

St Helen's Magazine

May 2020



St Helen's Church

Ashby-de-la-Zouch



Loving God, loving others, loving the world

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Editor Writes ...

I think my family find it surprising, if not to say silly, that in these strange times I have been worrying about the weather. We have, after all, had gorgeous sunny days which many of us have found a blessing. But, being a worrier, my concern was that we would be coping with a drought in addition to the coronavirus pandemic. I know, I know, apart from this being an illogical worry, I should be handing my worries over anyway. And, importantly, having handed them over in prayer, I need to not grab them back!

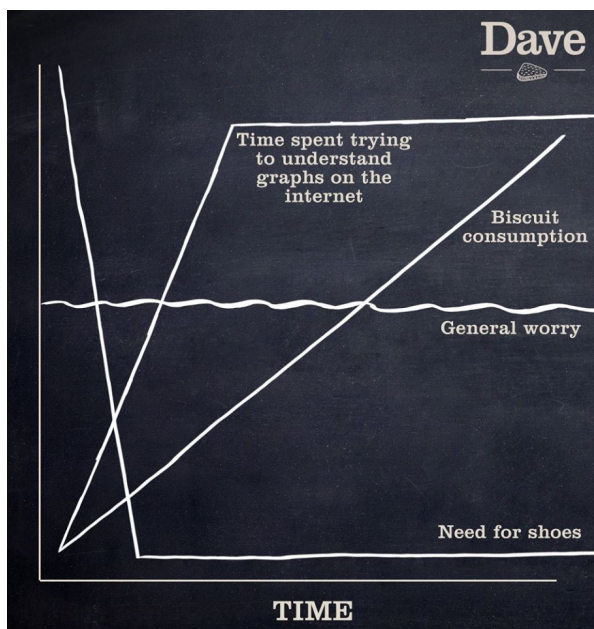


A bit of research and I was relieved to discover that a long spell of settled weather at this time of year is not unusual, and that April and May are the UK's driest months. Rainfall then increases from May, through June and July until August which is this country's wettest summer month.

For the many organisers of summer sporting events, this is a weather-worry free year because everything is cancelled anyway. I wonder, how all the sport fans are coping? For some of us in lockdown this must be one of the hardest aspects to bear, for others it's probably a silver lining in the cloud!

But in mid April the faintest of flickers appeared at the end of the sporting shutdown tunnel when the Professional Darts Corporation announced the ingenious introduction of the PDC Home Tour. This is a tournament broadcast live from the homes of its star players. It started on April 20th and is expected to continue through most of May, with a nightly league format

and all matches broadcast on Sky Sports. The PDC website describes it as 'stars bringing elite level darts from their living rooms to yours.' We can relate - our 'stars' are skilfully bringing prayer and worship from their living rooms to ours each day. There are photos on pages 18 and 20, and on page 28 we focus on what our choir has been up to. On page 19 there is news of the VE 75 celebrations which were due to have been in church on 10th May, and Mary is having VE Day thoughts over the page.



Jill Chapman



Revd Mary Writes ...

My dear Friends

How will you mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day?

Had things gone to plan, we might have spent 8th May having a street party with friends, or joining in with afternoon tea on Ashby's Bath Grounds. We might have heard the church bells ring out to signal peace, or found ourselves going 'all Vera Lynn' and singing 'We'll meet again'.

With communal events for VE Day 75 cancelled, we're being invited to mark the occasion as households. There's BBC Make a Difference 'Great British Bunting' initiative which encourages us to deck out our front gardens in red, white and blue bunting, and a suggestion that we might have our own celebratory picnic under that same bunting, waving to passers-by as we do.

St Helen's Church was due to host Ashby's civic service for VE Day 75 and we're still going to do that online, via our Facebook Page on 10th May at 10.30am. Why not join us? We'll be remembering with *sorrow* the events that led to war, and the horrors of the war; with *thanksgiving* the sacrifices made by millions of ordinary people during that time; with *determination* our part in working for peace.

Today, Europe is in the grip of another kind of war with Covid-19.

'We'll meet again' has become our lock-down anthem. Like it's earlier incarnation in wartime, it's become a rallying cry, a statement of faith, that better days are coming when we will be together once more. And as at our VE Day 75 service, we mark each day with the same mixture of sorrow, thanksgiving and determination; sorrow at the awful loss of life; thanksgiving for those key workers sacrificing so much to combat the illness, and determination to play our part in serving our communities.

I'm not sure what 'victory' over Covid-19 will look like, exactly. A vaccine, perhaps, to ward off further pandemics; families and friends mixing freely again; a return to school and work; unfettered departures on holiday; rescheduled weddings and house moves?

I wonder. Could we aspire to *more* than this? Might a more meaningful victory be, not 'back to normal', but a 'new normal' where we value our relationships more dearly, where we consume more carefully, where we travel more thoughtfully, where we expend time more sparingly, where we are content with less and local and much, much simpler? Might a longer-

lasting victory be shown in better-paced lives, in stronger communities, in a fairer sharing of resources, in cherishing creation which, in lock-down, is finally breathing again? Might not this be a closer reflection of God's Kingdom which Christians are called to build; a Kingdom where we are good stewards of creation, where we work for justice, and honour those closest to us, whilst loving our neighbours?

While you have a little more time, just now, could you think about what you've gained during this time; about what you've gained and what you'd like to retain when all of this is over? Think: what would 'victory in Europe', across the world, over Covid-19 really look like for me, for us - and what can I do to secure it?

With much love,

Revd Mary



Free Dial-in Worship Phone Line

On 26th April the Archbishop of Canterbury launched a free national phone line as a simple new way to bring worship and prayer into people's homes while church buildings are closed because of the coronavirus.

Daily Hope is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044**, and offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

Although thousands of churches across the country are now running services and prayer groups online while public worship remains suspended, many people do not have access to the internet, and it is estimated that 2.5 million people aged 75 and above have never used the internet.

Callers will hear a special greeting from the Archbishop before being able to choose from a range of options, including hymns, prayers such as Prayer During the Day and Night Prayer from Common Worship, reflections, and a recording of the Church of England weekly national online service.

The section called Hymn Line offers callers a small selection of hymns, updated daily. An option entitled 'Hymns We Love', provides a hymn and reflection and is based on an initiative by the Connections group

Archbishop Justin urged people to spread the news about this service.

Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff Matthew 3:12

The King James Version of the bible has a special place in many of our hearts due to the beauty of its language. And because it was a common English version that was popular for many centuries, spanning from when it was first printed in 1611, through to the 20th Century, many common English phrases find their origins in its scripture. Here are a few:

Bite the Dust from Psalms 72:9: *“They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.”*

The Blind Leading the Blind Matthew 15:13-14: *“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”*

By the Skin of Your Teeth from Job 19:20: *“My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.”*

Broken Heart from Psalms 34:18: *“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”*

Can a Leopard Change his spots? from Jeremiah 13:23: *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”*

Cast the First Stone from John 8:7: *“And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”*

Drop in a Bucket from Isaiah 40:15 declaring God’s sovereignty and power over the nations: *“Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he takes up the isles as fine dust”*

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry from Ecclesiastes 8:15: *“because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.”*

Eye for Eye, Tooth for tooth from Matthew 5:38: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”*

Fall From Grace from Galatians 5:4: *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”*

Fly in the Ointment from Ecclesiastes 10:1: *“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.”*

For Everything there is a Season from Ecclesiastes 3. (Ecclesiastes 3 is

also the motivation for the song “Turn! Turn! Turn!” by the Byrds.) *“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”*

Forbidden Fruit from Genesis 3:3: *“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”*

Go the extra mile from Matthew 5:41: *“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain”*

Good Samaritan from Luke 10:30-37, the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword from Matthew 26:52: *“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”*

How the Mighty have Fallen from 2 Samuel 1:19: *“The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!”*

The Love of Money is the Root of All Evil from 1 Timothy 6:10 (usually misquoted as ‘money is the root of all evil’): *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”*

Nothing but skin and bones from Job 19:19-20: *“All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me. I am nothing but skin and bones.”*

The Powers that Be from Romans 13:1: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”*

Pride comes before a fall from Proverbs 16:18: *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Put words in one’s mouth from 2 Samuel 14:3: *“And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth.”*

Rise and shine is from Isaiah 60:1: *“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.”*

The Root of the Matter from Job 19:28: *“But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the Root of the matter is found in me?”*

Scapegoat - Leviticus 16:10 is just one example of many in Old Testament law: *“But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.”*

See eye to eye from Isaiah 52:8: *“Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.”*

Sign of the times from Matthew 16:3: *“And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”*

Strait and Narrow from Matthew 7:14: *“But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

Twinkling of an Eye from 1 Corinthians 15:52: *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”*

There’s nothing new under the sun from the book of Ecclesiastes 1:9: *“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”*

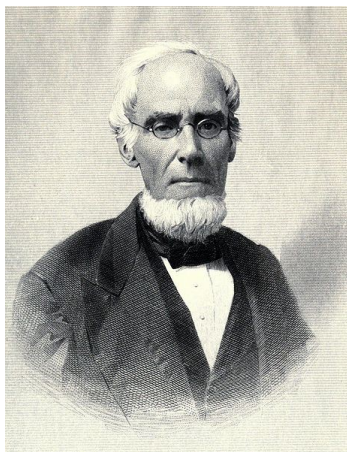
Wash your hands of the matter from Matthew 27:24: *“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.”*

Weighed in the balance from Job 31:6: *“Let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know mine integrity.”*

Wit’s End from Psalm 107:27: *“They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.”*

Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing from Matthew 7:15: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”*

Writings on the Wall from Daniel 5: *“The writing is on the wall”* is now a popular idiom for “something bad is about to happen”.



And the title of this article was chosen because I heard about a fascinating inventor recently - amongst his many successes, Gail Borden invented condensed milk, still a popular ingredient today, especially when other ingredients cant be found in the shops - see recipe opposite. He received the patent for his condensed milk process in 1856. His other food invention, however, surely should have been dismissed as 'chaff'. It was a product into which he invested a large fortune, and which ended up bankrupting him. It was ... the meat biscuit.

Jill Chapman

Three-ingredient orange loaf cake (eggless)



Ingredients

2 oranges
200 g self-raising flour
397 g tin condensed milk

Directions

1. Finely grate the zest from $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 orange into a small bowl and cover with damp kitchen paper.
2. Boil both oranges in water in a high-sided pan for 1hr, or until the skin is very soft – keeping the oranges submerged with a glass bowl or lid. Drain and cool.
3. Preheat oven to 190°C (170°C fan) mark 5. Line a 900g (2lb) loaf tin with baking parchment. Halve and deseed both oranges. Whizz in a blender until smooth.
4. Whisk together $\frac{3}{4}$ of the puréed orange, self-raising flour and all but 1tbsp of the condensed milk (reserve this for the glaze) until fairly smooth. Scrape into the tin and bake for 45min, until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
5. Brush over reserved condensed milk and scatter over the zest. Cool completely in the tin before serving in slices.

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Let US build your dream garden or maintain it

The Singing Bowl becomes a lockdown poem

The title poem of poet Malcolm Guite's book *The Singing Bowl* was published seven years ago, and yet, with its celebration of centring and stillness, and its injunction to 'remain within the world of which you're made' it seems like it could have been written for these times.

Singing Bowl

Begin the song exactly where you are,
Remain within the world of which you're made.
Call nothing common in the earth or air,

Accept it all and let it be for good.
Start with the very breath you breathe in now,
This moment's pulse, this rhythm in your blood

And listen to it, ringing soft and low.
Stay with the music, words will come in time.
Slow down your breathing. Keep it deep and slow.

Become an open singing-bowl, whose chime
Is richness rising out of emptiness,
And timelessness resounding into time.

And when the heart is full of quietness
Begin the song exactly where you are.



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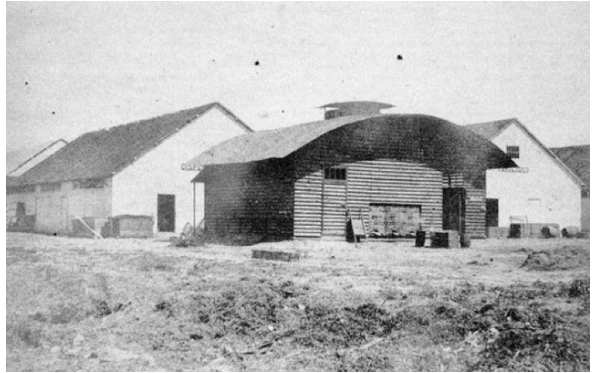
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Renkioi Hospital

Seeing the construction of the new Nightingale Hospital in London put me in mind of another hospital that was hastily constructed at a time of crisis over 160 years ago. This was Renkioi Hospital, opened in 1855, and although it was in Turkey, on the Dardanelles, it does have a connection with North West Leicestershire!

Renkioi Hospital was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel as a set of “flat-pack” wooden buildings, which were manufactured in England and shipped out to Turkey to be erected on site. This was to meet the need for more hospital beds during the Crimean War. Brunel acted on advice from medics, especially Florence Nightingale who was



already out in the East at Scutari Hospital, and designed a state-of-the-art hospital, probably one of the best in the world at the time. The plan was to provide 3,000 beds, although this was later revised down to 2,500. The site consisted of a set of wooden wards, connected by long corridors, each one containing 50 beds in four rows. Each ward had good ventilation, stoves for heating and candles for light, with a generous amount of space allowed per patient. Each ward also had its own bathroom and flushing toilets with ample fresh running water and proper sewers flushed with sea water. The hospital was supplied with 25,000 gallons of fresh water per day.

There were laundries and soiled linen was changed every day. Kitchens provided wholesome food, far better than the men were used to at the front, and there were also stores and dispensaries.

The medical staff consisted of 5 senior doctors, 13 assistant physicians, 7 assistant surgeons, 20 general nurses and 5 “Lady nurses”. The latter were women of higher social rank who acted as sisters, although none of the nurses were properly



trained or qualified. There were also 33 male orderlies and other staff who worked in the kitchens, laundries, dispensaries etc.

At first there were two nurses to each ward of 50 men, plus orderlies, but this was later reduced to one. Orderlies carried out the heavier work including cleaning.

Most of the patients were suffering from diseases caused by the appalling conditions at the front such as dysentery, typhus and other fevers. Relatively few were admitted with gunshot wounds and only one was recorded as having died from such. The good food, good standards of hygiene and nursing resulted in a relatively low death rate compared with other hospitals at the time. Of the 513 men admitted with diseases of various kinds, only 29 died. Some became ward orderlies when they were sufficiently recovered.

So what is the local connection? Ann Ayre Hely (nee Bradshaw), born and bred in Ravenstone, volunteered as a nurse in March 1855 following the death of her doctor husband the previous year. She was sent to Smyrna Hospital at first but was transferred to Renkioi when Smyrna closed.

Florence Nightingale never visited Smyrna or Renkioi, but after she returned to London, she was nursed by Ann Hely for a while. Ann was also chosen to nurse the mother of Queen Victoria, but the Duchess died before Ann could take up her post. At the age of 78, Ann was awarded the order of the Royal Red Cross nursing medal, which was presented to her at Ravenstone Hospital Almshouses where she spent her final years.



As for Renkioi Hospital, it never did reach capacity with no more than 640 patients at any one time being admitted. When the war ended in the summer of 1856, the hospital was dismantled and forgotten about and the staff returned to England.

There is now a book about Renkioi Hospital by Christopher Silver, available on Amazon. Pudding Bag Productions also made a film and wrote a book about Ann Hely. The film can be seen via our website: puddingbagproductions.co.uk Ann was awarded a Green Plaque by Leicestershire County Council in 2017 and this can be seen on the front wall of Ravenstone Hospital Historic Almshouses.

Wendy Freer

Heroes

In certain quarters I know 'unprecedented' is mute point! Yet, it is certain that we are currently living in ever changing times, people's lives as they have known it have been thrown completely upside down. Focuses have changed, across a spectrum of our culture. One area that I have especially noticed is the definition of 'Hero'. For many the classification of hero has changed, being less about a multi millionaire pop star or footballer, and more about the humble NHS staff and many other everyday 'Heroes'.



Some of these changes may be helpful, retrospectively we can appreciate things that perhaps we have taken for granted. As a Christian, I am thankful for God, the unchanging, the always present and all loving heavenly father.

Things change, God remains. Things seem unpredictable, God remains.

It is my prayer that you know God's peaceful presence, whatever you are facing in this time of lockdown.

Revd Stewart

Rings of Hope & Appreciation

Flower Arrangers all over the country are creating door rings to show their appreciation of the NHS staff and essential workers during this emergency. They are decorating them in green and blue, with ribbons, flowers and foliage.

The ring symbolises unending and everlasting love, the cycle of life and hope. Green is for renewal, balance and progress, and blue for the NHS.

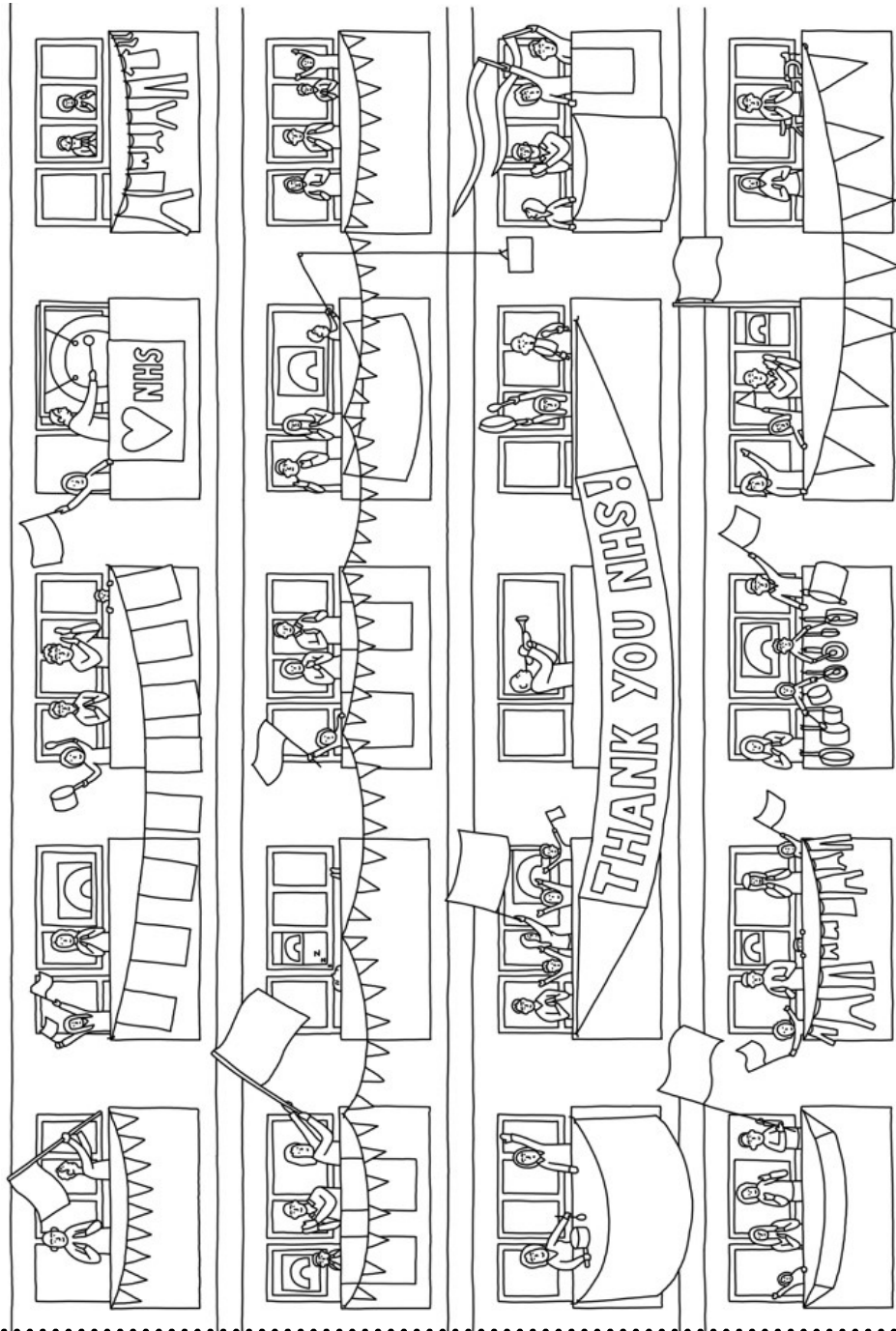
Gloucester based NAFAS member and Master Florist Katherine Kear, whose idea this was, thanks all who have already decorated their doors, and encourages the public to find creative ways to take part in this gesture of thanks.



Step by step ideas, suitable for beginners and children, can be found on the NAFAS Facebook page @NafasFlowers and also Katherine Kear's Facebook page @KatherineKearFlowers. A 'How to' video is available on the nafasflowers YouTube channel.

Thank you to Helen Smith for creating one already for our church door.

Thank You NHS - a page to colour in



'Prayer is not only our Greatest Privilege, but also Our Greatest Source of Power'

When I realised how massive the Coronavirus crisis was I felt I didn't know where to begin to pray. So when I saw the following article from Tearfund I decided to share it with others who might also feel overwhelmed by the crisis as we fully realise the effect it is having and will continue to have throughout our world.

It can be difficult to know where to start when praying for a crisis as large as coronavirus. But as Tearfund Ambassador and founder of 24/7 Prayer Pete Greig says: 'I am convinced that prayer is not only our greatest privilege, but also our greatest source of power.'

*Our God is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. So Tearfund's created a **Coronavirus Prayer Guide** to help us bring everything before God using the acronym PRAY (praise, reflect, ask, yield). Here's how it can be used so we can pray together during this time.*

Praise

Listen to, or sing, a song of worship to help you focus on God and become aware of his presence.

Reflect

To help build our faith, we reflect on the nature of the one to whom we pray:

- *We give thanks that God is enthroned in the heavens and yet is close to the poor and broken hearted. (Psalm 103:19, Psalm 34:18)*
- *We give thanks that God hears and responds to our prayers. (Psalm 145:18, Matthew 7:11)*

Ask

For many families in poorer countries, being in lockdown means no longer being able to earn enough to feed your children. In places where malnutrition is already a problem, even more people are going hungry and face the risk of starvation – like the 15,000 Venezuelan refugee families in Barranquilla, Colombia.

As Tearfund delivers emergency food and supplies to the most vulnerable communities, ask for God's provision for families in need.



Millions of people around the world who may get very ill from coronavirus will have no access to healthcare. People in rural villages might have miles to walk to the nearest clinic. Equipment, such as ventilators, is scarce – even in the larger hospitals. In South Sudan there are only four ventilators for a population of 11 million people.

Tearfund has created resources containing life-saving health advice, including crucial hygiene practices, to limit the spread of the virus. We're sharing these with communities around the world. Ask God to protect countries where there is a lack of basic healthcare. Pray for governments to release funds to help these countries tackle coronavirus.

Yield: please pray

Lord, show me how you would have me show love to my local and global neighbours in this season, in both prayer and action. Amen.'

This year Spring Harvest went on line; much of the material is currently available by searching for Spring Harvest Home. Each morning Pete Greig led a Devotional. Personally I would commend them to you, as they helped me in my journey. He used the centring prayer

*As I enter prayer now,
I pause to be still,
to breathe deeply,
to re-centre my scattered senses
upon the presence of God*




Mandy McIntosh

- For more information see www.Tearfund.org
- Cards are available to order from info@fair2all.net

May's Lectionary Readings

3 May 2020	Easter 4	Acts 2:42-end, John 10:1-10
10 May 2020	Easter 5	Acts 7:55-end, John 14:1-14
17 May 2020	Easter 6	Acts 17:22-31, John 14:15-21
24 May 2020	Easter 7	Acts 1:6-14, John 17:1-11
31 May 2020	Pentecost	Acts 2:1-21, John 7:37-39



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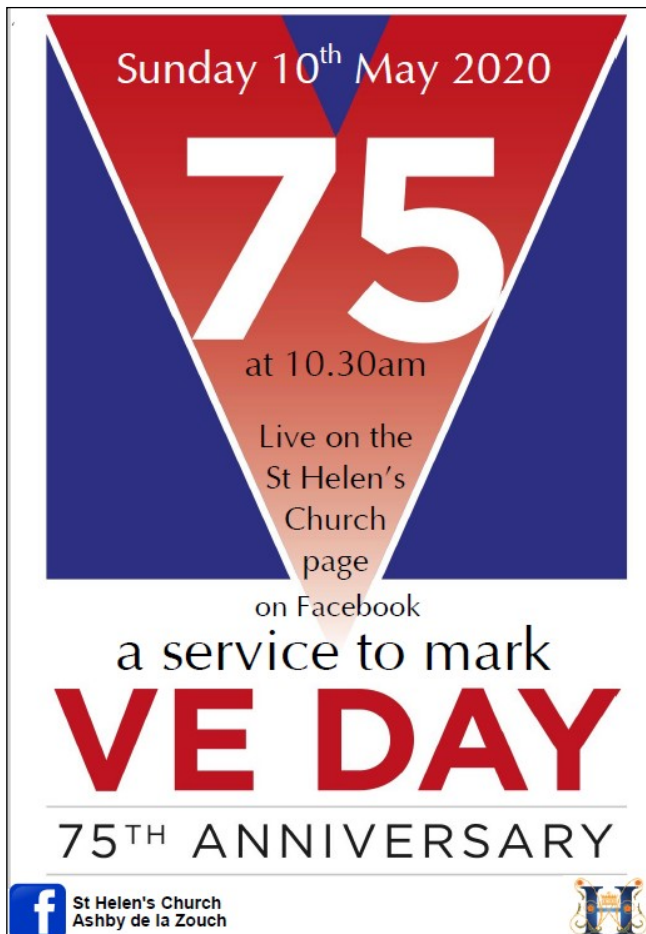
- Every morning
except Wednesday and Sunday
- Prayer for the Day -
Facebook at around 8am
- Every evening
- Night Prayer -
live on Facebook at 9pm
- Every Wednesday
- Communion -
live on Facebook at 10am
- Every Sunday
- Communion -
live on Facebook at 10.30am

Also available on website - www.sthelenashby.net

VE Day 75

Although communal events marking VE Day 75 have had to be cancelled, of course, there are still lots of ways to mark this occasion:

- Why not make some Great British Bunting as suggested by BBC Make a Difference. String it up outside your house and turn the town red, white and blue.
- Why not have a picnic in your front garden under your bunting on VE Day 75 - Friday 8th May? You could have spam sandwiches for a 1940's feel - or not!
- Why not end your picnic with a toast at 3pm? The suggested words are 'To those who gave so much – we thank you'.
- And why not tune in on Sunday 10th May on Facebook Live at 10.30am for a service to mark VE Day 75; to think about our own responses to war, and our own responsibility in securing and keeping peace.



On-line church in April

We managed to have virtual decorations for Easter, a virtual flag for the Queen's birthday, and a virtual flag for St George's day.



At Night Prayer we prayed for key workers we know, love and appreciate. Names were sent to Mary to print off, colour-coded by profession, and attach all around her tablecloth.



fair2all Under Lockdown

It was on Mother's day that I realised that as Simon, our son who lives with us, is a type 1 diabetic, my continuing to work in the shop potentially defeated the precaution his employers had taken in sending him to work at home.

My reason for continuing to be open, despite reducing sales, was the need to make sufficient profit to pay for the rent of the premises. As I have struggled to achieve this since the closure of the Royal Hotel Car Park in the autumn it had become a vain endeavour.

When it became obvious that people were not following the usual pattern of gift purchasing for Mother's Day and Easter Egg orders were cancelled with the closure of schools, I realised that there was not going to be the usual end of March upturn.

Despite the turmoil and the grieving* [see note below] I have experienced in the last month I am very grateful that I have had the opportunity to face up to the fact that fair2all in its current premises is no longer viable. I have space to consider my options. I have time to organise making the necessary repairs and change of use to one possible location. If I was still opening the shop every day, I would not.

As I write this article, I realise that, just as the church is not the building but the people, so a shop is not the premises but it is more the ethos and principals on which the business is run. The premises may change, but fair2all essentially will continue wherever it is located.

I am still finding it very hard to actually go and work in the Bath Street premises. I am trying to change window displays regularly but doing anything more is still challenging. It would be good to complete the stock check and make preparations for the move, so I wait on God to give me the strength I need to face the work that will be needed to accomplish relocation.

In the meantime I must admit I am enjoying the sunshine and working in our long neglected garden!

For information on the plants I am now selling, thanks to partnering with a garden centre, and to order any other items you would like from fair2all please email me – info@fair2all.net

Thank you for your support and prayers

Mandy McIntosh

*Grieving – I found the article 'That Discomfort you're feeling is Grief,' helpful to identify the emotion I was experiencing as grief. To read it follow this link <https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort-youre-feeling-is-grief?>



Beatitudes for a Global Pandemic

by Jayne Mandredi

Blessed are those who stay indoors,
for they have protected others.

Blessed are the unemployed and the self-employed
for their need of God is great.

Blessed are the corner shopkeepers,
for they are purveyors of scarce things.

Blessed are the delivery drivers and the postal workers,
for they are the bringers of essential things.

Blessed are the hospital workers, the ambulance crews, the doctors, the
nurses,
the care assistants and the cleaners,
for they stand between us and the grave,
and the kingdom of heaven is surely theirs.

Blessed are the checkout workers,
for they have patience and fortitude in the face of overwork and frustration.

Blessed are the refuse collectors,
for they will see God despite the mountains of waste.

Blessed are the teachers,
for they remain steadfast and constant in disturbing times.

Blessed are the church workers, the deacons, priests and bishops,
for they are a comforting presence in a hurting world
as they continue to signpost towards God.

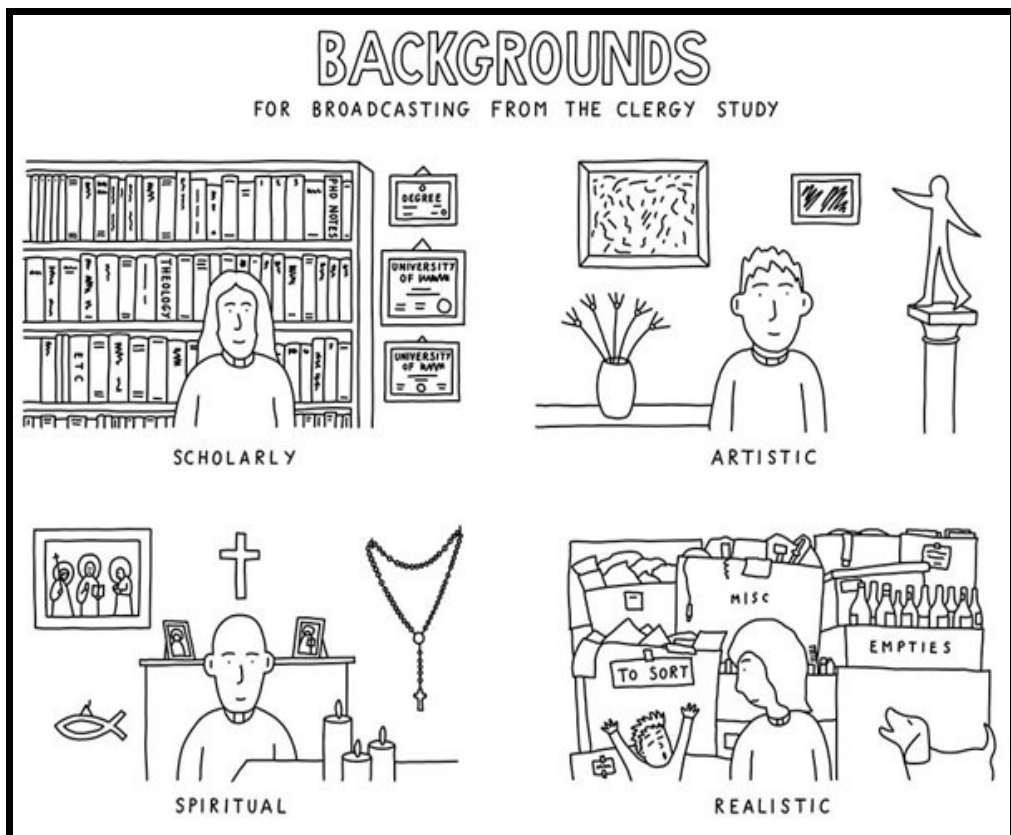
Blessed are the single parents,
for they are coping with their responsibilities alone, and there is no respite.

Blessed are those who are alone,
for they are children of God and with him they will never be lonely.

Blessed are the bereaved,
for whom the worst has already happened, they shall be comforted.
Blessed are those who are isolated with their abusers,
for one day - we pray - they will know safety.

Blessed are all during this time who have pure hearts;
who still hunger and thirst for justice;
all who work for peace and model mercy.

May you know comfort,
may you know calm,
and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all.
Amen.



Thought for the Day on BBC Radio 4's Today programme on 23rd April 2020

by Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds

I was once in the foreign ministry of another country asking hard questions of the deputy foreign minister. He was a little evasive and so we pushed harder on how a particularly challenging situation might be addressed, if not resolved. Eventually, he stood up, banged his fist on the table and said: "Sometimes it seems there is no light at the end of the tunnel. But, it is not because the light is not there; it is because the tunnel is not straight."



Fair point, I thought.

And it's not a bad image to hold onto during the current uncertainties. It is hard to spot the light when the bends shorten our vision.

But, today we celebrate the birthday – and, with remarkable symmetry, the death day – of someone who looked at his 'now' with a vision that has spanned centuries. William Shakespeare developed characters who couldn't always see around the next bend or whose light turned out to be a source of violence rather than illumination. Think, for example, of Macbeth whose "vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself" blinds him to the tragedy he has already set in train.

But, Shakespeare was a genius at imparting wisdom subversively. He never dumps moralising aphorisms on his audience. Rather, he lets the drama roll on, the language surprise, and the characters reflect back to the audience the truths about human nature and society that sometimes are uncomfortable to acknowledge. And he often does this while making us laugh.

Which makes Shakespeare a man for the moment. Steeped in the language of the Bible, he delved into the messy realities of human motivation and choices. His characters are never one-dimensional. And they pose questions four hundred years later that are pertinent as we look

now to the post-pandemic future. Which motivations are noble and need to be held onto as we shape a different future? How, as the Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures illustrates, might we as a society not lose sight of the gains and gifts this crisis has offered: togetherness, social solidarity, care for the marginalised, self-sacrifice, valuing people and jobs differently?

None of this is abstract. It invites a conversation – an argument, even – about how we want to be. I remember a business leader once telling me that the most important person in his business was the cleaner who had his office ready for him every morning. I asked if the cleaner's remuneration reflected this value, but got no answer.

So, as some parts of the world now enter the maelstrom of infection and others think about emerging from the worst experience, the light at the end of the tunnel invites both hopefulness and realism about the nature of the task ahead.



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Please hold Helen, Vernon, Katie, Kate and their families in your prayers at this time, laid off under the government's "furloughed workers" scheme.

Please pray for the young people who usually come to their groups or whom they coach / mentor, that they will know they are not alone.

Please pray for the future of AYFC when they can return to the work that Christ has called them to.





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Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Sadly, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mothers' Union events in May, and for the foreseeable future, are cancelled or postponed.

On March 25th, St Helen's MU was due to host the Deanery Lady Day service, always a special occasion when branch banners are carried and presented in church. Sadly, this was cancelled due to the current restrictions, but I thought I would write a little about the significance of Lady Day to the Mothers' Union organisation.

A recommendation to observe Lady Day, the Feast of the Annunciation, as a special day of prayer and thanksgiving, has been part of our constitution since 1897, but took some time to be adopted across the membership. However, by 1909, the annual report stated that Lady Day had been almost universally recognised as a special day of intercession and thanksgiving and 'many bishops' had held special services in their cathedrals to mark the day. Nowadays, Lady Day is celebrated in many different ways in the 84 countries where there are MU members, and services often include enrolment of new members.

The Annunciation was about listening and responding to God. Between 2017 and 2019, Mothers' Union launched a global listening process, MULOA (Mothers Union Listens, Observes and Acts), seeking to listen to and respond to God's plans for our service going forward. Mary's faith and obedience to God's call to bear His Son affected all generations around the world. The faith and obedience of our founder, Mary Sumner, has led to Mothers' Union sharing the love of Jesus Christ for generations, throughout the world.

Even though we are now in May, the following prayer for Lady Day feels relevant to us all in our present circumstances of lockdown and isolation:

O Lord Jesus Christ
give us, we pray,
the graces of Mary;
faith, patience,
ready obedience,
thankfulness
and courage.
Amen.

Beryl Stephens

How the Choir does Sundays

It was all so easy a short while ago. Everyone would turn up, we'd practise, put on our robes, sing/play the service, drink coffee, eat biscuits, and go home for lunch. That was then.

This is now – once the music choices have been made the technological fun begins. In our household, Holly uses the study where our PC lives for her on-line teaching every morning and Jill uses the laptop in a bedroom for church admin. So, I set up my 'recording studio', with my Dictaphone, Simon Starkey's condenser microphone, in the sitting room. It's there that the digital piano, which has a couple of pipe organ sounds available, now lives. The acoustic (real) piano is there too, and it is where I record the hymns, anthems, psalms and organ voluntaries ahead of each Sunday's service.

Occasionally all I have to do is to record myself singing and playing a hymn ... but it's usually a lot more complex:

1. Work out the best key in which to record the hymns – when we're all together in church we can often sing the higher notes more easily than when we're singing by ourselves in our own rooms at home – therefore the lower the better.
2. Work out which members of the choral quartet will be singing which verses
3. Attempt to record the piano/organ accompaniment and to add my own vocal line. This often takes three or four takes. I can play the wrong notes (quite easily obviously), and also sing the wrong words, or forget to switch on the microphone. Then there is the postie or delivery person ringing the doorbell to announce the arrival of Holly's latest parcel. (I have kept one or two choice outtakes for later publication.
4. Take control of the laptop from Mrs C, and upload the files, deleting half of them. These files are converted from WMA to MP3 files which are forwarded electronically, complete with performance instructions, to the other quartet members.
5. Andy Smith adds the 'boys' or tenor part by playing the backing track I've sent and recording his own voice on a separate track.
6. Andy sends the files to Anna (one of our recently acquired soprano/trebles, who sang at three or four services at St Helen's before lockdown) who adds a soprano line in a similar way, before passing everything on to Caroline Essex.
7. The Essex household brings it all together - Caroline completes further soprano and alto parts, and Adam carries out the technical wizardry by



combining all the tracks into one ready to go file.

8. I send the completed files to Mary and Stewart who organise the music in the correct sequence for us all to enjoy on a Sunday morning.

The one thing which remains constant is that in the Chapman household we follow the service with coffee and biscuits.

I must express my appreciation of my four colleagues' valiant efforts to put all of the music together. It's time-consuming, but it's a very rewarding technical and musical achievement.

Virtual choir practices are a whole other story ...

Andrew Chapman

Virtual Choir Practice

Well it is another Thursday night in Lockdown so, having finished the washing up, it is time to take my last drops of wine in my glass and move to the spare room where my laptop and desk is.

I switch on my computer and find the Zoom icon which asks me if I want to join a meeting. I do, so I put in the ID number and hay presto a number of little faces appear all smiling in anticipation. I must remember to switch on the microphone and put a cushion on my hard chair. (I have never sat so long in front of my laptop since I was at work, so maybe a more comfortable chair is on the cards)

Now where did I put my music? Ah yes, some I have downloaded and printed off, some are still in my emails. I wonder what Andrew will get us to sing this evening, as tonight is our Zoom Choir Practice.

Firstly it is time to say hello to everyone as we all have a nosey at the rooms everyone is sitting in, some with head phones on, some using their mobile phones and some just on audio. There are always one or two (No names!) who struggle to get on and there are always the clever ones who put a background on or turn themselves upside down.

Our Director of Music soon calls us to order amongst the shouts of “you are muted” as one of us chats away but we cannot hear a thing!

Andrew then has us all doing some scales, so up and down we go all unmuted - what a racket as the time difference of just a few seconds makes a right old mess of the sound. And if that is not bad enough, Andrew always does a scale that involves counting 1, 1-2-1, 1-2-3-2-1, 1-2-3-4-3-2-1, etc. It is much easier to type it than sing it, as I always get in a mess and have to give up.

It is now time to sing something proper, so it is a mad minute or so as we struggle to find the music sheets or open up the email with the music on. We all mute ourselves but as we are using David Essex's licence (Thank you David), Caroline has the advantage that she can mute us all together if required and shut us up talking!

Andrew usually runs through the Trebles, Altos, Tenors or Bass parts first which he has recorded himself singing with the music.

It is then time for a full blown harmony version, but all muted. So strange to be singing away, not hearing the others but seeing them just open and close their mouths. You can really cheat at this and pretend that you sang every note perfectly as Andrew cannot hear you. Or course I sing perfectly every time, I think not!

After a number of musical pieces during which cups of coffee suddenly



appear as families move about in the background, or the odd glass of wine (just me!) we break to go and stand on our doorsteps to “clap for the carers” and to have a comfort break.

It is then back to the singing for the last ten minutes or so. I have to admit it is not the same and no way do I let rip at full volume as the “Management” would complain, plus of course the acoustics are not as good as being back in dear old St Helens. But there again, it is a lot worse for some people during this difficult time.

So I look forward to next Thursday to catch up with my choir friends and try to sing along with these lovely sacred pieces of music. It is so good to keep in touch and I look forward to returning to the choir stalls sometime in the future.

Hugh Milward
Dodgy Bass Singer



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Quotes for the Month

'I guess it could be argued we are all a Fresh Expression now.'

Margaret P Houston, Twitter, April 4th

'Hey, church people faithfully streaming low budget, shaky, amateur daily prayer or Sunday service from your messy house because you want to serve your church community and offer what you can to God in love: that's your perfume poured over Jesus' feet. It's beautiful.'

Revd Mark Hewerdine, Twitter, April 6th

'You'll be pleased to know that we consider both the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny to be essential workers'

New Zealand PM, Jacinda Ardern, daily press conference, April 6th

'When we can get back in, let's get in there and celebrate like it's Easter, Ascension and Whitsunday all in one.'

The Beaker Folk of Husborne Crawley, Keep the Churches Closed, April 8th

'Grace is like water – it always flows to the lowest part. That's a message that we have that the world needs.'

Philip Yancey, in conversation with J John, Facebook, April 10th

'Once this epidemic is conquered ... we cannot be content to go back to what was before as if all was normal. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, a new normal, something that links to the old but is more beautiful.'

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter Sunday sermon from his kitchen, April 12th

'This year Easter will be different for many of us ... but Easter isn't cancelled. Indeed we need Easter as much as ever.'

Her majesty the Queen's Easter message, April 12th

'Like a new flame this Good News springs up in the night ... This is a different "contagion", a message transmitted from heart to heart – for every human heart awaits this Good News. It is the contagion of hope: "Christ, my hope, is risen!'

The Pope's Easter message, April 12th

'Surely the weirdest Easter in our careers: Churches locked; congregations at home; the tech savvy amongst the clergy live streaming services from the dining room; the less tech-savvy flooding Facebook with close-ups of their nasal hair. Mea culpa.'

Revd Richard Coles, Three Vicars Talking, BBC Radio 4, April 12th

'But the joy! The joy has gloriously heightened too ... sharpened by all the hearts and thumbs up signs that flooded the Facebook feed ... In normal times, I am greatly averse to hearts and thumbs up signs. These were not normal times.'

Fiona Mountford, www.spectator.co.uk, The unexpected joy of going to church online, Apr14th

'God doesn't expect the impossible from us. He wants us to expect the impossible from Him!'

- D.L.Moody, *Christian Misfit Community on Facebook, April 18th*

'Be more goose.'

Revd Mary Gregory, St Helen's on-line, April 18th

'I'm a bit more comfortable in my own home than I am in a pew, which is, I think, designed by some 18th century back specialist who lacked business and wanted more bad backs!'

Archbishop Justin Welby on attending on-line church services, Premier Christian News, Apr24th

'Jesus wasn't always 'nice' ... I wonder whether Jesus would have passed BAP. Discuss.'

Revd Paul White, Twitter, April 27th

'Thank you for joining me for this service of compline at the end of yet another day. Don't ask me what day it is - but it is the end of it.'

Revd Stewart Betts, St Helen's on-line, April 28th

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