

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



Parish Church of St Guthlac
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Sunday 14 June 2020 First Sunday after Trinity

A prayer for the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy,
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

How do we live as the Church *now*?

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching”

Last week I introduced my recent wonderings in the light of our coronavirus experiences.... wonderings about what specifically the church is here for and what we should be doing. As we are (still) a church without a building to use, what can we learn about what is key to our life together? What shape should the church begin to take after the lockdown?

I suggested that a helpful starting point might be the very first church, formed among the first believers in Jerusalem after the Day of Pentecost. In chapter two of the Book of Acts, Luke writes that together they practised what some have called ten ‘Holy Habits’ - a way of life that reflected their Christian faith and put into action the same love for others that Jesus demonstrated in his life, teachings, death and resurrection. According to Luke the first of these ‘Holy Habits’ was a commitment to learning more about God’s good purposes for the world : *‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching*” The early chapters of Acts show us that this ‘apostles teaching’ began with a proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus and then showed how his death and new life had always been part of God’s rescue plan for the human race, as revealed to us through the Hebrew Scriptures that we call the Old Testament. The apostles then went on to teach the believers about the direct implications of this for their daily lives, and in particular their relationships with each other and then those outside the church. This further teaching was eventually recorded for us in the New Testament. So ‘the apostles teaching’ is everything our Christian Bible has to tell us.

The other significant words are “they devoted themselves”. We develop a Holy Habit of ‘devoting ourselves to the apostles’ teaching’ by paying loving attention to the whole of the Bible,

wrestling even with the parts we do not like or find difficult. We listen, read, reflect and respond. We pray and put it into action. We deliberately practise doing all that until it becomes completely instinctive.

In our time we have a huge advantage over the first church - Bibles are readily available, and there are books, recordings and many internet resources to help us devote ourselves to Biblical teaching. However, we also have a huge *disadvantage* too. As a society and as a church we have become more distant and more disconnected from each other. Whereas the first believers learnt *together*, our tendency is to keep things private and *individual*.

The Bible was written to *share* - to read *together*, so that it prompts us to tell our own stories, to give our reflections and insights, to shape our lives as a community and not just as distant individuals. So as we begin the difficult stage of moving out of lockdown and into a world shaped by coronavirus, as the church we need to find new ways to read and share the Bible together; Sunday sermons won't be enough.

As a beginning, can I invite you to join an online group in our benefice? We will take seven sessions together to look at the seven big themes of the Gospel of Mark—there are film clips and questions to consider before we meet and then plenty of time to discuss. The group is called '*Christianity Explored*' and we'll 'meet' by using Zoom on Tuesday evenings. It would be great to have lots of people joining in—do please let me know if you can and then we'll set up our start date and send out more details.

In the meantime, keep safe and stay well.

Adrian

FOR YOUR PRAYERS Please remember those whom we have been asked to keep in our prayers. Please remember those who have died recently and keep their family and friends in your prayers. For other prayer requests, please contact a churchwarden.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN MALAWI. Please continue to prayer for our sisters and brothers in Northern Malawi and across the world as the nations of the world deal with the pandemic. Let us pray that the remoteness of many of these rural communities will provide an effective shield to the spread of the disease in areas where medical facilities would struggle to cope.

PRAYERS FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS Please pray for all our local doctors, nurses, care workers and support staff, especially **Amy and Dan Barnes** and **Katherine Swanson**.

VERONICA SMALL

It is with sad news to report that Veronica Small died June 2nd peacefully at home with her family. Veronica had been ill and discharged recently from hospital. Her funeral will be on Friday 19th June. Details about a future memorial service will be published in due course.

When will our churches be re-opening?

No doubt you will have heard in the news this week that churches and other places of worship have been given permission to open for private prayer and for funerals from 15th June —**when all safety and hygiene precautions can be put in place**. Whilst this is very welcome news, the proviso to these changes is extremely important.

Every Vicar and PCC are being asked to carry out a careful

Risk Assessment of their church building and of the congregation's capacity to put in place the social distancing and cleaning measures that will be necessary. As I write, on Friday, we are expecting guidance from the Church of England that will clarify aspects of these precautions, in particular the need to have people in church to 'supervise' at all times when the building is open.

Our priority of course, has to be ensuring that the risk of transmitting the virus is reduced to an absolute minimum, and that those who are more vulnerable are protected. As an example, those who are aged 70 or over and those with any underlying health condition, or who are living with others in these groups, will not be able to join in the cleaning effort required after opening. Another necessary precaution will be to record who visits each time, so that if a case of coronavirus is reported then all contacts can be traced.

I hope you can begin to see that, although it sounds simple to open our doors to those who want to pray, the process is not at all straightforward and needs to be carried out with care and attention to detail. Funerals in church will require other, extra precautions. All of this means it is important for the PCC to have a full discussion based on a careful Risk Assessment, before any decision is made.

Here at St Guthlac's we will begin our Risk Assessment when we have the promised guidance. The PCC will then meet, perhaps next week, with a view to considering what would be necessary to do in order to safely open the building. I will continue to stress that we must only open when we can ensure adequate safety precautions are in place — even if this means taking more time. If we cannot guarantee that we will meet all safety requirements then we will *not* be able to open the building. This outcome would be extremely disappointing, but ***we must not compromise on anyone's safety, particularly***

those who are more at risk from the effects of the virus.

I will of course keep you updated on the progress of our Risk Assessment and PCC discussions, but in the meantime please do let me know (by email, phone or letter) if you have views or ideas that would help us in this process. In particular I would welcome offers of help with cleaning or supervising open sessions in the church building, from anyone who is not in a vulnerable group. Without volunteers it seems unlikely that opening the building is realistic.

Do pray for our PCC and Ministry Team as we try to find the best way ahead.

Adrian

BBC1 Sunday Worship 10.45am For the order of service:
www.bbc.co.uk/orderofservice

BBC Radio 4 Sunday Worship 8.10am

BBC Radio 4 Daily Service each weekday 9.45am on long wave only

Catch up available for all these on BBC iPlayer or Sounds app.



0800 804 8044

Are you in need of some daily hope during this lockdown?
We have a new FREE telephone line for you to ring to hear comforting hymns, daily prayers and reflections.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  1663-1689 **CONNECTIONS**

Don't forget to visit the St. Guthlac's Facebook page and website <http://www.stguthlac-knighton.co.uk/>

'Church is Changing' on the home page includes copies of reflections and links to the You Tube recordings of virtual services. Newsletters can found on the news page.

Virtual Sunday Service for the

Knighton Benefice. Please look out for the email giving the link to this week's Sunday Service which will be available on YouTube from Sunday.

Virtual Compline/ Night Prayer at 8pm on a Wednesday. It has proven a meaningful way to have fellowship and prayer together as well as being quite good fun, especially as we find our feet with the technology and more people join us each week. You can join by just **phoning up** and inputting the code **or** using **'Zoom'** online. It has been democratic with several voices joining in with a line of liturgy each. If you would like to participate with a speaking part, please do contact Matthew by 4pm each Wednesday (revgough@gmail.com).

For Phone only: telephone this number **0131 460 1196**
When promoted input Meeting ID: **746 767 4408**

For internet using Zoom:

Join Zoom Meeting <https://leccofe.zoom.us/j/7467674408>
Input Meeting ID: 746 767 4408

Thank you for caring at home and in our community” : this is the message of appreciation that, as St Mary's and St Guthlac's, we want to send loud and clear to the staff of our local care homes and to all those carers who have been supporting clients, friends and relatives in their own homes during the pandemic. We are particularly conscious that we have at least nine care homes in our benefice, and that the staff will have been under extraordinary strain and pressure over the last two months—often, it seems, unappreciated by those who make key decisions, and perhaps also by ourselves, until now. To express our appreciation to these care home workers we are aiming to give a gift to as many as possible—probably a gift token to be redeemed when times are easier and leisure seems possible again. We have a generous grant from our Ward Councillors to start things off, but if each gift is really to convey

true appreciation then we want to add to it substantially through our own generosity.

Please do make a contribution to our Carers Fund to show your appreciation. We are collecting money through the St Guthlac's bank account, so please make a cheque payable to 'St Guthlacs PCC' (no cash please) . Alternatively you can pay by Direct Transfer:

Sort code 20-49-08 account 53861341 Reference "Carers"
You can send a donation by post or drop your envelope through the door of 62 Elms Road (Matthew), 5 Church Lane (Adrian) or the St Mary's Parish Centre, Church Lane (but not at St Guthlac's Church please!).

Thank *you*, in anticipation, for helping us thank our care staff.
Adrian

Fundraising Update Thanks to people's generosity so far. With the Council ward funding of £500 we now have a total of £1200 to say thank-you to the local carers.

Collect & Readings for the First Sunday of Trinity

The Collect

O God,
the strength of all those who put their trust in you,
mercifully accept our prayers
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature
we can do no good thing without you,
grant us the help of your grace,
that in the keeping of your commandments
we may please you both in will and deed;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

Romans 5:1-8

¹Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 9:35-10:8

³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

¹Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

REFLECTION

'These are the names of the 12 Apostles...'

I find Jesus' choosing of the 12 Apostles to be fascinating, especially because of both who he chooses, and how he chooses. To address the latter point first, according to this text from Matthew, Jesus' own ministry is centred on first of all...then in v 37-8 a more general sort of discipleship is mentioned, and then the one and only time the Greek word 'Apostoloi' appears in the Gospel, refers to the 12 who are almost immediately 'sent out'.

By contrast, in Mark, the 12 are chosen and then Jesus goes home! (3:20)

In Luke the sending occurs quite a while after the choosing. (9:1-6)

Here, as already mentioned, in Matthew, choosing and sending is all of one piece, because 'the harvest is ready and labourers are few'. Furthermore, Matthew describes the Apostles as being sent to 'mirror image' the ministry of Jesus himself in both word and deed... a tall order indeed!

Well, what about these twelve Apostles? A motley crew to be sure. One denies, one betrays, two of the inner ring of three decide to make the most of a seniority pecking order and another, Simon, is a zealot, a nationalistic revolutionary who would have had no problem with sticking a knife into the back of any passing Roman soldier!

In today's Church, the Lord still calls out 'Apostles' who are sent at various times and in various ways into today's harvest. As an ex Director of Ordinands and National Academic Selector I was utterly humbled by the vast array of candidates who felt themselves called to the ordained ministry or licensed lay ministry. My role was to help the Church discern and receive what was the 'intended' calling for each. Never easy, and sometimes I realised I had got it very wrong. To get alongside this person growing into the image of Christ and walking with them into their own futures feels as daunting now as it did then. But the Lord does 'call', and the Lord does 'send'. Part of the mission of the Church is to discern 'who' and 'how'... and eventually 'where'!

So, as we approach what in any normal year would be the time for great services of Ordination in Cathedrals up and down the land, what better time for each of us to consider our own 'calling', and the calling of those who we know. Of course, we are all called to be disciples or followers of our Lord, and that in itself is a wonderful vocation. But what about a further call, a call to ministry, lay or ordained?

In my own case, I was ordained very young indeed, after wrestling with this call to priesthood amidst much singing and academia...'priesthood' which was actually the last thing I myself wanted to be and to do. But the 'nag' remained. So at 19, I was selected with no preliminaries required. The next five years were about finishing off one degree, doing another, teaching other Ordinands, singing professionally and being a monk! At 24, whilst keeping my toes in much of the above, actually being ordained and enjoying being a priest on a huge council estate, by comparison seemed quite a relief!

Forty two years later, I feel as called as I did so long ago, for which I am very very thankful.

SAF

BENEFICE MAGAZINE—MAY EDITION : If you haven't received your copy of the magazine, either by email or post, and can't see it on our Church website, then do please let me know and I'll make sure it gets through. Adrian

GREETINGS & GOOD WISHES come to us all from **Gill and Derek Atkinson**, who are both well and thinking of us back in Knighton. They enjoy our Virtual Worship on the church website.

ACCOMMODATION WANTED Hilary is an ordained C of E minister but currently without a parish. She is urgently looking to rent or buy a two bedroom house in this part of the city. If you know of anything that might be suitable please get in touch with Adrian.

FOR THE NEWSLETTER Please send material to be included in the next newsletter by **Thursday 10pm** to administrator@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk