'.

There is one reoccurring word which stays with me as I pray and wonder what the vocation of the Minster will be in the post-coronavirus landscape ahead. It is the word 'healing'. So many people, especially the young, are looking for recovery from the deep psychological, emotional, physical, and economic impact of these times. What is our crucified, risen and ascended Lord, through the empowering of the Spirit of Pentecost, calling the Minster to be in the service of all who seek hope, meaning and renewal? Please join me in praying for vision and wisdom for the days ahead.

Every blessing,  
Dean Nicola



# Canon Precentor Richard

## The Brave New World of Online Worship



**M**y first experience of Holy Week and Easter at the Minster was, to put it mildly, not exactly what I had expected. I had anticipated a demanding but deeply resonant week of worship and preaching, celebrating the liturgies that take us to the very heart of our faith. What I got was a crash course in curating online worship, trying (with no training or experience) to translate the services of Holy Week into online events, recorded in my and others' studies, dining rooms, and kitchens.

A few weeks on, online worship has become the Precentor's staple diet. A weekly routine has established itself. All elements of a Sunday service (the main liturgy, the sermon, music, and now readings and intercessions), have to be submitted by Thursday lunchtime; they are then edited by Jeff Sutton, the cathedral's videographer, into a single act of worship to be broadcast at 10.30 on Sunday morning. As the weeks have gone on, we have tried gradually to broaden the range of voices heard and of faces seen, to make our offering gradually more representative of the Minster's community and worship. It has been wonderful in the last few weeks, for example, to begin to hear some of our choristers' voices singing hymns and even anthems.

What has been most remarkable for me, though, is the extent to which our virtual worship feels like an expression of 'real-life' community. Celebrating the Eucharist with only my wife Emma and an iPhone for company is an odd experience, but there is a real sense of connection with the wider world – both the cathedral community, and with a number of people joining us from different parts of the country. Dean Nicola and I are very grateful to those who send emails saying that they find the services helpful; rather like a handshake at the Minster door, they provide a sense of real connection, that we are not just broadcasting into a void.

One thing seems certain: online worship is here to stay. The genie is out of the bag, the cat out of the bottle. The cathedral is already exploring ways of improving the wi-fi signal inside the building so that, at a future date, worship – even when congregations can gather once again – can be live-streamed into the homes of those who are unable to make it. Many disabled people, for example, have been taking part in 'virtual' church services for years; but the Coronavirus crisis has brought it firmly into the mainstream.

But online church raises significant questions. Is online church really church? The short answer to this question must be Yes. God is present by his Spirit wherever two or three gather in his name – or, to put it another way, wherever community happens in the name of Jesus. And the experience of many, not just over the past few weeks but over years beforehand as well, has been that such community can be experienced powerfully in online, virtual forms.

Things are a little more complicated, though, for those of us whose faith has been formed and nurtured primarily through Eucharistic worship. The spirituality of the modern Church of

England has been influenced profoundly by the 'Parish Communion Movement' of the middle years of the twentieth century, which sought to put the Eucharist firmly at the centre of the Church's life, Sunday by Sunday. For many of us – myself included – the sacrament of the altar is the holiest and most significant thing that human beings can do together. But what happens when – as at the moment – we simply cannot share that Sacrament together round one table, as Jesus did with his disciples in the upper room?

The Church of England has been – rightly in my view – very cautious of the idea that the consecration of the elements can happen 'remotely'; in other words, that individuals taking part in an online service from home can supply their own bread and wine, which is consecrated by the priest presiding at the Eucharist via the internet. This would be a radical re-imagining of what we mean by Holy Communion, and would need years of careful thought, in ecumenical consultation with other Churches.

What has been rediscovered, instead, is the concept of 'Spiritual Communion'; the teaching that, when we are prevented by insurmountable factors from sharing together in Christ's body and blood, we remain nevertheless in communion with Christ spiritually, just as much as we would be were we able to gather at the altar. Many who have participated in the Minster's online services will be aware that the Church of England has produced an excellent guide to Spiritual Communion, with a number of helpful prayers including one by our own Angela Ashwin. Sharing together in Holy Communion must always be the norm, in normal times; but it has been a blessing of these most abnormal times we are living through to be reminded that, where this is not possible, Christ comes to meet us where we are.

Other questions for the future remain. What will happen if there comes a time when we are able to meet again in churches, but when for reasons of infection control Holy Communion remains forbidden? What will this mean for the future of our worship? What will be the lasting impact of the newly-raised profile of online liturgy? The Christian Church's faith has always been informed by its experience of worship, which is influenced in turn by the changing circumstances and contexts in which the Church finds itself. What happens next will be intriguing – and perhaps unsettling – for all of us.

*Richard Frith*

## From the Rector Chori

The picture has been largely the same throughout cathedrals. We began with elements of social distancing. Services were then no longer allowed to be public. And then we were in lockdown – no services in churches, no singing, furloughing of staff, online services. Very quickly we tire of speaking in soundbites: ‘strange times’, ‘unprecedented times’, ‘new normal’, and so on. As the person responsible for providing the musical elements of Cathedral worship, it really is like stepping into a new role and just as exhausting. Music is desired, but what? How? There are still choristers to be recruited, families to be kept in touch, staff to check in with, and some sort of future planning to be done.

Probably the last time there was such a dramatic hiatus in the music of our cathedrals it

was during the Civil War, plagues, and Commonwealth of the 17th Century; when choirs were disbanded, organs broken down, and a significant General Pause put on sacred musical activity. Musicians had to be quick at identifying other means of generating their lost income and keeping their art alive. Not only were organists and adult singers affected, but choristers, who were usually of the poorest families, would have had their whole education and security removed.

We live in the hope that the current hiatus will not last quite as long; that the needs of our choristers are not quite so acute; and at least we have the benefits that modern technology allows. Never before has it been easier to connect with people remotely in real time. Not only can we meet with people almost face-to-face, but even those of us who are mere mortals have the capacity to make reasonable sound and video recordings, such that we feel confident presenting them to the outside world. If this had happened ten years earlier, the picture would have been very different.

So what of online worship? Personally I find it very difficult to engage with for all sorts of reasons, but it is clearly an important offering that we can make for those who feel its value. Whilst it comes in varying forms, the first step has been to realise that it has to be different to worship in real space and real time. Just as it is odd for clergy to celebrate Eucharist on Thursday to be recorded for Sunday, it is odd to record a piece of music alone for combination in a recording which will be used ‘as live’ later. In entering worship we leave the temporal behind, and especially so in musical worship where live performance of composed music has

a corporate sense of anamnesis, creation, and renewal simultaneously. This sense is easily lost in the creation of backing tracks, rhythm tracks, conducting videos, recording of individual lines, collation of individual recordings, editing, mastering, and finally producing something which sounds almost like a choir. It can feel very mechanical, and sometimes daunting – many of these skills are ones that I have had to teach myself extremely quickly! – and we remain firmly fixed in our temporal existence, sensing the deadline looming.



Despite the difficulties, and the enormous sense of grief at losing, for the time being, something so precious, I am proud that we can continue to provide musical worship that lifts people closer to God. It may be simple – a piece of plainsong here, a hymn there – but there is much beauty in simplicity. And I am particularly proud of all our musicians for their readiness to adapt quickly and provide musical resources when asked. From the youngest chorister to the most

experienced lay clerk, everyone has wanted to give what they can.

From the time of the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, music was restored in cathedrals and churches. Some of our country’s most inventive musical endeavours come from this time, and wonderful composers such as Michael Wise, Pelham Humfrey and Henry Purcell were forced to reinvent a musical style and language to rebuild the choral tradition. This they did with vigour, recruiting choristers from far and wide in particular for the Chapel Royal – and, whilst it may have taken provincial areas longer to recover, musical worship began to flourish once again.

It is comforting to know that some of what we are experiencing has, at least in part, happened before. People have had to rebuild, to face new challenges, and to recreate afresh the best of the former period. Of course there are significant practical matters to address, not least financially, as well as ensuring safety in performing music, but we will adapt so as to continue to provide the highest level of musical worship that we can to the glory of God, furthering the mission and ministry of our own Cathedral, Diocese, and indeed the whole Christian purpose.

We look forward to the day when, once again, we will enter into worship through music in each other’s presence, but in the meantime I hope that our offerings give a glimpse of what we are used to experiencing together. It is hard work but, I think, fully worth it.

*Paul Provost*

# William Mompesson

We may not recall his name but many of us will be familiar with the story of William Mompesson, vicar of Eyam in Derbyshire, and certainly many will have been reminded of him in recent weeks. Visitors to Eyam today can see Mompesson's well a kilometre or so from the centre of the village, one of the stations on the parish boundary, and close to the pack horse trail, where supplies were left during the time of the plague.

William Mompesson was appointed rector of Eyam in 1664, and only a year later bubonic plague broke out in the village, brought there by disease ridden fleas in a bale of cloth delivered from London to a firm of local tailors. Between September and December 1665 forty-two villagers died and many were beginning to plan on leaving their homes and livelihoods to save the lives of their families. Eyam was then a prosperous village at the heart of the Derbyshire lead mining industry and it would have been a serious decision to leave this flourishing community. At this point Mompesson persuaded the villagers to make the sacrifice of putting themselves in quarantine, a lockdown of the whole village all too familiar to us today. He believed it was his duty to prevent the plague spreading to nearby villages and the towns of Bakewell and Sheffield. With the support of Thomas Stanley, the previous rector, he devised a plan for isolating the village: and in June 1666 it was enclosed and no one was allowed out or in. The Earl of Devonshire offered to send food and supplies from Chatsworth if they agreed to be quarantined.

William stayed on in the village ministering to the sick and their families and demonstrating his understanding of social distancing in his church by preaching in the open air. He survived and his plan undoubtedly prevented the spread of the disease in the region, but his wife was amongst the 260 parishioners who had died by November 1666 when the last person succumbed. She had refused to go with the children when William sent them away to safety in Yorkshire and stayed to help her husband in his work. The price that Eyam paid was devastating, only eighty-three persons survived from the roughly 350 who stayed in the village after the initial outbreak.

William Mompesson began his ministry as the Domestic Chaplain to Sir George Savile of Rufford and his subsequent moves were all to livings in the gift of Savile; first to Wellow, then Bilsthorpe and later Eyam. In January 1671 he was installed as Rector of Eakring where he arrived already known as 'Hero of the Plague' and where he continued to preach in the open air, possibly because his new parishioners feared he still carried the infection. Whatever was the reason, evidence of his open-air services still survives in the form of Mompesson's Cross at Pulpit Ash on a farm track west of the village of Eakring.

His incumbency in Eakring, where he did much good work, particularly helping to

restore the church, lasted 30 years and he lived there for the rest of his life. In 1676 he was made a Prebendary of Normanton and Vicar General in Southwell. He was residentiary canon in 1689 when 'the Chapter petitioned the

archbishop, Thomas Lamplugh, for permission to build a house for the canon who is undertaking his residence in rota'. The new building was to replace an old hall at the eastern side of the Vicars Court quadrangle and the building works were put in the hands of Mompesson. The work started in 1689/90 and he recorded the expenditure as it proceeded in an enormous inventory of seventeen pages that can be seen in the Minster Library. Special payments were made in 1693 for the preparation of some of the rooms for a visit of the Archbishop but

the final summary of the costs of £654 9s 2d was dated 1695. This amount was raised as gifts from the Archbishop, prebendaries, and others, and from sales of timber from Chapter estates.

Norman Summers in his book *A Prospect of Southwell* writes, 'The accommodation provided in this original building was equivalent to that of the wealthier yeoman farmer or smaller manor house of the period, but modest by the standards enjoyed by the residentaries 100 years later.'

William Mompesson continued to live a quiet life in Eakring and died there in 1709 aged 70. He was buried in the parish church (St. Andrew the Apostle) where a brass plate and three small windows in his memory can be seen.

In contrast to William's modest lifestyle, refusing preferment to Dean of Lincoln, his son George Mompesson appears to have been a wealthy man at the end of his life, owning property and land around the country as well as in Southwell. He was appointed prebendary for Oxton<sup>1</sup> when he was 27 or 28 years old in 1688 and was Rector of Mansfield from 1698 to 1721. He lived mainly in Mansfield but spent a good deal of time in Southwell attending Chapter meetings regularly. The Oxton<sup>1</sup> prebendal house was almost a ruin and some time, around 1709, rather than restore the old house, George built a new 'mansion of high fashion' behind the existing prebend in a style now known as Queen Anne. Nowadays it goes under the name of Cranfield House. It is still regarded as one of the most desirable in the town.



Christine Kent

# Southwell stays at Home

## Creative ways in which the town has responded to 'lockdown'

The town is so quiet, with little traffic going past.' 'The birds seem to be singing extra loudly this year, and we can hear them.' 'It's really sad seeing the Minster locked, but we can still touch the warm stone as we go past.' 'I really miss not being able to hug my grandchildren, or even go and see them.' These are some of the things people have said in emails and phone calls during the COVID-19 restrictions. Southwell has been affected as much as any other community, not least because many of us know people who have had the virus. Everyone has been worried about people's jobs being lost and relatives no longer able to pay their bills.

People have found creative ways to keep in contact with their families. One person whose elderly mother was in hospital was encouraged by nurses to climb through a hedge into the hospital grounds, so she could at least see her mother through a window and have a 'face-to-face' conversation on the phone. Many of us with laptops, smart-phones or iPads have learned the skills of Skype and Zoom. Baffled faces have become more relaxed as the weeks have gone by, and we get used to seeing our families on a screen only 5 inches wide and 2 ½ inches deep.

Art has blossomed. In Westhorpe, well-known as a cohesive and artistic community, the people have nailed a long clothes line to a wall and called it the 'Isolation Creation Station', with poems, pictures and words of wisdom pegged to the line. Others found the therapeutic value of colouring books when they couldn't go out. Children in Southwell have produced rainbows of all shapes and sizes to back up the Thursday pan-bashing session to thank keyworkers and the NHS.

As I write this, the Minster has been closed for weeks and many members of staff are furloughed (We learned a new word!); the archbishops had requested that churches should set a good example of 'social distancing'. But worship has continued in the homes of Dean Nicola and Canon Richard, and those on the internet have joined in. Live-streaming services demands patience and skill, especially in a church like the Minster which does not use computer technology week by week. Services have been pre-recorded, with participants getting used to filming themselves at home reading lessons and leading prayers – though my wife initially appeared upside-down when she recorded intercessions. There was singing too: in Holy Week individual choristers recorded verses from well-known hymns. On the first few Sundays, the Rector Chori, Paul Provost, and his wife Ruth led hymns, but by mid-May the technology was in place for choristers to sing Easter hymns as a group, but from their own homes. Thanks to all for their perseverance.



Westhorpe's Isolation Creation Station



A typical colouring book, for calm and reflection

Morning Prayer on weekdays has proved a bigger challenge as it has been done live; participants have got used to seeing the others occupying a quarter of their iPhone screen; they also had to remember to press the mute button because – if more than one person speaks at a time – the Lord's Prayer turns into gobbledegook. Worshipping at the computer or iPad became the norm. Meanwhile the Junior Church team has presented weekly classes on the Minster website.

Two of the prayer groups continue online. Stephen Ibbotson has written separately about the growth of Stilling Prayer on Monday evenings. The Silence and Meditation Group carries on meeting on Thursdays at 12.30pm, with people praying in their own homes. Members have continued taking it in turns to provide input to lead in to the shared silence, followed by fifteen minutes of prayer for the world and its needs. Extra people have joined in, including former group members who now live in West Sussex and Scarborough. At Sacrista Prebend

Ken, the tenant in the flat, decided to say Morning and Evening Prayer on his own in the chapel. 'I do it properly,' he said, 'and light the candles!'

And how have people occupied their time? Teaching and finance and social work have continued, but online. Dogs have taken their owners for walks. Some have taken more exercise on the prescribed daily exercise than they have for many years, and have enthusiastically compared steps and distances with their friends. Bird-lovers have compared notes, and gardens ended up tidier than they had been for years. The Town Council and the churches set up an excellent scheme to help the vulnerable. The Minster's clergy and Pastoral Committee have been making sure that those living alone are remembered. Friends and neighbours have done shopping for the self-isolated, who have got used to washing their bananas and food packets with soapy water. Drivers from the churches joined the weekly delivery to Newark Foodbank at a time of even greater need.

Staying at home? Yes. Inactive? No! The Church has remained the Church, even though temporarily without the building.

Vincent Ashwin



Getting ready for Palm Sunday service at the computer

# Funerals in a time of plague

I have been taking people's funerals since I was twenty-five. I have seen hundreds and hundreds of funerals of all kinds, in all kinds of places, surrounded by a huge variety of rituals and customs that made the grieving manageable for the mourners. But I have never seen a time like this.

Everything in us calls out to be together. In Congo, as soon as a death was known, you headed for the home of the deceased. There, in the main room, was the deceased laid out in the middle of the room, and around the walls were all the mourners, wailing, crying, praying, singing, testifying to God's goodness in the life of the deceased. No one was excluded; children and babes in arms, the oldest and most infirm, all took part. It was the same in 1980s Hartlepool – still the custom to have the deceased at home in the front room, with visits from family, friends and neighbours, and there was still open and very public wailing at funerals. No middle-class sniffing.

Nevertheless, however we do it, we want to do it together. And now we can't. No touches, no hugs, no arms around shoulders. Nothing that tells us, in a way that words struggle to, that we are together in the face of death, that there is human solidarity.

Churches are dark. No funerals there. Churchyards are still open. One or two clergy taking graveside services. A very few mourners, and all told to be socially distanced. But many don't have open churchyards in their parishes, and besides, not many people want such a ceremony.

Funeral Directors find it hard to find clergy who will take funerals, they tell me – the retired are staying at home, and the active are too hard-pressed. So, they ring celebrants.

Crematoria are still open. The picture of what happens and is allowed is hugely variable. Leeds, Bradford and Airedale have banned all families from attending. In this region there are limits on the numbers allowed to attend. Most 'crems' allow at least ten mourners, some fifteen, and one, up to twenty-four. This seemed a lot to me, and I was nervous about going there. But the organisation of the place was such that people were well spaced. There was copious wiping down of everything between every ceremony, masks and gloves. I was marginally relieved. All preparation has to be done by phone. This is not what I would want. The long calls are exhausting – much more than making home visits. And they are much less useful to the families. When you visit, they get to see you and have a sense of what they are going to get on the day – sometimes they say how reassured they are after meeting. But that is gone.

The funeral itself is all very strange. I don't go out and meet them as I would normally. I stay inside and wait for them to come in. I remain behind my lectern. If a family member wishes to speak, they must do it from where they are. There is no touching of coffins, no laying of flowers on coffins. There are no floral displays – the florists are shut.

Most crematoria now require the curtains to be closed around the coffin – not something that many people want. At the end we file out. There are no hugs, no touching, no consolation. We stand around awkwardly for a minute or two. There are no wakes, no celebrations, no funeral teas. No time to stand and remember. After a very short time we all head back to our isolation.

There will be memorial services, I am sure. But, as one funeral director's bearer said to me yesterday, 'It won't be the same, the moment will have passed.' There are some who are too afraid to go to a funeral, or who don't want to be bothered – they choose Direct Cremation – just a hearse with a plain coffin turning up and

dropping off a body for burning – no ceremony, no mourners, no one, nothing. I wonder what all this unprocessed grief will do to the nation in the years to come.

I try and write my ceremonies as carefully as I can – I listen and reflect what the families have said to me. I pray if they ask for it, and I pray internally all the time. I try and let my words carry something that will offer some consolation. And I always send them a complete script of what is said, so they can look at it afterwards, when the

emotion of the moment has passed.

At the first socially distanced funeral I took, there were three mourners in the front row. They were well-separated. As the curtains closed, one woman reached out her hand to the chief mourner, the son of the deceased. He started to raise his hand, then hesitated, and went no further. The gap between them remained unbridged. They wept alone.

But then, Jesus did not always want to be touched. And yet his presence is to be found in look, and word, and in the loving that is expressed by message and note and screen time. In cake left on the doorstep, in the smile that accompanies the avoiding of passers-by. We will touch again, we will hug, we will hold hands, we will wipe away each other's tears.

There will be so much to do, so much to listen to, so much to help ease the pain of our plague-time. May God find us ready for a vast, unseen, unnoticed task that lies ahead.

*Jeremy Pemberton: Furloughed Lay Clerk and Civil Celebrant.*



*Mansfield Crematorium*

## Stilling Prayer



**P**re-COVID a group had been meeting in Sacrista Prebend on Monday evenings to share half an hour of silent prayer and reflection, and to enjoy Christian fellowship. Stephen Ibbotson describes what has happened since the beginning of 'lockdown'.

It was getting serious! On 16th March Boris announced restrictive measures to avoid unnecessary gatherings. It still wasn't lockdown, but as the virus began to spread from northern Italy, the signs had been coming that 'containment' measures were on their way. That same Monday evening, a diminished number of us met, edged against the walls of the Sacrista chapel, safely distanced from one another, for what we knew would be the last Stilling Prayer for some time. After our time of silence, no drinks or general chat as was our norm, instead we suggested we could continue remotely in our homes, observing the silence at the same time. 'Perhaps one or two others from the Minster may want to join in.'

From the moment it was announced through the Minster website, there was a steady stream of requests to join the group. So, by the following Monday – the day of lockdown – it was our first evening of 'remote' Stilling Prayer'. Up to 40 of us lit our candles and joined together in silence for half-an-hour from 7.30pm, way beyond the eight to ten who might normally attend. It's continued to grow so that something in excess of 60 have been sharing in these times.

'This is certainly a time to be still and know the presence and peace of God.' 'I don't have to walk this in the dark alone.' It's 'moving and powerful to think of everyone praying quietly at the same time. A deep sense of one-ness in Christ.' The sense of being in solidarity through the awareness of others praying at the same time, has been mentioned by a number. It illuminates afresh the reality of 'the communion of saints.' Others have mentioned how they find it quietens and refreshes them. I've noticed particularly in this period of the pandemic, it cleanses my mind jolted and jagged by the continuous flow of information that bombards us. On occasions it's met a personal need: 'tonight's message was a perfectly timed reminder that I really needed and definitely appreciate.'

It highlights again the wisdom of Jesus telling us to go into our 'inner room and shut the door' to pray to our Father in secret. Might this become part of my personal 'new normal'?

## Pause for Thought



**F**or the last few years there has been a *Thought for the Week* in the Minster's Pew News, usually taken from books in Sacrista Prebend library. Here are two quotes from 2016.

### Prayer and the Holy Spirit

Prayer is the energy of the Spirit, permeating and leavening a person, and, through that person, reaching out also to the cosmos. It is not rattling off phrases and formulas, or touching off this or that vague feeling. Nor is it standing aside from life or getting lost in unreality. Prayer creates *a new heart* in men and women, and is always located in the heart of the world.

*André Louf, 'Teach us to Pray', 1974, DLT, p. 86.*

### The vicissitudes of life

Your way through life will not remain the same. There are years of happiness and years of suffering. There are years of hope, and of disappointment, of building up, and of breaking down. But God has a firm hold on you through everything. It is all part of life, and it is worth the effort to live it to the end. You need never stop growing.

*Rule for a New Brother, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 1986, DLT, Section 13.*

## Social Distancing

One of the great joys in these uncertain times is still being able to see your children and grandchildren.

We are fortunate to live next door to our daughter and daughter-in-law and as such are able to see and talk with them and our two grandsons.

Lucas is 4 years old and understands the need to keep a safe distance over the fence, but poor Hugo, who's only 18 months, just can't understand why he can't come to us for cuddles.

One afternoon Lucas said to Gran: "Gran, when this flippin virus is over, can I come and make some more gingerbread men?"

We think that sums it up, "a flippin virus" that will one day be over.

*Chris and Andy Corner*

# Values, Loo Rolls and Vulnerability

What matters most? If ever there was a time in human history when this question was paramount, it must be now. During challenging moments in the past I have often turned to the 'Wise and Holy Fools' to help me sort out my priorities. These free spirits down the ages challenge conventional attitudes and help us see the truth behind appearances. In celebrating 'fools' I must stress that I am *not* referring to the kind of reckless folly that endangers both oneself and others - a phenomenon sadly not unknown just now. The 'foolishness' I have in mind is a way of truthful, brave and generous living, part of our human potential which brings us closer to God himself. As St Paul boldly asserts, 'the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom' (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:25).

Jesus, arguably the greatest Holy Fool ever, constantly turned worldly wisdom upside down. For example, he recognised the essential worth of every individual, reaching out especially to those widely considered useless, unproductive or insignificant. I am profoundly relieved that this underlying conviction, that every person matters, lies behind the unbelievably huge responses of most world governments to the coronavirus pandemic (in spite of some glaring exceptions). Drastic measures, both financial and practical, are designed primarily to protect the very people who might, in a ruthlessly utilitarian world, have been considered expendable: the elderly, frail and unwell. As someone over 70 myself I am overwhelmed and humbled by the magnitude of this corporate effort.

Yet this is not simple or straightforward. While it is widely agreed that everybody is of equal value, Ministry of Health officials warn us that not everyone can be treated in the same way. There could still be agonising decisions about who will be given life-support machines if there are not enough for everyone. We are seeing daily the heroism of many front-line medical workers, carers and others who are prepared to risk their lives for the sake of others. We may not all be asked to make huge life and death decisions, but we can all pray for the grace to be unselfish in smaller ways, like self-isolating for the sake of everyone else. But we must beware! The last thing we need is armies of smug, self-appointed martyrs. We need a healthy dose of common sense and the capacity not to take ourselves too seriously. This brings me on to loo rolls.

Many spiritual guides say that we are always given the teachers we need, but I little dreamed that the humble loo roll would become my mentor. First, I am learning how precious each sheet of toilet tissue is, making me resolve never to take loo rolls for granted again. This leads me to appreciate other everyday things more, so that every birdsong, daffodil and baked bean is something to cherish. Thus, I am rediscovering the ancient art of thankfulness, a creative and healing energy in my turbulent soul.

But there is a darker side to the lessons of the

loo roll shortage. While there is a tremendous groundswell of good will around, COVID-19 is also bringing out the worst in us, including in me. I am aware that the rollercoaster of thoughts in my mind contains a large dollop of judgementalism. Of course we need to let off steam at times. But I know that habitually blaming others can become a corrosive energy in my soul. So, when I find myself railing against loo roll hoarders and others, I need to find ways of letting go of this unedifying stream of self-righteous indignation. Other holy fools help me here: the fourth century Desert Fathers and Mothers who lived in constant prayer and radical simplicity in the deserts of Egypt and elsewhere. From their profound understanding of human nature they urge us to listen carefully to our thoughts and then meet each negative or unhelpful impulse with something positive. This could be a Bible verse, favourite prayer, the name of Jesus or anything that works for us, in order to draw us back to our better and deeper selves.

In a world often preoccupied with success and achievement the wise fools tell us that it is strength, not weakness, to acknowledge our vulnerability and need of help. Many people are suffering greatly just now, and we all need space to lament and maybe talk openly with each other about dying, in a society that is often death-denying. At the heart of the Christian faith is Jesus, the crucified Fool on the Hill, a complete failure in worldly terms, but risen and with us now in the hellishness and humanity of this bewildering pandemic. Christ is here, not taking away our pain but sharing it with us.

*Angela Ashwin*



# Lockdown Lessons from The Very Rev Hosam Naoum, Anglican Bishop Coadjutor of Jerusalem



*This short talk was recorded by the Christian charity Embrace the Middle East and posted on social media. It has been transcribed and edited into a written form, and provides a very particular and humbling perspective of our unusual experiences.*

## How do we deal with this new situation?

I always tell people when I speak to them, and share our experiences in the Holy Land, that people shouldn't take for granted what they have. At the present time this is something people in many places around the world today will be learning the hard way. One of the things I believe we human beings need to be aware of is that God has given us so much. Quite often as human beings we can sometimes feel that it is not enough.

As Palestinians, as Jordanians, as Lebanese and throughout this diocese we have learned, in many, many situations, to trust and be content with what God has given to us. Although many people have ambitions, dreams, and so on, the nature of life in the Middle East has taught us how to be content, to accept life as it is, and deal with whatever comes through our doors. Being aware of this is one thing, but it isn't easy to live it virtually or even intellectually. To know it you have to live through it. In order to understand what this means, for example, even before the Coronavirus crisis, travelling from one place to another wasn't something straightforward. There are checkpoints, and there are restrictions on some areas because of the political situation that

we live in. In places like New York, people wouldn't even think about freedom of movement because it's just how things are. Now, in the light of the Coronavirus people are experiencing a different kind of life.

Perhaps this is why the first thing that comes into people's minds is 'it is strange times', 'it is weird times', 'it is unusual times'. This is very true because people haven't experienced this before; it's new.

How do we deal with this new situation? I think you know a piece of good news that I can share with you. Through my experience, at least, and the experience of my people, the good thing about this whole situation is that we human beings can adapt and we can adjust to whatever situation we live in. This is a kind of an instinctive survival mode that we, as human beings have, and I think we need to trust in that instinct and at the same time, trust in God; trust that God will help us through this. Especially as Christians we believe in miracles, so I hope this will be one way in which we can experience God's goodness in our life, despite all that is happening.



*Queuing for food. England May 2020. Sky News*

# Coronavirus - our experience as a single parent family

Living as a single parent with my three children, Isabel 11, and twins Phoebe and Bridget 10, this is our experience of getting through Coronavirus, lockdown, and all the other craziness over the last couple of months!

It all began on Thursday 12th March (Day 1), long before the official UK lockdown had started. I awoke in the middle of the night with an intense headache. Taking Paracetamol on and off over the following days, I thought little of it. However, being the sole carer of my three children, two of whom are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, I was cautious from the beginning just in case.

By Saturday night (Day 3) I was overcome by the most extreme muscle ache and fatigue, my mouth suddenly feeling like sandpaper, and a strong fever. I managed to get to bed, took Ibuprofen, and got through the night.

On Sunday (Day 4) I struggled to get out of bed and spent most of the day on the sofa. In the night I had switched back to Paracetamol and I'm certain it helped get the fever under control, but I was extremely lethargic and even moving from the sofa to the sink for the simplest of tasks was exhausting. Luckily the girls were fabulous, and we got through it. However, acutely aware of what I may have, I was doing everything to avoid infecting the children, whilst being their sole carer which is no easy task. Luckily, we had plenty of hand wash, multiple bathrooms and lots of space in the house to keep distance. The children, as naïve as ever (thankfully) were blissfully unaware of what was wrong with Daddy whilst talking constantly about Coronavirus and what their friends had said at school, and the people across the world currently suffering from it.

Monday morning (Day 5) I awoke having had horrible chills throughout the night and constant back ache. I felt OK, the fever was kept at bay (perhaps due to the Paracetamol which I was now taking constantly at the recommended dosage), but the strange sandpaper feeling in my mouth was very unpleasant. Doing anything was difficult, the phone call to school especially, as by 16th March communication by the government was still woeful, and school were perplexed about our whole household isolating for 7 days. The children were very good, spending a lot of their time during the first week reading and playing piano, whilst helping Daddy!

Tuesday 17th March (Day 6) I woke up not feeling good at all; adding to the fatigue and fever, my eyes were really itchy, feeling

almost like they were burning. Phone calls and FaceTime calls with friends and family kept us all sane; the girls learned to live in a new age of digital communication without physically being with their friends or extended family.



Wednesday 18th (Day 7) I awoke with awful jaw ache, and this I still have to the present day of writing (April 23rd). My tongue was also swollen, it was all very odd. The virus is evil as several times already my body felt like it was getting better and over the worst of it, only to be hit harder with even stronger symptoms. Worryingly Isabel had developed a mild sore throat and slight fever which persisted for approximately a week on and off. We hadn't had direct contact with anyone since Thursday 12th: could she have caught Coronavirus from me and were these mild symptoms in a child? Who knows as testing back then was virtually non-existent! The twins thankfully were completely fine.

Thursday 19th (Day 8) my symptoms were really bad, and I was quickly running out of Paracetamol, clearly unable to get to a pharmacy for more and online delivery already scarce. I felt a little better after a telephone call with my doctor (who was amazing), and then the pharmacist who went out of their way to deliver the Paracetamol an hour later. Both quietly informed me that there were a lot of very ill people with similar symptoms in the local area.

Friday 20th (Day 9) I woke up feeling much better in terms of energy levels and fever but had developed a horrible dry cough during the night which persisted on and off for a few weeks. By the weekend of the 28th (Day 17) the worst of the symptoms seemed to be over and the fever had gone. Just an on and off cough, and occasional bouts of fatigue and dizziness which continued for some time.

Since then, as a family we've really enjoyed lockdown. From cooking and baking together to games in the evening, it is a lovely way of life. If only we weren't all isolated from our friends and family. Getting really involved with the children's schooling, seeing what they are up to, not to mention the lovely sunny weather and spending time together in the garden. From a positive perspective it's been a wonderful time, however we do all crave going back to some kind of normality, perhaps a mix between the old norm and the current norm would suffice and be rather enjoyable....

*Oliver Gillinson*

# Where is God in the pandemic?

## Or What is God saying to us and our world through the pandemic?

*The pandemic has brought a new form of church*

As I write this, the quarantine arrangements have been extended for another three weeks. It is also clear that, until a vaccine is found for COVID-19, we will continue to have some restrictions to protect our health care provision and personal health. But what messages should we take from these unprecedented times? This pandemic will have historical significance, but should it also have theological impact upon our world? What spiritual messages could God be giving us through this disease?

St. Augustine of Hippo, who died in 430 AD, had an appropriate comment concerning the significance of Easter. 'The season before Easter signifies the troubles in which we live here and now. The time after Easter that we are now celebrating signifies the happiness which will be ours in the future'. One spiritual message I am taking from the present pandemic is that a return to happiness will be ensured if we develop more fully our view of God in all aspects of His glory.

There seems to be a flaw in our concept of God, let alone what he demands of us as his followers. We recite those wonderful words from the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God  
The Father, the Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth  
Of all that is seen and unseen.

Perhaps the patriarchs of the church had the same difficulty that we have in our understanding of God? They swiftly move on much more expansively to the life, death and resurrection of Christ, yet have left so much about God unsaid? The Creed has more to say about the nature of the Holy Spirit than it says about the qualities of God. Similarly, because we talk much about God as love, do we give the impression that God is an emotion, rather than a being? Yet God is much more than love. He is also the creator, our guide, the focus of our prayers, our companion through life, the Almighty and the means of our salvation. Moreover, it is clear in both the Old and New Testaments that he will one day be our judge. We are made in His image, but are we twenty first century believers in danger of making God in our image? The Nicene Creed was formulated to reject an early Christian heresy and to establish the Trinity as core belief; perhaps we need another Creed in 2020 to establish that God is not just a warm Comforter but also an Almighty Judge.

He is the Almighty and the means of our salvation.



An even cursory knowledge of Christ's teaching clearly removes any concept of God as one who would accept our half-hearted attempts at evangelism, at occasional standing up for the poor, or our feebleness in confronting injustice. Let alone our modern idols of longing for riches, seeking to take and not give back and the gauging of success by the acquisition of possessions. Add to our sins our adoration for ephemeral celebrities, whether those who play sport or who entertain, whose lives on closer examination may seem inane and shallow. Jesus' teachings through parables establish that God will expect servants to use talents, that fig-trees will be expected to produce fruit, that houses built on poor foundations will fail and that servants will be divided into those who are blessed or cursed. Also, that in the eternal afterlife there will be those who rejoice in God's presence and those like the rich man in Luke 16. He in his lifetime ignored Lazarus and is therefore cut off from God. The Christian life is the only one to which entry is free but the subscription is then paid every day through a life dedicated to Him.

One parable for example shows how scrutinised we will be when God judges us. The Rich Man in Mark 10 (also in Mathew 19 and Luke 18) would be welcomed into our



churches. He professed to keep all the commandments, he came running and was very polite. His equivalent today would be singled out for responsibility within many churches, perhaps using his talents on committees and within the Diocese. Yet Jesus allowed him to, 'Go away sad, for he had much wealth' (Matthew 19: 22). I have heard many sermons using this event as a comment on wealth, or as an example of Our Lord's incredibly high standards. Yet at its heart it is not about these issues but about a Rich Man who was deluded. He calmly explained that he had kept all the commandments, yet when tested on the first command: 'Do not have any Gods before me', his riches were revealed as too valued to be laid aside. His lip service to the commandments established him as deluding himself, failing to see that riches for him were like a graven image (second commandment). We can only speculate as to his path to riches, but might they have involved covetousness (commandment ten) as well? Jesus, far from being unnecessarily harsh, gently indicated he was a liar and a hypocrite. Even Jesus' apparent quibble over being called 'Good teacher' (Mark 10: 17) was a challenge to a young man whose flattery of others had given him a position in society. Jesus' reply: 'Why do you call me Good?' was an attempt to help the rich man to assess to what things or people did he ascribe the title of 'good'. As well as valuing his words he was invited to examine his standing before Almighty God.

The present pandemic should help Christians to trust God through a time of severe testing. But it should also enable us to indicate to a sceptical world that our present predicament is of mankind's making. On a worldly level we have used the world's resources without a care for good stewardship. We have known that care of the poor and sharing of resources is the right thing to do, but too often we have done so grudgingly and in a way that brings disease and poverty to many. We have put science on a pedestal and assumed that a spiritual dimension to life is merely an interest for some and a rather quirky pastime for others. Our stewardship of disease has lulled us into a false security that every modern plague has a cure and a suitable vaccination. That we are not concerned for sources of contagion, as seen in live animal markets, serving food from unhygienic conditions, only now worries us because our secular world has been found wanting. Yet we have conducted our lives as though the secular world provided everything and the spiritual realm was unimportant. Hence at the present you can enter an off-licence but not enter God's houses for personal prayer! Human Rights enshrined in legislation such as the Equalities Act have been given more importance than Human Obligations to Almighty God.

As Christians the pandemic gives us a real opportunity to convey God's love to those who are suffering. But it also brings a golden opportunity for us to rebalance the values of our world, dedicated to the worship of humanistic materialism. The present circumstances should be a wake-up call to the world to recalibrate our values and in penitence and faith to return to God who is Creator and Judge.

*Around my village there are signs of new life- will the pandemic bring New Life to our church?*

*David Shannon: Cathedral Council and Minster School  
Governor*

## From Andrew Porter, Acting Area Dean

**I**t feels like we are together: the clergy are connected by a WhatsApp group and clergy Chapter are holding meetings by Zoom. Andrew says 'I have been heartened and even excited by the way people are being brought together and churches are reaching out with local online initiatives throughout the deanery, even in the smallest of villages churches. The buildings may be closed but the church is very much alive.'



*Holy Trinity Church, Southwell,  
where Andrew porter is the incumbent*

## An Anonymous Contribution

**T**hose who regularly check their smartphones and social media will have been treated to a wealth of comments, video clips and recordings relating to the pandemic and experiences of 'lockdown'. Humorous, dark, hopeful or just descriptive they are proving to be yet another way people have found to share and build solidarity with one another. Here is one that neatly captures a number of strands.

And the people stayed home.

And read books and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games and learned new ways of being and were still. And listened more deeply.

Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently, and the people healed. And in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

# Wider Responses to Lockdown

Naomi Kent has very kindly submitted a contribution from the wider world. She directs a research agency which has been exploring the effects of lockdown across the country.

We are currently living through a period of profound instability and change. Rarely, if ever, has day-to-day life been altered so radically and so quickly for so much of the world's population. I have had the privilege to be involved with a social research project following the lives of 15 UK households over 6 weeks with the aim of understanding the impact of the national lockdown. Through conversations about the potentially mundane – how they feel about queuing 2 metres apart to enter the supermarket - to the distressing, following news reports from around the world, we have gained an understanding of how British households are coping in these unprecedented times.

After the initial shock of the lockdown announcement, it was amazing how quickly most people appeared to adapt to the new reality. As the early sense of panic subsided it was replaced by new daily routines and new gnawing anxieties. In the immediate aftermath of the decision to lock the country down, we saw evidence of the much talked about “rally round the flag” effect: there was widespread support for the Government response, amidst a spirit of national solidarity in the face of adversity. This reflected the national picture in the early days, with nine in ten people supporting the lockdown measure, including seven out of ten strongly agreeing. In twenty five years of research I've rarely seen seven out of ten Britons strongly support *anything!*

However, as the weeks have passed this feeling that we are ‘all in the same boat’ has subsided. Increasingly it has become apparent that, as others have noted, we may be all in the same storm, but we are in different boats.

The way in which people are coping depends on a complex web of interrelated factors. Are you someone struggling with living alone and craving human contact or are you enjoying the new-found relaxed family time without the normal circus of activities? Are you a financially secure baby boomer with a public sector pension or a millennial on a short-term contract worrying about ever getting on the housing ladder? Do you have a large garden and easy access to the countryside or are you living in an inner-city flat with no outside space of your own?

So far, the response to the pandemic appears to have restored the faith of many in their fellow Britons. We've heard numerous accounts of how everyday acts of altruism have warmed hearts in desperate times. Locally, spirits have been buoyed by neighbours offering to do the shopping, friends calling to check in and streets setting up WhatsApp groups to support the most vulnerable.



Image contributed by one of the participants in the survey.

Nationally, reports of heroic NHS staff and of 750,000 people volunteering to help are huge feel good factors: *“I feel immense pride in my local and global community. I feel great joy when I hear the amazing selfless acts of so many people all around the world.”*

Those living in London have observed the positive impact on those around them: *“It's a much friendlier place, it has slowed down - everyone is more considerate now and more respectful.”*

The strong need to feel part of a community, connected with other people, and experience even remote social interaction, is apparent in the ways people have responded: picking up the phone to re-connect with old

friends who had become only ‘Christmas card friends’; weekly zoom calls with parents and grandparents; sharing meals via Facetime; celebrating birthdays with virtual cocktail parties, even one complete with delivery of ingredients to all guests and an online bartender demonstration.

Although modern technology and creative thinking have enabled us to stay in touch and connected, and though many of these practices - such as a degree of home-working - will no doubt continue, it is clear they will never replace face to face human contact. Participants have made good use of video calls for fun social interactions and to enable efficient work meetings, but they are different. We heard about how difficult it is to truly gauge how someone is feeling, missing all the nuances of being in the same room or to express real care and empathy. *“I had four members of staff crying on a zoom call and you can't give any help or comfort to somebody on a video call”.*

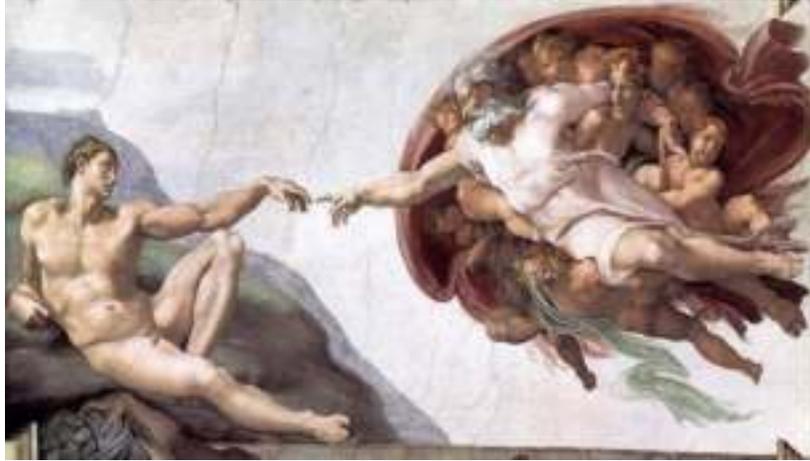
We were not surprised to find that the first thing that over 70% of the population will do as lockdown ends is visit an elderly friend or relative. For all that the kindness of others and modern technology are helping people navigate through the storm, they cannot solve every challenge: *“The other day I just felt I needed a hug...and that's not possible at the moment.”*

Naomi Kent

# Don't touch!

## A reflection on the importance of touching

A recent headline in my paper read: 'In these scary times a hug would help, but it's the one thing I cannot have'. The tragedy of the current pandemic is obvious: 10,000s of people have died of coronavirus, and that number includes health professionals and carers in residential homes. There have been good outcomes too, with kind neighbours and friends having been happy to do shopping for the self-isolated. Out on the street for our recommended daily exercise, strangers greet each other but also avoid coming too close.



One thing that many people say they find difficult is not being able to touch even members of their extended families. 'My grandchildren chatted over the garden gate but couldn't come near; it was so hard,' a friend told me. We don't normally think about touch as a major sense, but when it's taken away from you, you realize how important it is. (This reminded me of when we lived in a remote corner of Africa and really missed Marmite and Polo Mints. When we returned to the UK we took them for granted!)

Touch is basic. It is the first sense to develop in the womb, and is one of the ways that we express our humanity. Touch becomes a sign of affection or solidarity and appreciation – the pat on the back, the touch on the arm, or the hug when meeting, the shake of the hand, the arm-in-arm walk of friends. Though it can be misused by sexual predators, touch is fundamental. The journalist in my paper wrote: 'The part I am struggling most with is the sudden and complete loss of affection. I'm anxious about other things, like losing work, but still at the forefront of my mind every day is that I can't be touched by or touch another human.'

Christianity is a tactile religion. Artists have portrayed this: as in God reaching out to touch Adam on the ceiling of Rome's Sistine Chapel (right). In the Gospels we often read of Jesus laying his hands on the head of those who were sick, or on children's heads to bless them. In Christian worship priests follow Christ in taking bread and wine in their hands in the Eucharistic Prayer. The New Testament instructs Christians to 'greet one another with a holy kiss'. Over the two thousand years of the Christian Church this was once an actual kiss, but nowadays a handshake, or (in more informal churches) a bear-hug. When COVID-19 became a threat, but we could



still worship in the Minster, we stopped physical hand-shakes at the Peace, and even that felt like a deprivation.

Touch was part of the Easter story, and Erika Kirk spoke about this in her sermon on 19 April. Thomas refused to believe that Jesus had risen until he could see for himself and actually touch him. Jesus came and said 'Shalom' but – Erika said - 'Thomas is absent, unable to see or hear or touch Jesus, unable to make that

essential human connection which enables us to express our feelings for each other. This reminds us of the loss we feel at being separated from loved ones at this time. For, even if we have the latest technology, even if we can see and hear those we love over the internet, in times of crisis there is no substitute for presence and touch to reassure, and heal our sense of disconnection. Thomas' sense of disconnection is so sharp that he cannot take comfort from what his fellow-disciples tell him.'

Erika continued: 'Whatever situation we find ourselves in, Jesus is closer to us than we think, through his Holy Spirit and in the love and support of friends ... When the circumstances of our lives are painful, as they were for those first disciples and as they are for so many of us now, it can be hard for us in our anguish to recognize Christ when he comes to us. It can be hard for us to see him beckoning to us, inviting us to believe, inviting us to travel with him, and in some mysterious way to find our healing in the wounds that he suffered. It is in these times that we need more than ever to keep our hearts and minds open to his coming, to look for the signs of his love and risen presence, so that belief and trust become possible.'

For many people, being separated from our Church family and from the action of receiving Holy Communion into our hands is a stripping away. It has been especially hard for the families of people in hospital and care homes, and of those who have died of coronavirus, not to be able to be with them, or to say good-bye. Also, clergy have been restricted in their access to those who would want prayers as they prepared for death, and to be with the

bereaved. Some words at a Christian funeral speak about God's hands: 'Into your hands, O merciful Saviour, we commend your servant N', and this reflects Jesus' prayer to his father on the cross, 'Into your hands I commit my spirit.' So whether it's a 30-year-old nurse or a 90-year-old widower who succumbs to coronavirus, the final embrace is God's.

Meanwhile the rest of us look forward to the time when it's safe to be close to our family and friends again.

*Vincent Ashwin*

## The Strawberry Bed

What a strange name for an article for the COVID-19 edition of Leaves! But there is a link which we will endeavour to explain.

Dear friends of ours are planning to move house when restrictions are lifted, and in the process of clearing their old home where they have been for many years, they had pieces of surplus wood. We took them, intending to give them to a joiner we know, but the idea of making a bed for strawberries emerged and developed. Last year we bought 3 plants from Aldi and they have all had babies so now there are 14 - Mother Nature in all her bounty!

Neither of us are joiners and have very limited tools but we set about the task with enthusiasm if not much skill. Having found wood glue and tacks and being informed by our very practical son in law that the glue was extremely strong (we have no doubt if used skillfully!), we hammered and glued the pieces together. After about a week of painstaking attempts, the box with legs was ready to receive the soil.

Two minutes into emptying a bag of potting compost into the structure, it collapsed! We surveyed the result with dismay and rapidly collected the soil back into a barrow. What to do now? Consultations with said son in law, whose response was 'practice makes perfect' led us to try again. This time the wood was glued and screwed (enough screws to build the Forth bridge!), left a proper time to enable the glue to dry. More supports were added and we think now we could probably jump into it without disaster!

The moment of truth arrived on Wednesday. 2 bags of topsoil and 1 of potting compost were poured with trepidation into the box and, yippee - it survived!! We stood back, congratulated each other



and then planted the strawberries, who look very happy in their new home!

Why have we told this tale? Firstly, an unexpected and unplanned gift from friends made it possible - the generosity we have seen in the past few weeks has been both humbling and encouraging. We don't all have the skills of craftspeople, but we believe God honours our attempts however feeble to try things which we don't feel confident about and not to give up when we fail. Also, this period of stress, uncertainty and grief, has been accompanied by beautiful weather, an exuberant spring and new life everywhere. We are fortunate enough to have a garden and the weather has made working in it a pleasure. We shall enjoy our strawberries when they ripen all the more for the effort put into making their bed, and it will remain a permanent reminder of this strange time.

Hope to see you all soon and keep safe.

*Helen and Patrick Sills*

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## VE Day Celebrations under lockdown

Long before the expressions 'lockdown' and 'social distancing' entered everyday language May 8 2020 had been designated a Bank Holiday. This was to celebrate the end of hostilities in Europe seventy-five years earlier, on May 8 1945. Celebrations were to include street parties, processions and special remembrance services. By the time the day came round none of these were permissible. Bishop Paul, Dean Nicola, the Rector Chori and several choristers were able to provide a dedicated online service.

There were also numerous ingenious substitutes for the intended public celebrations.

Here is a 'lockdown' street tea party spotted in Bilsthorpe.



# Local Charities, Lockdown and Social Distancing

Southwell Leaves has included several articles on local charities supporting vulnerable people in the last year or so, and we thought readers would be interested to know how they are coping with weeks of lockdown and the restrictions of social distancing.

**Newark Foodbank.** The many people who have been concerned at not being able to make their usual contributions at the collection points in Southwell can be reassured by Jenni Harding, their fundraising coordinator, that donations have not decreased. Quite the opposite, for the last six weeks donations have been at their peak, around the levels normally experienced between Harvest and Christmas, the busiest time of year. Other heartening news is that the Foodbank has received generous donations of funds to purchase goods and direct donations of goods from local businesses and supermarkets. Jenni writes 'we hope anyone in Southwell who has given will be reading this so we can say a big thank you'. Also, many people have volunteered to work with them and they now have more than enough younger, fitter volunteers able to replace the over 70s, who made up the majority of their regular volunteers and were required to self-isolate in March.

Of course, working methods have had to change; food vouchers are issued electronically and the 'front of house' at Barnbygate, where clients used to collect their food bags and stay for a chat and a cup of coffee is closed. Food and supplies are now delivered twice weekly by volunteer drivers helped by the Newark Fire Station. The foodbank is also on standby with emergency deliveries if notified by local agencies and the Local Council. During April they sent out food to more people than ever and all the extra supplies so generously donated were certainly needed. A final message from Jenni: *If you know of anyone who could use our service in these difficult times, please get them to call 07307 695310 for help.*

**Flower Pod.** Along with other Reach centres in Mansfield and Newark, Southwell Flower Pod was closed temporarily on 23 March. This was an immediate crisis for the adults with learning disabilities who attend the centres and who must have been worried and confused by the sudden loss of their social contacts and routine. However, the

Reach team mounted a crisis response which included online courses, social activities, weekly phone calls and safe delivery of packs and resources to support wellbeing and help people feel less alone and isolated. The staff at Flower Pod are maintaining the gardens and polytunnels and indeed flowers and plants have played an important part in supporting the wellbeing of clients and carers and in saying thank you to colleagues and volunteers. They have also put together teaching packages to help people maintain the skills they have learned and to continue connecting with nature. Under very difficult circumstances, and compliant with government regulations, they are continuing to care for some of the most vulnerable people in society.



**Home-Start Newark** have also had to rapidly adapt the usual service they provide to families with young children under five. The very centre of the support they offer vulnerable families is a weekly home visit of a trained volunteer who frequently becomes a friend. This arrangement has had to be replaced by regular telephone contact and families report that simply staying in touch has made all the difference in this trying period. An added problem for families with very young children has been keeping them occupied when confined indoors. Home-Start have offered ideas for activities on their Facebook page and delivered Creative Craft boxes provided by Newark & Sherwood Community Hub. They can also direct families to other services that are becoming available.

It has been disappointing to have to pause the twice weekly Family Groups that provide such a

valuable opportunity for parents and children to socialize, but it would take a deal of ingenuity to devise a way of under-3s interacting safely! However, Family Group members are keeping their connections alive by holding weekly meetings electronically. The Preparation Course for new volunteers has also been a casualty of the pandemic but all volunteers remain totally committed and ready to resume a normal service to their families as soon as possible.



Christine Kent

# Potwell Dyke Grasslands

## - Doing a Roaring Trade!

In that miserable wet autumn and winter from last September to March this year there was record rainfall and record cancellations of working parties. We could not get all the cut grass off site, nor the sheep as soon as we would have wished. It was a sad, squelchy, over-grazed grasslands in February. However, our increased pool of volunteers has meant that the occasional working parties that did take place largely caught up with the round of tasks. In particular, we saved potential tree surgeon fees in 'facing up' trees overhanging the grasslands and opening up the margins to more light.



*Southern Marsh Orchid  
Dactylorhiza praetissima*

As the weather improved, so did our spirits as it became clear that the snowdrops, the violets and the celandines were doing just fine as usual. Now the flowering season (late-April) is truly underway with the main field carpeted in yellow from the cowslips and dandelions.

Meantime the plague was starting to make its impact in 3 ways:

- We cannot work on site – this may not be too serious for one season
- Schools cannot visit the site – risk of losing £1,000 of income
- More individuals are walking through the site as part of their 'exercise'

During lockdown there has been great stress laid on the therapeutic benefits of nature (we already knew this from testimonies from our friends at Framework who visit the site annually). And it is true, the birds seem to sing more loudly and sweetly as ambient noise has reduced. The blossom looks more brilliant as the air is clearer.

Of course, the Potwell Dyke Grasslands is not the only land in Cathedral ownership – families enjoying picnics have begun to use Higgons Mead and as nature reasserts itself around the 'wild' area there are several clumps of cowslips which have arrived spontaneously. The 'Education' or Archbishops Palace Garden has made a stunning backdrop to Bishop Paul and Sarah's daily reflections. The people of Southwell have much to thank the Minster for in these difficult times, for safeguarding our local environment from development and allowing access to these lovely places.

Meanwhile we are encouraging those who enter the grasslands for their lockdown exercise to consider further the benefits to their own well-being; of being grateful and of being kind. Joining the pool of volunteers, not just for the grasslands but for Higgons Mead and The Archbishop's Palace Garden, offers a way of doing just that.

*Mal Rose on behalf of Potwell Dyke Grasslands Action Group*

## Some positive reflections on the Coronavirus Pandemic

For some, an absence of knocking on doors by Jehovah's Witnesses (Mark 6:7). (For me personally I welcome them and enjoy an exchange of views. I also admire their courage in knocking on doors, knowing that at some houses they will receive verbal abuse and at others apathy. I know and accept that in some quarters this view will be frowned upon).

The village doggies think it is Christmas with the amount of walks.

An increase in the level of fitness from walking and/or cycling.

There is evidence of the Church reaching out to people through on-line communication who would not normally be interested in Christianity. A sowing of the seed?

A reduction in junk mail.

A reduction in unwanted emails.

A cheery wave to strangers when out walking.

Contact with friends and acquaintances normally reserved for Christmas.

A coming together of communities and neighbours.

The bravery and courage of the NHS staff and associated services.

*Glynn Lloyd*

**VOLUNTEERS WANTED**

**ON THE POTWELL DYKE GRASSLANDS**

ARE YOU ENJOYING THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY OF THE GRASSLANDS? THEN WHY NOT JOIN US WHEN THE LOCKDOWN ENDS AND HELP MAINTAIN THIS SPECIAL SITE. CONTACT BILL FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Can you spare a couple of hours on a Saturday morning to help us look after this very special site in the heart of Southwell?

Work includes hedge and fence maintenance, pulling up invasive plants, species surveys, plant identification and guiding walks. Enthusiasm and interest are more important than specialist knowledge or experience. And don't worry, it's not all hard work - there's always time for a tea break!

For more information or to join one of our Saturday working parties please contact: Bill Key 01656 816121

# Peter's and Ann's personal experiences of lockdown and the Pandemic

We have been making a list of words and phrases used to describe the present difficulties. My favourite, so far, is being like 'Lent with no fixed Easter to look forward to'.

We have been spending time giving more attention to the garden than is usual in the Spring.

I have been reading some books which I might not have read otherwise, one of which deserves a mention: 'The Plague' by Albert Camus (1913 - 1960), published in 1948.

My immediate reaction was 'There is nothing new under the sun'! And so I have been pondering what truly is the meaning of Providence and God's mercy.

We have been trying to keep each Sunday different from the rest of the week.

And I have been writing weekly Notes for our Home Group which is meeting virtually .

Looking ahead a little way, I expect to see the closure of many small businesses. I regret this because these are where customers have been treated as individuals rather than computerised account numbers of super-stores.

Our bucket list of what we would like to see or experience in the future (2021?) includes:

- (a) another B. & B. visit to Scotland;
- (b) a changed Church of England with a much more open and accountable structure;
- (c) Christians of all churches more willing and confident in speaking to unbelieving friends and neighbours about our Lord Jesus, whom we serve and the Gospel which is so precious to us;

We look forward to reading about what other people are experiencing.

*Peter and Ann van de Kastele*

## Keeping Trim

Christine and Peter Kent were well practised and well prepared:

*Outdoor barber's shop, Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, November 1960*



*Indoor barber's shop, Halloughton Rd, Southwell, April 2020*

Vincent and Angela Ashwin, and Alison and Hugh Middleton were not, and had nerves to overcome:



Whereas Andy Corner chooses to defy gravity:



# Community, Communism and Communion.

The nation has been coming out each Thursday evening during the coronavirus crisis to celebrate the NHS. We are proud of this institution which was founded by idealistic politicians when we emerged from the Second World War. For many people it is our greatest national treasure and something we are happy to pay for out of our taxes and with charitable giving at times of crisis. So, it comes as a jolt when some people are threatening to suck money from the NHS into their own pockets by suing the NHS for negligence over COVID-19. Anyone who loses a loved-one is devastated, of course, but could money really help them to feel better about their loss? I cannot understand the logic of taking money away from a hospital which serves the community and putting it into the bank accounts of individuals. It seems an example of individual rights wrongly taking precedence over the well-being of a community.

Being a community is an essential part of being Christian, and many would say that being human is itself communal. Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote about the African concept of Ubuntu - humanity. 'I am because we are', or 'I exist to the extent that I relate to other people.' Tutu was saying that you can't be fully human without being connected to other people. It's there in St Paul: 'You are the body of Christ and individually members of it'. Paul writes that if one limb is hurting then our whole body hurts. The health and well-being of the individual is bound up with the health and well-being of the community.



In the first decades of the Church, the followers of Christ lived what looks remarkably like a communist life-style. 'Those who believed had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.' (Acts 2. 44-45) This sharing of resources is the basis of the welfare state, except that in our country of over 60 million people 'distributing the proceeds' is now done through taxation. All-out communism was conceived as an idealistic project aimed to end the misery and poverty of workers in Lancashire's cotton mills and of subsistence farmers in Russia. As we know, communism failed totally as a political system and ended up as another form of dictatorship.

So how is proper community built up? All three Abrahamic faiths teach that believers must care for the poor. The Hebrew scriptures enjoin believers again and again to care for 'the alien, the orphan and the widow.' The New Testament builds on this, for example with Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan and the statement in the First Letter of John, 'Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen'. Islam too has a strong tradition of charitable giving. One year when I was a vicar in Newcastle, Christian Aid Week coincided with Ramadan; a collector saw a Muslim doctor put five £10 notes into his Christian Aid envelope as his 'Zakat' for the poor.

There has always been a place for charitable giving. We remember how medieval monasteries used their wealth

to build hospices and schools, and today the Minster supports hospitals and schools in Palestine, Uganda and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). But modern societies depend on taxation to pay for the health, care and education of people in the community. It is a matter of concern when people misuse the taxation system for their own ends, whether it's low-paid workers taking £200 of benefits they are not entitled to, or a successful entrepreneur squirreling away £2,000,000 in a Caribbean island or Mediterranean enclave to avoid income tax; tax avoidance may be legal, but is it moral? We remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi: 'A nation's greatness is measured by the way it treats its weakest members,' in which all are seen as equally belonging to the community.

Strangely 'the tax man' is often portrayed as the enemy, which possibly goes back to tax collectors being criticised by Jesus. But in the countries of the Roman Empire, collecting taxes to fund the occupying army was farmed out to private individuals, who used bully-boys to extract the money, and lined their own pockets too. In our generation, the Inland Revenue are doing a public service that enables our country to function as a caring community where the sick, the old and the poor are treated kindly.

When it's at its best, the Christian Church is what a good community should look like. We contribute to its life in money and energy; we care for each other; we think about those outside our congregation, for example, by campaigning about climate change and poverty; we try to 'disagree well' (to use a phrase of Archbishop Welby) when our views are in conflict. We express our solidarity most of all when we come to Communion. Rich and poor, frail and healthy, young and old, liberal and conservative, kneel side by side in our joint communion with God.

Our country is increasingly polarised; foodbanks sit alongside huge cars, and a minority take money that should belong to the community by avoiding tax or by suing schools, churches and hospitals. Maybe the Christian Church has something to teach the world.

*Vincent Ashwin*



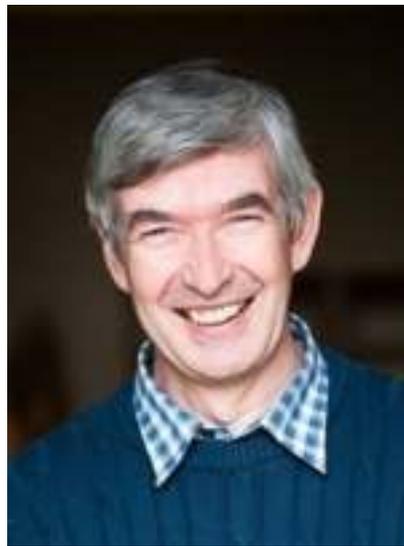
# The 2020 Robert Boyle Lecture; Mental Health and the Gospel

One of William Mompesson's contemporaries was Robert Boyle, the renowned seventeenth century scientist. Boyle was born in 1627, twelve years before Mompesson and died eighteen years before him, in 1691. There is no reason to believe they either met or corresponded but they shared the experience of living through a turbulent time that saw civil war, the beheading of a king, a period of commonwealth rule, restoration of the monarchy, the great fire of London, the great plague and all the social and intellectual changes they fermented.

Robert Boyle was arguably the archetypal gentleman scientist (or natural philosopher). He was amongst those who founded the Royal Society and he is remembered for his scientific achievements. He is immortalised as Boyle's Law, which identifies the relationship between the volume and pressure of a gas, and which can be understood as a precursor to atomic theory. He inherited estates in Ireland and in Dorset which provided him with a comfortable private income with which to support his enquiries and quite probably protected him from the turmoil Mompesson experienced at first hand. He was a devout Anglican who viewed religious faith and experimental science as mutually enriching. His fortune allowed him to endow a series of lectures or sermons which could serve as a platform for a distinguished scientist or theologian to explore the relationship between the two disciplines. With some interruptions the Boyle Lectures continued through until the mid-twentieth century and were revived in 2004 routinely at St. Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside. The 2020 Boyle Lecture was given by Professor Christopher Cook in February.

Professor Cook is Director of the Centre for Spirituality, Theology and Health at the University of Durham. He is an ordained Anglican priest, a qualified medical practitioner and ... psychiatrist. As far as is known he was the first medical practitioner to give the Boyle Lecture, and his title was *Mental Health and the Gospel*. I am grateful to Jeremy Pemberton for providing me with a copy.

Cook goes straight to the heart of the matter. 'If I hear a voice from heaven telling me that God is pleased with me, am I having a profound religious experience or am I suffering from schizophrenia? If dementia robs me of my ability to remember my own recent history, changes my personality and prevents me from managing my own affairs, in what sense am I still "me"? If my depression leaves me feeling that God has abandoned me, no amount of reassurance from others may be sufficient to re-engage



Prof. Christopher Cook

with the love that I used to feel.' It is often too tempting to consign such experiences to the consequences of an illness and into the hands of mental health professionals but this immediately risks depriving them of any spiritual or theological interpretation, and for a believer and for many others that is impoverishing. There seems to be an unbridgeable gap between science and theology. Cook quotes Gotthold Lessing in describing this as an ugly ditch.

However, the closer we look at so-called mental health difficulties, the harder it is to accept explanations that are reliably and unquestionably 'scientific'. The vagaries and complexities of each and every one of us make it difficult if not impossible to apply scientific methods to them with any true rigour. From the science side of the ugly ditch it is

clear that without insights from elsewhere, understanding will be limited. What is the view from the theological side?

One hurdle to overcome might be literal adherence to the notion of demons. The only demonic exorcism by Jesus from someone we would now recognise as suffering mental illness is the Gerasene. Of the others one appears to be suffering epilepsy, another is blind and another is mute. In both Mark's and Luke's accounts of the Gerasene, critically, Jesus asks the question "What is your name?". He then goes on to restore the man in body, mind and spirit. He is

socially reintegrated and finds a vocation in telling others what Jesus had done for him. This would be consistent with what we now try to do: respect the afflicted individual and support their social integration rather than 'demonising' them as 'mad'.

Jesus' teachings extend into anxiety (or worry); Matt. 6:31-33 and he advocates an approach that might be recognised elsewhere as mindfulness; Matt. 6:34. Cook suggests that the parable concerning a speck in the eye could be understood as an example of projection whereby guilt and misgivings about oneself are identified with another person as a way of relieving the discomfort they cause. Finally, of course he focuses

upon prayer as a form of meditation and non-judgemental self-reflection, which are clearly both spiritually and psychologically helpful.

Over coming months, we are going to hear a lot about COVID-19 and the pandemic from pundits, both scientific and otherwise. Mompesson had his feet in two camps. He understood the 'scientific' need to prevent the spread of plague, and he was moved by God's grace to act on that by appealing to selflessness. There is sure to be a need to respect the fact that no one fully understands what has been happening and much to learn as a result.

Hugh Middleton



Jesus Exorcizing the Gerasene.  
Pencil, Katolophyromai, 2020

# News from our Mission Partners

## Ethiopia

For over 25 years the Minster has sent donations to the Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa. Radio 4 and the Guardian recently featured tributes to the remarkable doctor, Dr Catherine Hamlin, who died aged 96, after 61 years in the country. With her husband Reg she founded what is now a chain of six hospitals with eighty beds. The Guardian obituary read: 'Catherine and Reg, both devout Christians, believed in trying to heal the whole woman: 'We don't just treat the hole in the bladder,' as Catherine once put it, 'we treat the whole patient with love and tender care, literacy and numeracy classes, a brand-new dress and money to travel home.' This year's Lent appeal was again for the Hamlin Fistula charity, and the work is now mostly done by local surgeons.



*Dr Catherine Hamlin aged 88*

whether we continue to fly for village clinics. What we really want to avoid is taking nurses who are carrying the virus into a village that would otherwise have been isolated from it. So in the meantime we are trying to find other ways that we can serve villages such as taking medical supplies, hand-washing stations or food to them instead.

Last week I did a dangerous goods training course for MAF Chad by Skype. It's a bit tricky to really know that people have understood and we had quite a few audio problems which didn't really help but their test results were OK so I guess something must have gone in.'



## Swaziland Schools Projects

Keith Fossey from SSP went on his annual visit to eSwatini (the country's new name) a few months ago. He writes:

'With the schools closed because of Coronavirus, our builders are continuing their maintenance and improvement works at Nkhaba, whilst maintaining social distancing from each other. Their first task is to turn the teachers' staff room into an area that is far more functional. It is a brick built rondavel with a high ceiling and inadequate lighting. When I was there in February, I saw the teachers marking pupils' work using the lights on their phones! The ceiling is being lowered, strip lighting introduced and some new, bigger windows installed. Other work in this school includes putting in false ceilings in classrooms.'



*A refurbished classroom at Nkhaba School*

It is unspectacular work like this – insulating children and staff on bitterly cold winter mornings and baking summers – that the Minster's grant of £1250 this year will support.

## Tanzania

Stewart Ayling, whose parents Maggie and Brian worship at the Minster, has written an update about his work with the Mission Aviation Fellowship in Arusha, Tanzania.

'We're all doing fine (including me). It seems like we are starting to get an increase in virus cases here and it has reached pretty much all parts of the country now. This makes our MAF flying a bit harder as we pretty much have to decide for ourselves

## Keframa School Build

Keframa High School is also feeling the indirect effects of COVID-19 even though there have been relatively few cases (so far) in northern Uganda. Lorry drivers are the most concerning carriers but Uganda is the main route for trade in and out of South Sudan and much of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and so they cannot be prohibited.

The school is closed and staff are doing what they can by keeping in touch with students by phone and broadcasting lessons on local radio.

More widely food is becoming expensive and inconsistent; rains have threatened the next (May/June) harvest' with additional indirect effects upon students' ability to pay school fees. The school has hired some land to grow cassava for students who live nearby and our continuing support is hugely appreciated and much needed at this difficult time.



# Workhouse Children

As we all agree, the Minster is by far the most beautiful and imposing building in Southwell, but along the Newark Road towards Upton there is another imposing building. On the left hand side, set well back from the road, you see Southwell Workhouse: a bleak, forbidding house.

On some weekday mornings I scurry up Workhouse Lane to join my group of National Trust colleagues who will be spending the day taking part in a role-playing session with a visiting class of children. We are part of the Learning Team which offers a day of activities connected to life in the Workhouse during the 19th Century. Some of us assume the roles of residents in the Workhouse, a Master, a Matron and a School Teacher and several male and female Paupers. Today I am to be the School Teacher.

After a brief meeting, as we change into our role-playing costumes, two Group Leaders walk down to the Car Park to collect the coach full of children. The children chatter as they walk up the path and look at the formidable building with its segregated areas, women at the left-hand side, Master and children in the middle and men at the right-hand side.

Once inside the building they change into a Workhouse costume. They are excited and noisy as they dress. Girls wear a bonnet, a pinafore and a shawl, and boys wear a cap a shirt and a jacket. When they are dressed the room grows quiet. The children listen carefully.

The Group Leader says. 'We know that at school you have been studying the Workhouse Census for 1851, and you have chosen the name of a child from the census. Today you are going to pretend to be that child. Think about the child.

Why are you in the Workhouse? Are you an orphan alone in the world? Has your Dad lost his job? Are your parents too ill to work? You are here because you have no home ...you have nothing. Remember this, as you spend the morning learning about a child's life here in the Workhouse.'

The children are quiet and thoughtful. Wearing the Workhouse uniform brings to life the character they have chosen to be. They are marched silently into the large Boardroom where the adult role players are waiting. Master, Matron and School Teacher look grim in their impressive costumes and the Paupers look sullen and unwelcoming in their uniforms. Master greets the children. He looks cold and harsh...

'I realize that you are here through no fault of your own but children should be seen and not heard. I do not have noisy children in this Workhouse. You will live in the children's part of the Workhouse away from your parents and they will live in the Workhouse away from each other. If you all keep to the rules, I may allow you to see each other on Sunday. If you break the rules you will be punished. Boys can be beaten, girls can be made to

scrub floors, all of you could have meat taken from your dinner. You will be given a bed, some schooling and three meals a day, with plenty of gruel, potatoes and bread.'

He separates the children and one group enters the schoolroom with me. They look anxious and nervous as they sit on the benches. I look stern as I hand out slates and slate pencils and demand complete silence as each child attempts copperplate handwriting. They enjoy this activity and the classroom becomes so quiet that you can hear the clock ticking.

After being in the Schoolroom, the children are taken around the house. The building is cold and bare and forbidding. They see the adults' day rooms, food and pots and pans in the kitchen, the cellars where food is stored, the water pumps in the yards and the privies outside near the vegetable garden and the dormitories upstairs.

Inmates often slept two or more to a bed on lumpy straw mattresses. When it was time for bed, Workhouse children couldn't say 'Good night' to their parents or be given a good night kiss. Parents were far away in other parts of the building. Children in the Workhouse lived completely separate lives away from their desperate, hardworking, sometimes sick parents. It could be very lonely.

At the end of the morning the visiting children remove their costumes and discuss what they have seen and learned. They realize there were good and bad things about living in the Workhouse. A pauper child would have some schooling not available to other children and there would be enough to eat, but the regime was harsh and family life did not exist. This is what upsets them most.

At the end of the day a child asks me ....

'Miss, do you live here in the Workhouse?', 'No, I live in Southwell'

'You know this morning, were you pretending to be a person who is dead now?'

'Yes, and so were you.'

'Oh yes, so I was... bye Miss.'

*Ann Hurt*

*Illustrations by Christine Measures*



# The Opportunity for a National Rehabilitation Centre

– *‘turning adversity into opportunity’*

In 2009, the 6th Duke of Westminster had just returned from a visit to Camp Bastion in Afghanistan. He had been an active reservist for 20 years and felt deeply moved to use his position to *‘do something for those who have paid a high price for serving’*



A year previously Dame Carol Black had published a report on the state of the working population in Britain and found some shocking conclusions. *‘175 million working days lost to injury’*



Secretary of State for Defence at the time, Lord Des Browne, made the following request to the Duke. *‘would the Duke do something for the nation too?’*. The Duke wholeheartedly supported this and the work began.



From this was born the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre Programme (DNRC) – a programme to relocate the defence rehabilitation facility at Headley Court, and explore the opportunity to combine it with the first National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) for NHS patients. The idea is that the centres will be based on the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate in the Diocese of Southwell near Loughborough. This was part of the Archbishop of York’s diocesan visit last year.

The NRC is part of the DNRC Programme which seeks to do two things.

Firstly, to deliver a 21st century successor to the MoD’s former Headley Court facility in Surrey. The Defence facility opened in 2018 and is now treating members of the armed forces. Secondly, to propose, subject to formal public consultation and approval of the NHS business case process, the creation of a National Rehabilitation Centre to provide clinical rehabilitation for NHS patients as well as providing a National hub for Research & Innovation and Training and Education.

Key to the NRC opportunity is it being on the same site (the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate, near Loughborough) as the Defence establishment – but 400 metres away from it. This will allow both facilities to share expertise, knowledge and facilities and collaborate to mutual advantage to a remarkable degree, including hydrotherapy, the Computer Aided Rehabilitation Environment (one of only 6 in the world) and the Gait laboratory to monitor muscle activity which are truly pioneering in what they are achieving.

Access to intensive rehabilitation is seriously restricted in the NHS, and our peers in Europe gain much better outcomes for their patients. Despite the clear success of the 22 major trauma centres in saving lives, (the East Midlands Major Trauma Centre is based at Queens Medical Centre) the outcome for people who need rehabilitation could be improved. In fact, we benchmark unfavourably with peers in Europe, with the result that we know

that at the 3-month point the mental health of many patients has deteriorated. Six months after a serious injury we are returning 35% of patients back to work whereas in Europe this is 50-60%. But we also know that improving outcomes for people needing rehabilitation is possible, and the clinical teams have explored areas of best practice widely when exploring the opportunity for the NRC.

Pending the outcome of public consultation and the business case process if successful, then the NRC will endeavour to address this need, delivering the specific sophisticated rehabilitation people need at the right time, and to give them back their lives after the setback of serious injury or illness – for example a road traffic accident, meningitis or multiple sclerosis. The new centre being considered will be something entirely new – a place where patients, innovation and expertise combine to push boundaries beyond that achieved in this domain to date. It should be viewed as a start-up and a flagship project in technology terms in the transformation of NHS rehabilitation services. The intention is that it will pave the way for similar clinical centres across England. Under one roof it will treat patients; train and educate significant numbers of staff in this field; and integrate industry, research and innovation in rehab to discover new practical solutions for patients. It is clear that there will be international dimensions to the work of the NRC.

## Timescales and funding

Over the past year, clinical teams, patients and the public have developed detailed clinical plans for the new service. The proposal will be put to the public during a period of formal public consultation over the summer, for the regional rehabilitation service which will go into the NRC. This process will gain wider views on the proposal. There will then be a period of business case process to complete within the NHS during 2020 and 2021; and if the proposal is approved to go ahead, construction could start early in 2022, with the NRC projected to open and take its first patients early in 2024.

Keep in touch with developments and information about the upcoming NHS public consultation on the DNRC website at <https://www.thednrc.org.uk/>

*Miriam Duffy, Programme Director National Rehabilitation Centre*



# Saints and Symbols

The top panels of the magnificent east window made by Clayton and Bell, feature the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and below them their respective symbols or emblems. They are, of course, the four apostles who produced the first four gospels of the New Testament. Matthew is featured with an angel, (sometimes a winged man) Mark with a winged lion, Luke with a winged ox and John with the customary eagle.

In the picture you can see the same icons from an inner frame of the Book of Kells, circa 800 A.D, with the same emblems. It was the renowned scholar St Jerome in the 5th Century who matched the symbols with each evangelist. These symbols can be seen throughout history on sacred works of art in a range of materials including, ivory and iron.

As well as Ezekiel 1:5,10, The Book of Revelation 4:7 describes these creatures surrounding God's throne, 'The floor around the throne *was like a sea of glass that was crystal-clear. At the very centre, around the throne itself, stood four living creatures covered with eyes front and back. The first creature resembled a lion; the second, an ox; the third had the face of a man, while the fourth looked like an eagle in flight.* They have been part of Christian iconography for over 1500 years, beginning in the 3rd Century.

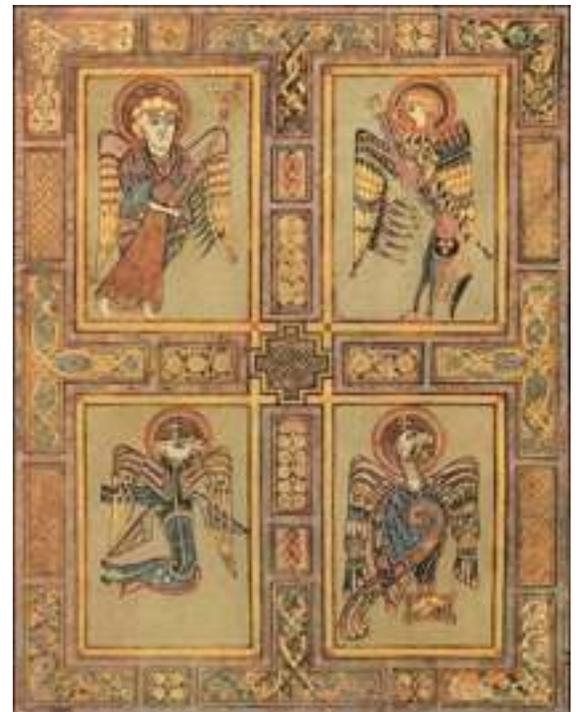


*Luke writing his gospel with the ox (not winged) by his side.*

Depictions of The Four Evangelists are part of a rich and very old tradition in Christian art including the Gothic, Early Renaissance, High Renaissance and Northern Renaissance periods. Symbols such as these were crucial in terms of creating a narrative in art, including windows, and to identify, and to add characterisation of the evangelists themselves simply because an illiterate person, as was often common, wouldn't have been able understand the Latin mass nor read the Bible. Instead he would read the frescoed walls or the sculptured reliefs. This kind of artistic decoration was known as the 'biblia pauperum,' was essential in the understanding of and subsequent spread of Christianity symbols with each evangelist.

So how did the symbols emerge? A man symbolized St. Matthew because in his gospel he discusses the ancestors of Christ and talks about the human nature of God more than the Divine aspect. However, elsewhere, if he is portrayed on his own, he can also be seen holding a book or a sword. Of course, he was a tax collector before Jesus called him, and, there are a few images in art that show him with a money bag. As early as the 6th century, the lion has been St Mark's traditional icon as in his gospel he refers to a voice crying in the wilderness and talks about the power of God in his resurrection. As with the other evangelists, (see image of St Luke) he is also depicted writing his gospel.

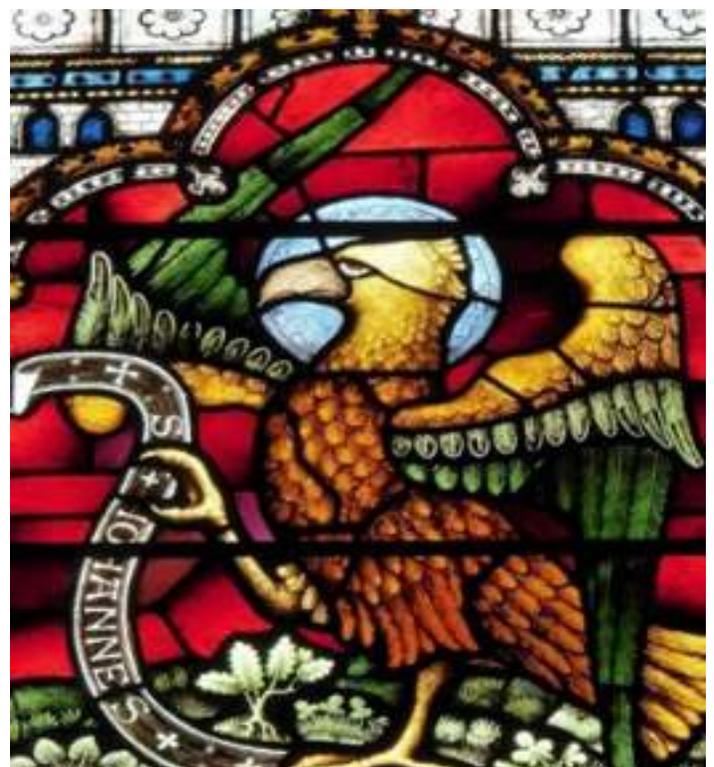
St. Luke's gospel begins with the sacrifice offered by Zachariah, we can only assume that the ox is a symbol of Christ's sacrifice. As well as being a physician, according to the old Testament, an early tradition presents Luke as a painter of the Virgin, as can be



seen in the picture. The eagle was believed to be the only animal that could look straight into the light of the sun and Christian art usually depicts St. John with an eagle, symbolizing the heights to which he rises in the first chapter of his Gospel, but he can also be seen with a chalice referring to the poisoned wine he was offered, blessed and the poison, in the form of a serpent, departed.

It is fascinating exploring the iconography of the apostles, and saints in general. I hope this rather potted article has whetted your appetite. Do have another look at the upper panels of the east window.

*Tom Hislop*



*East window, upper right panel detail - St John's eagle*

## Did you know...

### there are still 10 Prebendal Houses remaining in the Town?

The early mediaeval diocese of York contained four ancient foundations of secular canons in York, Ripon, Beverley and Southwell. The early history of each is obscure and there is uncertainty in the case of Southwell as to the date at which Nottinghamshire became transferred to the see of York. It seems probable that this took place around the middle of the 10th century and that it was immediately followed by a grant, to the archbishop, of lands which possessed in great part the boundaries of the later manor of Southwell. The date is generally taken to be 956 and the donor was King Eadwig; he gave the lands to Oskytel who was probably translated to the see of York in that year. Archbishop Oskytel was thus in possession of a large estate centering on the village of Southwell, but, including a number of neighbouring villages.

For a century after the foundation of this first Minster little is known about the constitution of the body of clergy which served it. However, it is recorded that Ealdred, the last English Archbishop of York, 1060-69, the man who crowned both Harold II and William the Conqueror, bought many estates with his own money and added to four earlier Prebends at Southwell. He is also said to have built a refectory at Southwell where the Canons might eat together. This points to an attempt on his part to impose a communal way of life on the clergy serving the Minster, such as was common abroad, and was carried out more elaborately by Ealdred himself at Beverley, our sister church.

However, nothing further is known of this design at Southwell. The medieval Chapter of Southwell was essentially a college of clergy, each supported, in the main, by the revenues drawn from a single estate or Prebend. Domesday Book refers incidentally to certain lands at Southwell as forming a Prebend, proving that the system was in being here in 1086. Southwell, in fact, is one of the churches in which the Prebendal system can most clearly be traced to before the age of the Norman Conquest. None of the Prebends of Southwell could be called wealthy and there is a sharp and significant contrast between these modest endowments and the high average value of the canonries created by the formidable bishops who founded the new cathedral church at Lincoln.

The second Minster, started in 1108, was the work of men preoccupied with the needs of their own time with little, if any, interest in the Saxon basis of their foundation. But the community grouped around the Norman Minster was still, in its essential constitution, the community which Archbishop Oskytel may be

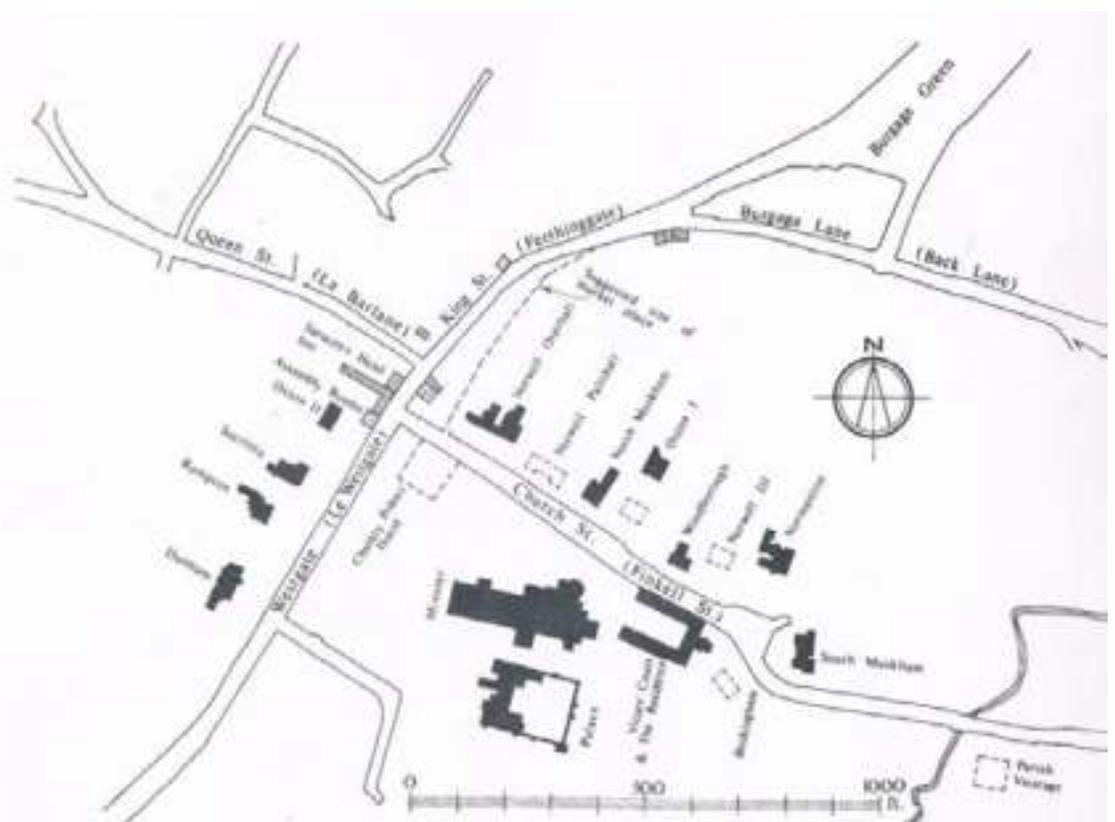
presumed to have founded, and which Archbishop Eadred had wishes to reform.

Prebendal houses, situated along Westgate and Church Street, were the residences of the Prebendaries. The Prebendaries were secular canons (ordained priests not subject to monastic vows) who formed the Chapter of the Minster and ran its affairs. Each would have a house in Southwell as well as one in the Parish of their prebend. There were, by 1291, sixteen prebends named after the villages where the Prebendal Estates were situated, for example Woodborough. There is no Prebend of Southwell, but the Prebend of Normanton, named after a small hamlet in the north of the parish, had the presentation of the Parish of Southwell and was entitled to most of the parish tithes. An exception is the Prebend of Sacrista which was not in the true sense of the word a prebend as it had no lands, but was the office of the Sacristan.

In the course of time it became the practice for the prebendaries to lease their prebendal houses to tenants, install a resident vicar in his prebendal parish and be represented in the choir of Southwell by a vicar choral.

The map is of the mediaeval town showing the sites of the sixteen prebendal houses, ten of which survive. In the next issue we shall look at these prebends in more recent centuries.

*James Pinder, on behalf of the Guild of Stewards*



# Facing Fear and Looking for Life

Those of you who remember Canon Nigel Coates will know that he often began his sermons by talking about a book he'd been reading. One of these was *A Tour of Bones* by Denise Inge, who was the wife of the Bishop of Worcester and also an authority on the work of Thomas Traherne.

Denise Inge grew up in America and, before marrying into the Church of England, enjoyed a life of adventure: canoeing down snake-infested rivers, rappelling down rock faces were thrilling experiences of fear – but she recognised these were ‘pretend’ fears – when we enjoy scaring ourselves in the belief that we're invulnerable.

Then, she says, there's a fear we all face – ‘quiet as cat's feet’ – which we may think we are avoiding when we fill our days with activity, but it has inevitability on its side. ‘This is the fear that I sense when I enter the charnel house’ – the medieval burial chamber upon which the bishop's house is built. As she moved around her home each day, she was conscious of the house's other, silent, occupants lying beneath a trapdoor in the cellar. She knew that sooner or later she'd have to face a ‘quest into fear’ in order to learn about living life unafraid.



*Sedlec Ossuary*

So began an exploration to discover more about such places, of which there are thousands across the world. She chose four: Czerma in Poland, Sedlec in the Czech Republic, Hallstatt in Austria, and Naters in Switzerland.

The ossuary at Czerma exists as a symbol of reconciliation – in territory that was fought over again and again in the 17th and 18th centuries. The bones were discovered by chance, by the local parish priest out walking his dog (or rather, it was the dog who found them) – Polish bones, Czech, German and old Silesian, left scattered in the low-lying fields following the old conflicts. It became his life's work to collect all the bones together, giving them a dignified disposal. What strikes Denise as she enters the small chapel is the sameness of tens of thousands of bones, undistinguished by race, language, sex or culture. Every life, she says, is worthy of respect just because it is. Every human counts. The chapel speaks to her of the need for forgiveness, and of healing the parts of our lives that are broken.

Sedlec is home to a 12th century Cistercian cathedral plus years of Cistercian influence. Its ossuary contains the bones of the victims of plague and of the 15th century Hussite wars, collected together in the lasting hope of the resurrection. Surprisingly, and

grotesquely, the bones are used as decoration – as garlands, chandeliers, or material for sculptures. Human remains as artist's materials. The intention may have been joyful, but the effect is macabre. And the message is clear: remember that you are mortal. ‘Do today the good you would see done. Seize the present which is real and fleeting.’

Hallstatt, the oldest known industrial community in the world, is where the author comes across the last ‘skull-painter’ in the town, who carries out an ancient tradition of decorating the skulls of the deceased with wreaths of flowers and leaves, and painting the name and dates of the person across the forehead in gothic script – which makes them personal, much more than mere objects. They convey the feeling of connected humanity, of their unique place in the community of life – which made her think about belonging, and of what we'll be remembered for.

At Naters the ossuary is open to public view from the street, behind a metal grille. High up is a black wooden beam, painted on it in gold the words: ‘What you are, we were / What we are, you shall be.’ Local inhabitants, including crocodiles of schoolchildren, stopped regularly to view the bones. One daily visitor said that it was to do with being grounded in the real not the pretend. It was about being on the path of true humility.

The bones become for the author ‘a metaphor for the enduring and essential, the deep things that remain’. She quotes Henry David Thoreau, who went to live in a woodland cabin at Walden Pond in order to live simply, facing the essential facts of life and hoping not to face one day the fact that he had not really lived – or may never live before time has run out.

Although it may sound a grim subject, the book is far from grim – and is about much more than bones. Each of the places gives rise to reflections ranging from philosophy and religion to history, science and human progress. It's a book that celebrates life and considers questions that go to the heart of what it means to be human. A book to return to again and again.

*[A revised version of this article first appeared in an online journal edited by Ben Mephram of Gladstone Books, and reproduced by permission. [www.gladstonebooks.co.uk](http://www.gladstonebooks.co.uk)]*

*Penny Young*

# Goodbye to Spring (a chronicle)



I walked up the road early evening in March  
It was grey with a chill in the air but  
The promise of spring was all around.

It was the birds singing that brought a sense of  
Loss that spring this year would be different.  
When I listened again, I thought they knew.

Soon there would waiting in the long tunnel,  
The anticipation of the normal cycle of events:  
Weather, living and doing all dissipated.

Sunshine streams down from an endless blue sky.  
Mothering Sunday. The road has a rural stillness.  
There are no bells this morning. The Church is closed.

The occasional car passes but the sound of  
Aeroplanes in flight cutting across the sky  
Has been absent for days. Such quiet.

It's a week of Sundays. The clock has stopped.  
The sun is having a field day.  
The trees are busier than the streets.

We're washing our hands, but this is no birthday party.  
More of a real life Waiting for Godot  
Without the philosophy.

Facts, figures and statistics are the daily diet.  
With warnings instructions and threats.  
Hell is other people.

A cold March wind seeps into the bones  
But it can't kill the blood sucking  
Parasite that keeps in our homes.

Leaders fall ill and deputies fill in  
Before falling ill themselves.  
We all fall down.

Another Sunday with the stillness of  
A big freeze. Its quieter than an aquarium.  
People are doing their exercises, eyes glued to their screens.

On tv celebrities sit comfortably apart to  
Graciously show us the distancing art  
Of unsociable etiquette.

Bustle and busy are gone from the streets  
Which are as clean as a whistle in the clearer air.  
The road stretches out like a clip from an old newsreel.

The clocks spring forward but we're on a back footing  
Wishing we could rewind to a time  
Of the normality of shopping.

Globalisation has become self- isolation  
And lead to the dislocation of the real and the norm –  
The way we used to be.

Law and order take a front seat.  
Only ghosts roam the empty  
And fear -ridden streets.

The diary says no upcoming events.  
April is a blank as is May. We look to the summer  
In a vain, desperate hope.

I feel the loneliness of the long-distance walker,  
But give a thumbs up and wave to  
The ambulance driver

WhatsApp and YouTube are keeping some sane  
Such humour in black times is good for the soul.  
Virtual contact takes centre stage.

The floods had abated and the B(rexit) word  
Evaporated when the enemy  
Walked through the door.

Our island mentality couldn't  
Accept the reality that the pestilent  
Invader would come.

We nervously dismissed it  
Like a spring passing shower.  
Then the deluge came down.

Thursdays at eight we clap  
And we cheer for none but the brave  
Our NHS workers.

We wish away summer and  
Look to the autumn, the dead season,  
To bring us back to life.

And all the time as we look for some light  
As the poison continues to  
Drip feed our gloom.

Neither sport nor royalty  
Has brought us together more,  
Than this time of uncertainty.

Self-isolation unites the nation  
As well as the insistence  
On social distance.

A pub ignores lockdown  
Has a lock-in and itself  
Is shut down.

The briefings are grim be it  
M. Gove or Raab. Today it is  
Hancock's half-hour.

At the supermarket we queue  
Two metres apart but in reality  
We've never been closer

The Queen plays her part in  
Addressing the nation with  
A Vera Lynn style, 'We'll meet Again.'

Sport lacks respect and concern  
With endless debates about  
Football's return.

This glorious spring has become  
A winter of discontent through  
This evil pestilence.

We gaze at, and are amazed at,  
This sun blessed season  
That shrouds the dark truth.

Briefings explain plateaus, curves, and spikes.  
Peaks and flattening and  
Catastrophic loss of life.

Brave Captain Tom on his  
Marathon walk, inspires a nation.  
A hero in peacetime and war

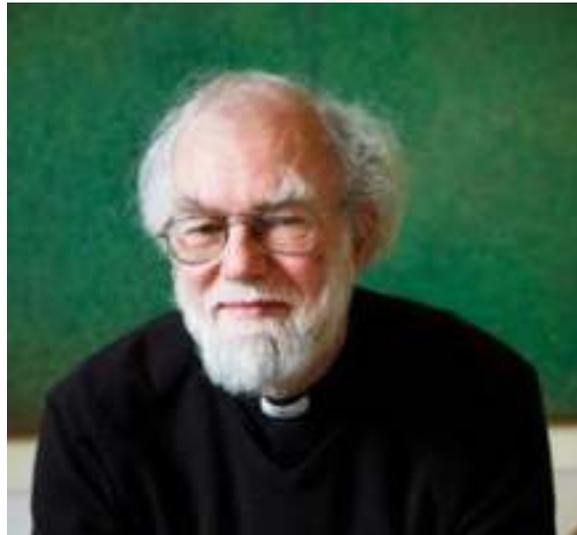


*Tom Hislop*

# Reflection on Social Distancing

*An abridged version of the sermon for Christian Aid Week by Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury given online, on May 10th 2020.*

A couple of weeks ago, I had a letter from a friend in Sri Lanka reflecting on the current global crisis. Had anyone noticed, he asked, how odd it was that we should be talking so much about 'social distancing' in a world where various kinds of 'social distance' were built in to the way societies were organised? The life we had regarded as normal is in fact a life in which there are deep chasms of separation between those who have the resources to manage their lives with a degree of freedom and control and those who don't. In many contexts – and not only in the developing world – you can find communities living literally side by side, but with this immense gap between them. We can't help being uncomfortably aware that the level of risk [of catching COVID-19] varies.



Another name for such a world is the Kingdom of God. We are not going to bring it about by policies and programmes, certainly; but we need constantly to be finding ways of letting its reality show through, so as to challenge the 'social distances' we so easily take for granted.

In a rather strange way, we are learning something about this through the conditions we're currently living with. We are becoming aware of the literal distance between us when we shop or take exercise; we're also learning the crucial importance of so many

unromantic jobs in public service without which we'd be lost. Whether it's a health service professional routinely staffing the intensive care unit, or just someone stepping aside on a footpath to allow another to go past, we are recognising that living thoughtfully – mindfully – is something life-giving.

We think with gratitude and admiration of all those who are daily exposed to high levels of risk – health and care workers of course, but also shelf stackers and rubbish collectors; and we think too of those for whom lockdown restrictions mean the risk of abuse.

In Christian Aid Week we're invited to cast our eyes wider still: to remember those across the world with the least resources to respond effectively to the Pandemic. Our partners in Africa are facing challenges we can scarcely begin to guess at: communities living in impossibly overcrowded conditions or with no safe water for washing or drinking. As the Pandemic takes a tighter hold in such environments, the economy of entire countries begins to unravel, far more dramatically even than the painful economic effects of the disease here in the UK.

As we observe the social distance we need to keep each other safe here, we might think about how we are called to step across another kind of social distance, so as to stand alongside those who are so much more at risk. In the story of the Good Samaritan, we have the picture of a person who crosses more than one gulf of distance to bring life and hope to someone whose life is at risk. He must stop on a lonely road where danger may still be lurking. He must take time and pay attention, putting aside his own preoccupations and worries so as to see carefully and intelligently what needs doing. And, not least, he must distance himself from his own prejudice and hostility towards a stranger.

The Samaritan's act in saving the life of his Jewish neighbour is a sign of what a world might look like in which the distance created by fear, ignorance and bigotry had been abolished.

The God we worship gives us the power and freedom to step away from the prison of our self-preoccupation; to confront with joy and thanksgiving God's own radiant beauty, and to confront with honesty and love the urgent needs of God's creation. Jesus' life is a journey

towards a deeper and deeper solidarity with human beings in their pain. So the painful days we are experiencing at the moment give us a chance to think again about the way in which we fail to notice just how far we have slipped away from each other in our global society, and indeed in our own country too.

In our tightly interconnected and mobile world, no problem is only local; disaster and disruption anywhere rapidly become an issue on our doorsteps. As many have said, our best hope as a world community for avoiding another lethal pandemic, perhaps even worse than this one, is to urge the creation of effective health care in every country and the creation of efficient international vehicles for response to medical emergency. It means no longer tolerating the deadly inequalities that condemn so many to dangerous exposure to sickness and hopelessness.

God help us to rise to this challenge and learn to love as he loves us, with a love that never fails in its willingness to cross over, like the Good Samaritan, to wherever there is suffering and fear, leaving behind the narrowness that we have let ourselves get used to.

*Edited by Vincent Ashwin*

