

June 2020

St Mary's News

The magazine of the
Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin
A Registered Charity
Henley-on-Thames
Oxfordshire



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From the Rector June 2020

Dear friends,

In these first days of June events in the United States of America have almost succeeded in knocking Covid-19 from our headlines. The scandal of racial inequality has scarred American history since it was first settled by Europeans and the African slaves they brought with them. Britain of course played its part in that story, and we too continue to have our own struggles with questions of race and equality. Rather than get into the details of those political arguments, which we can all follow in the newspapers and elsewhere, we can approach these questions instead from a theological point-of-view.

Our Bible begins with the creation story in Genesis. We do not need to be Creationists to recognise in the story of human ancestry in Adam and Eve a sense of common humanity shared by all. And more than that, the amazing claim that human beings are made in God's image gives to all human beings a dignity that is profound. The divine image in which we are made is restored and fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who unites humanity with divinity within Himself. The union of humanity and divinity has a universal impact. It is not confined to Jesus' time, nor to Jesus' immediate community; Jesus transcends human boundaries. We see this in Jesus' teaching, for example in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which He makes clear that the command to love our neighbour is one that cannot stop at ethnic and religious barriers. S. Paul takes up the theme, writing that in Christ there is "no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free".

The love of God is not constrained by human divisions, and the love that we are called to show for our neighbours should likewise not be confined to those who are like us, to those we readily understand.

But as well as the Bible's powerful teaching about our common humanity, our shared human dignity and the universality of the command to love our neighbour, there is another strand of biblical teaching that is important in our current context. From the story of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt, through the birth of Jesus to a humble family in an obscure corner of an occupied country, to Jesus' death by crucifixion – the traditional mode of punishment for slaves – we see God's radical subversion of human power, and solidarity with the powerless.

The Church is called in word and deed to proclaim that love which transcends human boundaries and divisions, and to stand in solidarity with those who are downtrodden.

With my prayers,

Fr Jeremy

The Parish Office, Hart Street, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2AU

Tel: 01491 577340

E-mail: office.hwr@btinternet.com

stmaryshenley.org.uk

Monday is the Rector's day off.

Friday is his study day.

*He would appreciate being spared calls on these days except
in an emergency.*

Calendar and Prayer Intentions for June 2020

Monday 1 June	Feria	The fight against Covid-19
Tuesday 2 June	Feria	Foster carers
Wednesday 3 June	The Martyrs of Uganda	The Church of Uganda
Thursday 4 June	S. Petroc, Abbot of Padstow, 6th century	The Bishop and Diocese of Truro
Friday 5 June	S. Boniface of Crediton, Apostle of Germany, Martyr, 754	Those who suffer
Saturday 6 June	Ini Kopuria, founder of the Melanesian Brotherhood, 1945	The departed

Sunday 7 June	Trinity Sunday	The Parish and People of God
Monday 8 June	Thomas Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells, Non-Juror, Hymn Writer, 1711	Courage
Tuesday 9 June	S. Columba, Abbot of Iona, Missionary, 597	The spread of the Gospel
Wednesday 10 June	Feria	Love
Thursday 11 June	Corpus Christi	Devotion to Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament
Friday 12 June	S. Barnabas the Apostle	Those in need
Saturday 13 June	Feria	Those who mourn

Sunday 14 June	Corpus Christi Sunday	The Parish and People of God
Monday 15 June	Feria	Our archdeacons
Tuesday 16 June	S. Richard, Bishop of Chichester, 1253	The Bishop and Diocese of Chichester
Wednesday 17 June	Feria	Our choir and organist
Thursday 18 June	Feria	Henley College
Friday 19 June	The Sacred Heart of Jesus	Compassion
Saturday 20 June	Feria	The departed

Sunday 21 June	The Second Sunday after Trinity	The Parish and People of God
Monday 22 June	S. Alban, First Martyr of Britain, c.250	The Bishop and Diocese of St Albans
Tuesday 23 June	S. Etheldreda, Abbess of Ely c.678	The Bishop and Diocese of Ely
Wednesday 24 June	The Birth of S. John the Baptist, Ember Day	Those preparing for ordination
Thursday 25 June	Feria	Teachers, lecturers and students
Friday 26 June	Ember Day	Those who suffer
Saturday 27 June	S. Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, Teacher of the Faith, 444, Ember Day	Those who mourn

Sunday 28 June	The Third Sunday after Trinity	The Parish and People of God
Monday 29 June	Ss Peter and Paul, Apostles	Pope Francis
Tuesday 30 June	Feria	Those struggling with financial hardship

Church at Home

<http://www.stmaryshenley.org.uk/church-at-home-trinity-sunday/>

Sermons will continue to be uploaded weekly to the parish website:

<http://www.stmaryshenley.org.uk/who-we-are/rectors-blog/>.

You can also follow us on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/St-Marys-Church-Henley-on-Thames-139822910238683/> and

<https://www.facebook.com/StNicholasRemenham/?eid=ARA8WIXzrOeNZZ61ccWzYjq1P0IKFM3i-IMuTVPUkJvpNjoU8eu5ijc0DSJ5N7Tiyq4NqY8TF9xycCui>

Please also keep an eye on our parish websites: <http://www.stmaryshenley.org.uk/>;

<https://www.remenhamparish.org.uk/>.

Parish Giving Scheme

Many of you will by now have received letters about our Parish Giving Scheme, which has recently gone live! Thank you to those who have already signed up. If you haven't yet done so, please do consider if this is something you are able to join.

If you have not received a letter, you can also join the scheme by telephone, by calling 0333 002 1271, and someone from PGS (Parish Giving Scheme) will contact you to help you set a direct debit and gift aid. You may not get through straight away, but you can leave a message and they will get back to you. Our Parish Code, which you will need to provide, is 270627170.

My warm thanks also to those who have made one-off donations recently.

The church needs your urgent support in this crisis!

Parish code: 270627170

Fr Jeremy

Gardening June 2020

There is nothing better than sitting down to a good meal with good friend and eating food you have grown yourself. Monty Don "Down to Earth"

This is very true and we are already eating the first lettuces and strawberries I planted this year and although we are not eating with our friends I have given a couple away for them to enjoy. It is a delight to be able to give flowers, fruit and veg to friends and this time of year is when the future begins to pan out to what may be good and what may be less successful. The hot dry weather has made everything grow very quickly but it needs a lot of watering. I have four sixty gallon water butts but they don't last long.

The most noticeable thing to me is the dahlias. They have grown into enormous bushy plants and already started producing flower buds. I have had to thin them out and prune them (See the latest video <https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21AAQjNJFQvp%2DcG%5Fo&cid=4BB3E8FC6A22EF1E&id=4BB3E8FC6A22EF1E%212616&parId=4BB3E8FC6A22EF1E%21141&o=OneUp>) or they will just produce a mass of small weak flowers on spindly stems. The sweet peas are doing well and I have cut off many of the sideshoots and am now letting them go and produce flowers throughout the summer. Since I have stopped showing flowers and veg I realise how much time I spent on clipping, pruning, cutting back, feeding and watering just to get one better plant than the next chap (or in many cases, lass) on the showbench.

The tomatoes still need daily watering and that is a job I do every morning on my way to letting out our new chickens. Yes, we have chickens again. Now the jungle at the bottom of the garden has been cleared we have access to our old coop so we have four hens and are looking forward to our own fresh eggs again. Everything else is growing well particularly the chillies, peppers and my own seed trombolino squashes. These could be a problem as they grow to about a yard long, weigh about six pounds and I already have eight fruit growing and they haven't reached the top of the frame yet. Something else to give away.

The melons are fine as well but you have to be careful as they will throw out flowers early but won't fruit as they put out lots of male flowers before the females appear so it is best to keep picking them off and wait a while. Melons generally grow on the ground but we tend to train them up poles or netting to save space and control them more easily but the downside is that they need supporting or the weight will drag them down and break the stems and plant. Outside the peas and broad beans have already begun to set which is good as they were not overwintered I planted them all in early spring and it seems that the blackfly haven't tried to ravage the beans yet so that may be another bonus for planting later. So far this year I have learnt that it is not necessary to plant out so early, wait till May, and you don't need six foot gutters to grow peas in so I will cut them down to three foot next year.

I am happy to send the garden videos if you want them. Just email me on dgc9427@btinternet.com. Keep safe and keep happy.

Dave and Sheila

Notices

St Mary's Choir Fund

A beautiful print of the church commissioned originally for the Millennium (church restoration) appeal, renowned 'Ladybird' artist Martin Aitchison is available to buy in aid of the St Mary's choir fund.

At just £12 for a mounted print including details of the artist on the back, this print will fit into any standard 16 x 12 " frame. Details from parish office or Gill Aitchison in the choir.

Food Bank

Although we cannot bring donations to church at this time, please continue to support the Food Bank. The supermarkets have donation points and you can also donate to NOMAD online www.nomadhenley.co.uk. Thank you.

Mothers' Union

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement which invites Christians around the world to pray between Ascension and Pentecost. What started out as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2016 to the Church of England has grown into an international call to prayer.

This year the Mothers' Union 'Thy Kingdom Come' service was due to have taken place in Coventry Cathedral. Instead on May 22 the service took place online and many MU members and others were able to join in the worship, which I found very moving.

The Archbishop of Canterbury introduced the short service which included a sermon from Mothers Union Central chaplain Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson, Bishop of Penrith. One of the Mu Worldwide Trustees, Thembsie Mchunu and her family sang a message of thanks and prayers were led by Sheran Harper, Mothers' Union Worldwide President.

The service is still available on Mothers' Union Facebook page. www.mothersunion.org

Jean Griffin

Articles and Reflections



Unexpected Visitors

Here, in the communal gardens of Remenham Row, we had two unexpected guests. A pair of Canada Geese decided to take up residence in early March by the riverside, and make their nest in one of the garden flower urns.

The female duly laid four eggs in somewhat cramped conditions, whilst the male remained on 24 hour guard duty. So protective was he of the surrounding territory, the residents were forced to observe strict social distancing and remove any garden furniture that might be within his designated area.

After 28 days the goslings were hatched in a beautiful cloud of down, sadly they left us after only 24 hours to start their new life on the river. A delightful distraction for us all in the time of lock down.

We hope to welcome the pair back again next year to their new 'bed and breakfast'.

Joy Smith (by invitation from Jenny Lloyd)



Photographs by kind permission from Mike Ricks

From Joan Edwards:

During the long break I have done a lot of walking with my granddaughter. Home from college, she has Downes Syndrome. We always sing songs like 'The sun has got his hat on' and the 'Alphabet Song' 'I know where I'm going' I remembered a spiritual I sang with my choir a long time ago called 'We are marching in the light of God' or Siya. Humba' I found it on Utube and played it on our walk. It was so uplifting on a sunny day walking by the river, listening to an African choir. I recommend a listen. It was written in 1952 as Christian hymn by Andries Van Tunder an elder in the Judith Church. He passed the song to his grandsons in Ireland who have the original paper it was written on.

Very Best Wishes.

Reflections on the lockdown after 9 weeks By Gill & Terry

The lockdown in the UK commenced on Monday 23rd March 2020. At the time of writing for the June Newsletter, the lockdown will soon be ending for most people, albeit with new restrictions in the event of contact tracing & testing. Shops and public places will have phased re-opening but social distancing is to remain. Travel abroad may be possible, but subject to 2 week self-isolation quarantine upon return. Church life as we have known it will take quite some time to return. This new phase raises many uncertainties and questions, but it seems the right time to reflect on life during these last 9 extraordinary weeks.

We are very conscious that the lockdown experience will have been very different for a wide range of people. Reports chart the surge in domestic abuse and mental health issues due to living in confined conditions. Loss of income has resulted in real hardship and a dramatic increase in demand at our local food bank organised by Nomad in Henley. Not to mention those families actually infected by Covid -19 with its devastating health effects. We are very grateful that our own lockdown experience on the whole, has been far more positive than negative, counting our blessings of both being retired, having a garden and being in good health.

Looking back, the daily briefings led by Ministers flanked by Scientists with charts and slogans dominated the early days. We were desperate to receive information about the virus and what action to take. The message "Stay at home, Protect the NHS, Save lives" was clear. The lockdown was only initially for 3 weeks, to be reviewed. All we had to do was to follow the rules and find a way to cope with a completely new way of life. Could this be a golden opportunity to actually do all the things we have been putting off because life was just too busy? Our response was to write down a lengthy master list of all the things we really wanted to achieve during lockdown and then each morning give ourselves a short realistic to-do list for that day. What satisfaction can come from ticking off from the list when done!

Lockdown life took on an exhausting blizzard of activity. Gill obtained lots of vegetable seeds and bedding plants for the garden. Yes, it would all take some time to grow, but time was no longer a problem. All the unused corners of the garden were tamed and cultivated. Plants and pots were ruthlessly pressed into action. Terry started cleaning all the paths and brickwork with a high pressure spray and found it very addictive, being unable to stop until everything was gleaming clean. Daily walks in the locality became a great source of pleasure, where every single pathway was explored. We discovered the Chiltern Way with its Berkshire Loop and were soon able to experience beautiful countryside on walks of increasing length. Spring blossom and path side flowers were a genuine delight to experience at leisure, instead of rushing past.

Gill has taken this opportunity to play a lot more music, study for her Gold RSCM Choral exam and even learned from Stephen Nicholls how to mix tracks to produce multi-part anthems for the remote church website. The disappointment of having our September holiday to the river Moselle in Germany cancelled has been tempered by rearranging for September 2021 and having a further 12 months for us to learn the German language on-line every day! Mealtimes became even more special, using the ingredients to hand and actually using recipes from the many cookery books on the shelves.

We have really missed not seeing our family with grandchildren, friends and our congregation, but regular phone calls were soon supplemented by Facetime, WebEx and Zoom. Our family has even organised a quiz night for Sunday evenings where 4 households can play together. The generosity of our neighbours and local community has been a real blessing, where thoughtfulness and concern for others' welfare has been the rule. Every day has brought good news of action to help people in need in contrast to the daily death count.

As this 9 week lockdown phase is ending, will we really miss our new way of life? Well, Yes and No. Our master list is not yet exhausted and there still remains lots to do. But Gill will hopefully be able to get to the Dentist for treatment for her cracked tooth and also visit the hairdresser. Terry can finally get to the opticians for the postponed eye test. We look forward to being with our family, friends and congregation again soon. However, we have experienced the richness of a simpler, more contemplative and fulfilling life over these past 9 weeks which hopefully will never leave us.

Time to Read and Reflect: Books Art, and People

Oh dear, how we miss our beautiful church nearby and all it offers! Yet we are fortunate in having our weekly on-line service thanks to Fr Jeremy; our thanks also to Stephen Nicholls and Gill Aitchison for hymns and psalms, and for the prayers and readings of others. Still, with my shopping done by my daughter, 'lockdown' leaves much time to fill, and with glorious weather I've been walking in the quiet of the evening, taking meals outside in my tiny courtyard garden, catching up on telephone and email, and enjoying hours and hours of reading.

But what to read? No doubt, like me, over the past weeks you have plundered your own bookshelves to re-read, or have begged and borrowed books. If you don't much like shopping on line, Hilary at the Bell Book Shop has a great pre-order system going with a counter at her doorway. Even so, I miss my casual, last minute drop-in-to-buy-for-bedtime-reading from Oxfam, and am indebted to friends and family for borrowed books. The great thing about this is that I've read books I wouldn't otherwise have chosen. How else would I have come across Oyinka Braithwaite's outrageously readable, quirky, and ultimately tragic, *My Sister, the Serial Killer?*

More seriously, I'm currently halfway through another borrowed book, Barbara Castle's memoir, *Fighting All the Way*. It is delightfully full of illuminating insights into her parliamentary colleagues and the many others she met in the course of a life truly lived. Without her I certainly would have missed a wonderful observation from the nearby artist Stanley Spencer travelling in a delegation to China of which Mrs Castle was also a member.

Speaking to her of his own painting he said he was not interested in the 'methods and mechanics of art'... 'If my soul feels it, the painting is right.' This was a pertinent observation since he was at the time engaged in painting one panel of his great series: *Christ Preaching at Cookham Regatta: Listening from punts*. Spencer explained that he 'was obsessed with a consciousness of Christ'. 'I feel him. I know him personally. In the painting I want to show him moving among ordinary people, the life and soul of the party, out-regatting the regatta.' Ordinary people are certainly what Spencer excels in painting: his young girls in a punt seemingly oblivious of the great event taking place close-by.

In Henley this summer we shall miss our town's greatest party – Regatta week. And yet perhaps all is not quite lost. Reading the artist's words, it seemed to me that we have seen a reflection akin to Spencer's image of Christ not only in the extraordinary devotion of our NHS staff, but also in the many kindnesses of those in our own small 'locked down' community: a powerful reminder that, for all our faults, Christ walks with us whether we know him or not.

Jill Edwards

Oyinka Braithwaite, *My Sister, the Serial Killer?* Penguin, (2019)
Barbara Castle, *Fighting All the Way*, Macmillan, London, (1993)

Prayers in a time of pandemic, by Terry

Almighty God, we pray to you today when our entire world has been deeply affected by the impact of the highly contagious virus Covid-19.

We ask you to

- bring comfort to all the families that grieve the death of their relatives
- give support to all suffering economic hardships
- to give reassurance and love to all those who are anxious or lonely whilst staying in their homes

However Lord, despite the terrors of this unwanted virus, we give you thanks for all the good things that emerge as we change our way of living

- We give grateful thanks for all those involved in nursing and medical care, risking their own lives to save ours
- We give thanks for all in Government at all levels who are focusing on protecting us and seek to mitigate loss of jobs and income
- We give thanks to our neighbours and community support groups who volunteer to help others in need, including delivering food bank parcels, shopping on behalf of others, or just keeping in contact with the lonely

O Lord, one of the unexpected consequences is that many of us are experiencing the gift of time.

- Time to think of others and not just ourselves
- Time to enjoy the company of our friends and families, even if this is achieved by telephone or video conferencing
- Time to appreciate your natural world with walking or exercising in our neighbourhoods
- Time to enjoy the simpler things in life when we are grateful for what we already have, rather than worry about what we need
- Time to finishing off any jobs or tasks thoroughly, rather than rushing under the pressure of the day

O Lord, as we adhere to the social distancing rules, many of us are experiencing changes in behaviour, where

- Others acknowledge our presence, often with a friendly greeting, rather than ignore us
- Car drivers and cyclists are demonstrating far greater courtesy to other road users and pedestrians

O Lord, with most manufacturing halted and international travel suspended, we give thanks for the dramatic benefits being experienced in our climate with less pollution.

Finally, Almighty God, we beseech you to help the world to find a vaccine and effective testing so that we can eventually control the spread of this virus. We look forward to the lifting of restrictions on our movements, restarting nurseries, schools and universities, and everybody getting back to work as normal. However, we pray that the good things we are experiencing are not lost automatically when normal life is resumed:

That we continue to think more of others, treat people with greater courtesy and understanding. We pray that our world becomes a friendlier, more peaceful and healthier world

Amen.

Forthcoming Concert – Henley Choral Society

Saturday September 19th

In St Mary's

'Nelson Mass', Haydn

Ave Verum Corpus, Mozart

Miserere Mei Deus, Gregorio Allegri

For Lo, I raise up, Stanford

O for the wings of a Dove,

Felix Mendelssohn

Opera Prelude

Before the lockdown, Opera Prelude had planned quarterly concerts at St Mary's. Opera Prelude's talented young artists present culturally vibrant lecture recitals drawing on the wealth of social and historic connections between opera and the other Arts. In order to support the work of the charity, they are presenting short online Lecture Recitals, performances and inspiring discussions. These will be presented by some of their most talented young artists, who will be joined from time to time by celebrated performers, academics, art historians and musicologists. Donations will be invited from £4 - £25. See www.operaprelude.org.

Rector

Revd Jeremy Tayler
rector.hwr@btinternet.com

Churchwardens

Robin Hartley
07398152388
Sue Hockley
01491-575896

Treasurer

Kathryn Turner
01491-577340

PCC Secretary

Sheila Croton
07460535793
Email: sac2801@btinternet.com

Organist

Sebastian Thomson
07739 712783

Tower Captain

Joan Bennett
01491 579795

Mothers' Union

Parish Office
01491 577340

Planned Giving

(envelope scheme)
Martin Whittaker
01491 572228

Secretary

Julie Griffin
01491 577340
Email:
office.hwr@btinternet.com
(Mon. & Tues. 9.30-12.30,
Weds. & Fri. 9.30-4.30)

Advertising

Parish Office
01491-577340

Publishing

Alan Tang
E-Mail: alan.tang8@btinternet.com