

RG31

The Parish Magazine of Tilehurst St Catherine & Calcot St Birinus

April 2020

This edition is available online only and will be the last during the 'lockdown'



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All details and events are correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of going to print. The P.C.C. and Editors are not necessarily in agreement with the views expressed by contributors in this magazine.

We welcome contributions of articles or letters for future issues from anyone living in, or connected with the parish. All contributions must be received by the editors by the 20th day of the month preceding the next month's issue at the latest.

Contributions may be sent to magazine@stcatherines-tilehurst.org.uk

Read your own copy of RG31 (10 issues) - 60p each issue, or £6.00 for a year's subscription. Details from the editors whose details are above.

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Cover Picture *Easter message: Christ has died, Christ is risen* Photo Stuart Poore



Rev Gill Rowell

On Grief and Celebration

Hello everyone! These are such strange - I hope that you are managing to cope. (If you need help with shopping or getting prescriptions, don't forget we have volunteers who are happy to help – contact Sonia @ sonia.ludford@gmail.com.)

Probably most of us feel a genuine discomfort and sense of awfulness with the corona virus, a sense that the world has changed. Has it changed temporarily or permanently? We don't really know. But we do know we are experiencing a real loss of connection with one another, a loss of normalcy, and a fear of the economic toll, for our own futures, and for our nation, as well as globally. I read an interesting article online recently which likened what we are going through as individuals and as a community as being similar to stages we might experience when we are grieving.

We will all respond differently to what is going on, but it is likely that we might experience at different times denial (it won't affect me), anger (why am I having to stay at home?), bargaining (OK, I will stay indoors for two weeks but after that I expect everything to be OK!), sadness (when will it all end?) and acceptance (where we figure out how best to proceed).

Of course acceptance is a good place to be in because this is where the power lies for maintaining our best mental health. So we do what we can, not what we can't. We wash our hands, we keep a safe distance from people, we communicate by phone or social media, we put our trust in God. All of us somehow need to find balance. So when we realise we are anxious about something - because we are focussing on the worst case scenario (what the article called "anticipatory grief"), that is when we must also remember the best case scenario to balance it up.

For instance, as the media focuses on the number of deaths caused by corona virus, we must remember that not everyone we love dies. When we feel our future is unknown, we must remember that history tells us we will get through, we will survive.

It is going to be a strange Easter for the church, but I think it also has the potential to be a profoundly deep and meaningful one as we consider Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross in the light of the circumstances we find ourselves in. His followers couldn't see a better future. But the resurrection teaches us, if nothing else, that God's plans are far greater than our own, that he has already begun the process of redeeming the whole world – and that God is faithful, and to be trusted.

May your Easter celebration be a profound one – and may you be able to join me and others from St Catherine's as we worship (together but alone!) online on our Facebook page or our website (details on back page).

gill



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OPENING HOURS
MON - SAT 8.30am - 5.30pm SUN 8.30am - 1p.m

Services in the Parish

Until further notice there will be no services in the St Catherine's building. But we can still worship together, this is how you can be part of the St Catherine's 'virtual church' every day.

Morning Prayer (Live-streamed)	Monday - Friday 10.00 am
Daily Thoughts	Monday - Friday approx. 4.00 pm
Tots Praise	Friday 9.00 am.
Sunday Service (Live-streamed)	Sunday 10.00 am

We are live-streaming our 'At Home' services, and also offering 'Evening Thoughts' via Facebook. To watch the live-streams or any of our previous videos on Facebook go to: www.facebook.com/st.catherines.tilehurst/

You do not need an account to view - if asked to login or join, you can click 'Not Now'. Once shown on Facebook, all our videos can be found again on our Web Site: www.stcatherines-tilehurst.org.uk

Whilst church contacts on email will get the Weekly Notices with a Gill's sermon, and can also hear it via the church Facebook page, I thought that the following additional notes on the readings for each Sunday would be useful for readers of the magazine.

Tony Bartlett, editor

Sunday 5th April - Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 118.1-2,19-29; Philippians 2.5-11; Matthew 21.1-11

Old Testament: Isaiah 50.4-9a

The prophet who sustained the weary with a word, yet at the cost of violence, insult and humiliation (vv.4-6), reminds us of the rabbi Jesus.

Why such opposition to one who brings God's word? Some of the prophet's own people would have found his message (Isaiah 49.6), that foreigners were to benefit from God's blessing, unpalatable. And Babylonian officials would hardly have welcomed his opinion that their power had had its day (Isaiah 43.14).

What sustained such a prophet? First, he taught what he learned from God; his message was the fruit of habitual listening (vv.4-5). Second, his ministry was not the outworking of his own abilities but the consequence of his confidence in God. He twice declares, 'the Lord God helps me' (vv.7,9). Jesus and Paul (Romans 8.31) were among the many who entered into his experience.

New Testament: Philippians 2.5-11

This passage may be a hymn or poem that Paul has incorporated into his letter. Without taking anything away from 'the glory of God the Father', Jesus Christ is worthy of universal acclaim, not for his authoritative teaching or compassionate healing but because 'he emptied himself...humbled himself...[and] became obedient to the point of death...on a cross' (vv.7-8).

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

We can't be sure what lies behind these words. Some suggest biblical wisdom poetry, where Wisdom (female) personifies God's wise dealings with creation (Proverbs 8; Ecclesiasticus 24; Wisdom of Solomon 7 and 8). Wisdom reaches out and 'descends' from her place beside God into the world, where she reveals God's glory in Jesus' human form (v.7). Others see a reflection of the story of Adam: Jesus' self-emptying runs counter to Adam's self-centred grasping after the very thing that God had denied him. Either way, the whole sweep of Jesus' movement that culminates in his undeserved death is utterly gracious. He gives himself away for the glory of God, who honours him before all creation. 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus' (v.5) – Paul hopes that worshippers will live the words they sing.

Gospel: Matthew 21.1-11

The Gospels give the impression that increasingly tense relationships between Jesus and the authorities form the backdrop to his last visit to Jerusalem. He sees this Passover as the stage for a decisive confrontation. His action in the Temple – its so-called 'cleansing' – was surely a flashpoint in an already volatile environment.

Jesus and his disciples arrive in Jerusalem with crowds of Passover pilgrims from all over the Jewish world. Inspired by the memory of Moses, their hearts and voices overflow with excitement and hope as they prepare to enact the Passover as their story of liberation. The inevitable strains on law and order draw in extra soldiers to keep the peace, which only serves to heighten the pilgrims' hopes for freedom. They enter the city in what we would see as more of a 'demo' or 'march' than a pilgrimage walk, singing the Passover psalms (Psalms 115–118), from which the words in verse 9 are drawn. Despite our assumptions, only John 12.13 has the crowd waving palm branches (as their ancestors did when they cleansed the Temple two centuries earlier – see 2 Maccabees 10). Here the people put cloaks and branches on the road: garments to greet a king (2 Kings 9.13) and branches fit for a festival of liberation (Leviticus 23.39-43; 1 Maccabees 13.51).

Jesus' staged entry is performance art in true prophetic style. Matthew's mention of a donkey and a colt (other Gospels have only a donkey) shows how much his account is shaped by his reading of Zechariah 9.9 alongside Isaiah 62.11; it is the latest in the series of fulfilment quotations that structure his narrative. By the choice of a donkey, Jesus contrasts himself with kings and generals who preferred horses and chariots. It is a moment when Jesus might well have been tempted to act differently – perhaps with the hope of becoming the political leader that so many were hoping for. Instead he acts out his vision of truly liberating leadership, entering the city of peace as a humble peacemaker, hungry only for righteousness and mercy (Matthew 5.3-12).

The links between the readings

The reading from Isaiah reminds us that a prophet's vocation is inevitably costly, never more so than in the case of Jesus, says the hymn in Philippians. Jesus' humiliating death is full of grace, and according to Matthew's account of his entry into Jerusalem a sure sign of God's way of governing the world.

(Continued on page 24)

STAYING AT HOME

NAME: _____

DRAW / COLOUR / FILL IN THE GAPS

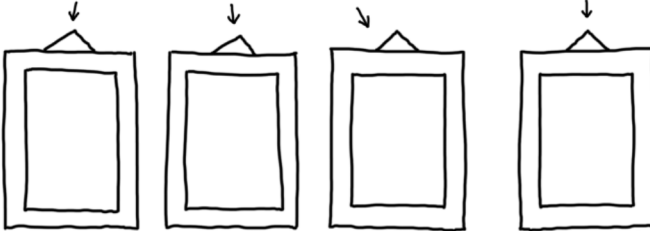
SHOE SIZE: ☐



THE PEOPLE IN MY HOUSE

PETS

← COLORING



PEOPLE I'M MISSING SLIGHTLY
↓

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FUN ACTIVITIES
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THIS WEEK



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- ② _____
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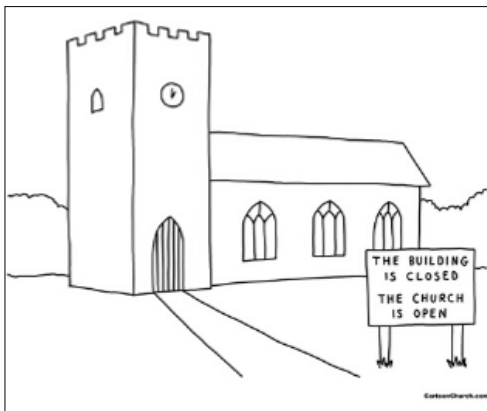
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Puzzle page

I am grateful to Neil Somerville for these puzzles, answers on page 30 - Tony Bartlett

BETWEEN THE LINES

A word can be inserted in the blank line so that, reading downward, seven three-letter words are formed. What word is hidden between the lines?

F	T	A	S	L	O
N	P	K	Y	T	E

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

The English language contains many weird and wonderful words. Which is the correct definition of each of the following?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 Kenspeckle</p> <p>a) Be forgetful</p> <p>b) Mildew</p> <p>c) Conspicuous</p> | <p>3 Pilliver</p> <p>a) Pillowcase</p> <p>b) A thief</p> <p>c) Argument</p> |
| <p>2 Agowilt</p> <p>a) Sudden fear</p> <p>b) Feeling faint</p> <p>c) Water source</p> | <p>4 Gilly-gaupus</p> <p>a) Silly predicament</p> <p>b) Awkward person</p> <p>c) Make a fuss</p> |

MYSTERY SUDOKU

E				A				R
	I	H			T			
T	R		L					
		R		L	E			
L								T
			M	C		E		
					C		E	L
			A			C	T	
R				H				M

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the letters ACEHILMRT in some order. One row or column contains a 7-letter word and something many enjoy. What is it?

A PERPLEXING POSER

While out enjoying a stroll two parishioners crossed a bridge. As they did so they observed a boat full of people. Yet on the boat was not a single person. How come?

From the 'Parish Pump'

29th April - Catherine of Siena or how to survive in a large family

Catherine of Siena, who was born 1347, should be the patron saint of anyone who has grown up in a large family, and mastered the two vital skills for survival: how to stand up for yourself, and how to make peace with others.

Catherine had siblings! At least 19 of them. Her father was a Sienese dyer, and Catherine was the youngest. Her parents wanted her to marry, but Catherine did not. She became a nun instead, a member of the Dominican Third Order.

Perhaps after sharing a house with at least 22 people, Catherine wanted some peace and quiet: in any case she spent six years in solitude, giving herself to prayer and penance. Then she moved back into the world, through nursing the local sick people, and then beginning to travel.

Catherine travelled frequently, with a number of her 'disciples' – a mix of Dominicans and Augustinians, and even an English Friar. Wherever they went, people listened to their proclamation of the total love of God through Jesus Christ, and their calls to reform and repent. There were some spectacular conversions.

Catherine could not write, but soon someone else was taking down her 'Dialogue' by dictation – it ran to 383 letters. Catherine's thoughts centred on Christ crucified, the supreme sign of God's love for man.

The quality of these letters made them widely read for years to come.

A godly woman who could lead and teach.... soon new opportunities presented themselves: in the last five years of her life, Catherine found herself involved in the politics of both State and Church.

This included trying to make peace during the Great Schism in the Church after 1378, when Pope Gregory XI died, and two new popes – bitter rivals – claimed the papacy.

Catherine wore herself out in trying to promote peace, had a stroke on 21 April 1380, and died eight days later. (A warning to ecumenists everywhere?!)

Catherine soon became Siena's principal saint, loved for her writings and her example of godliness and self-sacrificing love.

Her house and an early portrait survive at Siena, and her memory lives on today: she was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970, nearly 600 years after her death

Church minister was inspiration behind 'Great Escape'

A Church of Scotland minister nicknamed 'Padre Mac' has been named as the inspiration behind the Great Escape.

The Revd Professor Murdo Ewen Macdonald's "fiery sermons" motivated the famous breakout of a German Prisoner of War camp in March 1944, according to an author.

Dr Linda Barker said the Great Escape is often heralded as a plan masterminded by English officers, and the theme tune

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

to the 1963 film of the same name is sung by England football fans.

The theologian has been given credit for a minor role in hiding tunnel sand in the famous break-out over the course of a year. However, the historian claims his influence was possibly far more significant, as he had previously made his own escape while in transit to a PoW camp.

He was a chaplain for the men of Stalag Luft III, including RAF Squadron Leader Roger Bushell, who has always been known as the mastermind of the Great Escape.

Dr Parker is the author of "Nearer My God to Thee: Airborne Chaplains in the

Second World War," which examines the full story of padres who accompanied the airborne forces to all theatres of war between 1942-1945.

"Murdo Ewen Macdonald, known as Padre Mac, may have been the 'inspiration that led to many great escapes' during the Second World War," she said. "He was moved to Stalag Luft III, where the Great Escape would take place in March 1944.

Here, he befriended Roger Bushell, and Harry 'Wings' Day, both instigators and organisers of the Great Escape.

"As a chaplain, he would have had access to all the troops and would have been able to speak with them, in confidence, to motivate them with the story of his own escape attempt."

From Bishop Steven's Blog

We are undoubtedly living through one of the greatest crises of our lives. The Archbishops recently announced that, following government advice, "public worship will have to stop for a season. Our usual pattern of Sunday services and other midweek gatherings must be put on hold.

Given the scale of the global pandemic, the risks to public health and the advice from government this is the only possible course of action. All of us will need to follow it.

However this will be painful and difficult news for the whole Church. In a time when our every instinct is to draw together in worship and fellowship, to comfort one another and reach out to others, we must remain physically distanced. Many will need to be isolated for their own protection or for the sake of their families.

We do not know how long this situation will endure but an initial time frame of at least three months seems likely and it may well be longer. It is all deeply painful.

We should expect that many people, including ourselves, will be in shock over the next few days at the speed of the escalation of the crisis, the economic difficulties, the changes to familiar patterns and the loss of familiar and deeply valued patterns of worship.

We all respond in different ways to shock and trauma and difficult news. Some are adjusting rapidly. Others will find it difficult to believe and take in. Some will be angry. Some will want to argue and bargain and find ways around the advice. Others will channel their

(Continued on page 12)

Jesus' appearances after His Resurrection

The following list of witnesses may help you put all those references in order....

Mary Magdalene	Mark 16:9-11; John 20:10-18
Other women at the tomb	Matthew 28:8-10
Peter in Jerusalem	Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5
The two travellers on the road	Mark 16:12,13
10 disciples behind closed doors	Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25
11 disciples WITH Thomas	John 20:26-31; 1 Corinthians 15:5
7 disciples while fishing	John 21:1-14
11 disciples on the mountain	Matthew 28:16-20
A crowd of 500	1 Corinthians 15:6
Jesus' brother – James	1 Corinthians 15:7
Those who saw the Ascension	Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8

(Continued from page 11)

energies into rebuilding hope and offering practical suggestions.

Clergy, chaplains, lay ministers and churchwardens will be on the front line in explaining the decisions and the new arrangements and helping and supporting others. This will not be easy. When we are in shock, we can only take in so much information at any one time. There is a danger of being overwhelmed.

Together we will need to continue to build up the Church, to help care for God's world and to care for one another in the coming weeks and months. It won't be possible to put new systems in place all at once.

We will need patience with ourselves and others and great kindness in all our communication. But by the grace of God, we will continue to be a Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world even in the midst of this most difficult of times.

Peter's Poem

This was written by a friend who has recently died. It was read at his funeral and I would like to share it with you.
Rosemary Cunningham

It is not that far
around to the other side
of this small planet.

Different cultures
are a blessing, not a curse
to this small planet.

We're close relatives,
we found unexpectedly,
"It's a small planet!"

Enjoy and care for
everything that comes your way
from this small planet.

Be just, love mercy,
and walk humbly with your God
on this small planet.

Not here for ever,
There's a greater place to be
than this small planet.

Peter Dixon

The transfiguration rap.

NB: this should be read more in the style of Benjamin Zephaniah or John Hegley rather than Gerard Manley Hopkins.

A normal day's outing – up a mountain, as you do.
There were 12 to choose from, but He only took a few.
Up there they witnessed an extreme event -
Peter jumping in quickly – offering to build a tent.

There was fear and overwhelmed-ness
curiosity, excitement, too
as Jesus was transfigured and changed their entire view –
not only from the mountain top
but about who He really was –
the embodiment of history and prophecy that said so much -
about the ineffable God – with the human touch.

Katrina Yates



St Catherine's Gardening Club



Hello everyone! I'm typing this on the first day of my "confinement"! It sounds like I'm having a baby doesn't it? But I'm over 70 so taking the government advice seriously.

However, I'm thinking of going up to the church to do a bit of gardening on my own when the weather is nice. That will be fine so long as I keep 2 metres away from anyone else up there!

Before this recent edict, we had started to get busy in the garden, weeding and tidying. Hazel's bed in the corner of the grass beyond the top car park is coming along wonderfully, and repaying all her hard work.

Now we have pruned the roses, they need feeding. So we have been "muck spreading!", spreading manure over the soil around them, and digging it in gently so as to avoid disturbing their roots.

We also put this manure soil improver all along the fence between the clematis, and hope that this will be good for them as well as anything we plant along there later in the year.

I was very thankful to have Richard Child's help in doing this. Still waiting for similar attention is the East facing buttress bed, where we hope to plant some colourful bedding in a few months' time.

Paddy brought up his own mower last Saturday morning and set it as high as possible and cut the grass beyond the top car park. It does look a lot better as it was growing so long after it rained and rained and rained and rained. We should be grateful we're on a hill.



Shirley and Chris had a grand turn out of the shed last week and removed anything not useful, making it very much more accessible with more space to store gardening tools.

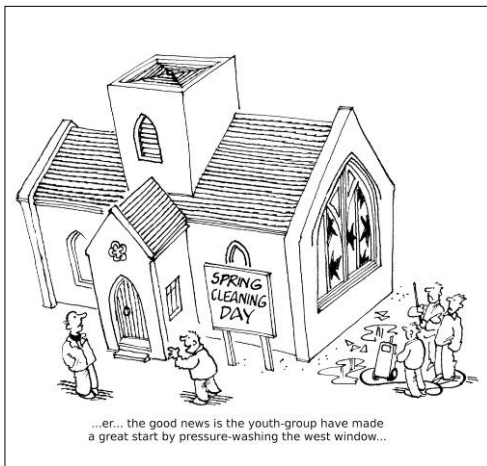
With regard to our future plans in a time of so much uncertainty we must place our trust in our faithful God. Let's pray that Tilehurst Garden Festival and our Flower Festival do not have to be postponed.

Now is sadly not the time to invite you to come and join our little team. However, we hope you are able to enjoy your own gardens, or at least enjoy strolling around admiring other people's front gardens! May the beauty of God's creation lift your spirits and give you hope.

Jo Day

"It was such a pleasure to sink one's hands into the warm earth, to feel at one's fingertips the possibilities of the new season."

Kate Morton



This too shall pass



Our world is shaking and fear is mounting globally. Floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, wild fires, locusts, wars, extreme temperatures and on it goes. Now we have a deadly pandemic pestilence namely COVID19 to contend with.

With all the advancements we as humans think we have made, we are powerless to stop these relentless disasters.

We need God, although many will deny this. However, when our self reliance fails, some turn to prayers of desperation; pleading for God's forgiveness and mercy. Sadly we usually do this as a last resort.

Followers of Jesus though, trust in God's promises and gain some release from fear. True freedom from fear consists of willingly committing our daily lives into God's hands.

We are Jesus' sheep and He knows how to protect His flock. Trusting ourselves into God's care is an act of faith. If we place ourselves completely under his power, wisdom and mercy,

He promises to protect and shelter us from all evil. In times like these, God

can work miracles if we only ask earnestly in prayer.

Today, as troubles plough on we have two choices. We can either pray, or we can try to save ourselves, which is impossible when everything is shaking!

Almighty Father

We pray against fear, knowing that You have not given us a spirit of fear.

We pray for wisdom for our governments, leaders and decision makers.

We pray for the safety of our families, our friends, neighbours, community, country and world.

We pray protection for the emergency services, doctors, nurses, carers, volunteers and good neighbours as they try to help those in need.

We pray that You will cease the corona virus worldwide and that You will heal everyone who is affected by it.

We pray your blessings on all those You are calling home at this time.

In the name of Jesus Amen

2 Chronicles 7:14

"If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Lorraine Roberts

March

This was held on 11th March when Gill told us about her Ethiopian Pilgrimage when she went with a group led by Bishop Andrew to Ethiopia in January 2019.

The meeting opened with Jean thanking Valerie Forrow for her hard work in helping to organise the Womens' World Day of Prayer. Valerie was presented with a plant.

Gill then enrolled Ella Canning into the MU which was a happy occasion for us all!



Gill then told us about her trip. She had many interesting slides to give us a picture of life in Ethiopia.

There is much poverty but also friendliness, great faith, beautiful churches and outstanding scenery.

The trip began with a visit to the National Museum to see the remains of Lucy which were discovered in 1974. Lucy is one of the oldest humans and she dates from over three million years ago.

The group spent some time in Lalibela where there are eleven cave churches. These are carved out of rock and their building is attributed to King Lalibela who set out in the twelfth century to build a New Jerusalem.

Many of the churches are decorated with eggs as a sign of the Resurrection. The group also visited a Mosque which was opened specially for the group to see. Other symbols of worship include drums and prayer sticks. The group began every day with prayer.

One specially sacred site contains an edition of the 10 Commandments which may be the Ark of the Covenant although there is some doubt about this. It is guarded by a celibate priest.

The group saw a funeral, a wedding and a huge baptism ceremony which was attended by many. Water was gathered in a cross shaped pool and then hosed on to those watching.

The group were lucky enough to see camels, hippos, oxen, pelicans and an eagle and all left Ethiopia with happy memories of a wonderful experience.

Rosemary Cunningham

Mothers' Union Prayer Chain—Prayer in Emergencies

A call to one of the following numbers will start a chain of prayer straight away.

Valerie Forrow ☎ 0118 942 9319

Evelyn Bartlett ☎ 0118 967 8659

Lorraine Roberts ☎ 0118 942 6189

Hilary Smee ☎ 0118 941 2895

Jo Day ☎ 0118 942 1481

Shirley Horsnell 📞 07872 315 506



Cornwell Charity Crafts

We sell handmade gifts to support an annually named charity. We reinvest the cost of materials and donate our time and profits. Caroline O'Sullivan & Valerie Poore

Cornwell Charity Crafts have been raising money for charity for quite a few years now. For most of those years, the annual charity has been Send a Cow. Whilst Caroline & I are the 'names on the card' so to speak, there are many other people who have made crafts and staffed our stalls over the years.

We think that Send a Cow is quite special, so I thought I'd share a little of its back ground to show you why.

Send a Cow was set up by a group of Christian dairy farmers from the UK in 1988. Despite the name, they no longer send cows from the UK, instead they source them locally. In fact, providing livestock is just a tiny part of what they do. Over their 30 year history, they've transformed the lives of 2 million people in Africa. They focus on farming and families, resulting in confident people in control of their own land and of their own futures.

They focus on training; ensuring families have the skills they need to grow food and earn an income. They've been working on the ground with rural African communities and have established country programmes in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia.

So in 2020 Cornwell Charity Crafts will be raising money for Rain Water Harvesting. Having enough water for both crops and family use can be an issue for African

farmers, particularly as weather patterns have become more uncertain.



Send a Cow support families by teaching the skills to build and maintain a rainwater catchment tank. These clever storage areas capture rainwater runoff, usually from the roof of the house, and direct it into the tank. This means that no matter when the rainy season comes, water is available. Each Rain Water Harvesting costs £25.

Clearly, due to the current situation we have no planned sales. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible!

As always, we do our best to fulfil special requests!

Watch out for new products on our Facebook page, coming soon!

Valerie Poore.
val@thepoorehouse.org.uk

Tilehurst Triangle WI



Since our last report, much has changed in the world. As we can no longer meet in person for our WI meetings, walks, book club or our new singing group, to support our members we are producing a weekly newsletter. It is a light hearted publication with photos, interesting facts, puzzles and a 'What are you Doing?' section where members can send in information about how they are spending their time at home. Many are gardening, crafting, decluttering, decorating and learning new skills.

Before we were told to 'Stay at Home', the walkers had a lovely walk at Cliveden through the grounds, woods and along The Thames. We hope our photos bring some spring cheer in this uncertain world.

We will miss our monthly 'Cuppa and a Chat' at Cafe Siena and the warm welcome we receive from Karen and her team. Keep safe everyone.

Tilehurst Triangle WI



With Every Gift, We Stop This Climate Crisis

Christian Aid Week – 10th to 16th May



Our planet is changing, but some people are feeling the effects of this more than others. Due to the climate crisis, droughts are now more frequent and more intense, and one place that has experienced this is Kenya.

In Kitui, eastern Kenya, eight out of ten people depend on rain to grow crops. Without water, staple crops like maize and beans wither up and die. People can't grow food, which means they can't earn a living, and go hungry.

Drought forces people to walk further and further to collect water. This daily burden robs them of the chance to farm and grow food for their families. Elderly women and children are especially vulnerable on these dangerous and exhausting journeys.

Strength and power - Florence's Story

What happens when the search for water does not consume people's lives? We can find out by meeting Florence: a woman who has transformed her life with access to a dam full of water.

A few years ago, Florence's husband died, leaving her a widow. At that time, she had no water to grow crops. She had to walk for hours to collect water. 'Life was miserable,' she told us.

Florence could easily have been defeated. But things changed when Christian Aid's local faith-based partner, Anglican Development Services – Eastern (ADSE), worked with her community to build a dam, just 30 minutes from Florence's house.



Florence also uses the dam to keep honey bees: the microclimate of plants created by the dam means the bees don't need to search long distances for nectar. She sells the rich, golden honey at the market.

Smiling brightly, she says: 'I have been sustained by the earth dam. My life has changed. I am very happy. You can see it in my face: my face is shining. I have strength and power.'

Florence is a generous woman of faith. She knows others are struggling to cope with the drought, and hopes they will experience the same blessings she has received: 'I am thankful to people who have donated to build this earth dam. I am praying God will increase their giving.'

This year, our lives have been turned upside down by the Coronavirus pandemic, but the struggle for water and food is still the same for Florence and her family. We had various fundraising events planned for May, such as another Big Brekkie and a quiz, but they have had to be postponed.

We are currently looking at online ways of raising money because we cannot just tell Florence and the people of Kenya

(Continued on page 22)

Spring Harvest 2020



**SPRING
HARVEST
Home**



It came as no surprise when this year's Spring Harvest, a mass gathering of Christians at three locations over two different weeks, was cancelled.

Instead, they announced the launch of Spring Harvest Home, available online via YouTube from April 13th to 17th. Their statement said ...

"We are all disappointed that we can't join together as one Spring Harvest family this year, but the team here have been working really hard to adapt and deliver the heart of Spring Harvest... direct to your living room!

Spring Harvest Home is a completely free online conference programme with content suitable for everyone in the family. Lined up for the week after Easter, we have some amazing material all built around the 2020 theme of "Unleashed – The Acts Church Today". Never has there been a more appropriate time for us to gather together as a community to worship, learn, laugh and pray together.

Big Start, morning Bible teaching, live worship, specialist seminars and workshops and some light-hearted sofa viewing will be available right through the day. Spring Harvest Home will be available online through YouTube, so go to YouTube.com and search for 'Spring Harvest'. You can then subscribe to the Spring Harvest channel to make sure you don't miss this unique Spring Harvest Home week.

It's our prayer to serve everyone who tunes in, helping us all to encounter God, be inspired by the good news of Jesus this Easter, and to see all of us, our communities and our culture, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Encourage your friends, family, neighbours and churches to also connect with Spring Harvest Home online, for what we believe will be a truly unique time of being quality Church together!

See you soon at Spring Harvest Home!"

Stuart Poore

The latest version

Science can seem tangled. (Yes, I've said that before!) Even experts struggle. But it's not too bad: it can even be amusing.

Travel east without ever turning, but still find you've arrived back home? "CRAZY IDEA!" - until light dawned and our Earth "became round". Don't worry about today's "crazy ideas". Wait prayerfully; more light may dawn?

Once, "information" just came and went in my head. Now, I hear of tougher "information", a part of the Universe. (I warned you! Join the puzzled people's club!) Try this. When we've hot stuff and cold stuff, the difference can power engines, do useful work. This normally needs fuel like coal or petrol. Can we make FREE ENERGY? In this famous thought experiment, "Maxwell's demon" tries to make some for us.

Imagine a box: it has a central partition with a little flap. Our demon shuts the flap, or opens it to let a molecule go through. Air molecules' speeds vary.

The demon lets FASTER molecules go through to the left, and SLOWER ones through to the right. The left-hand air gets hotter: the right-hand air gets cooler! FREE POWER!

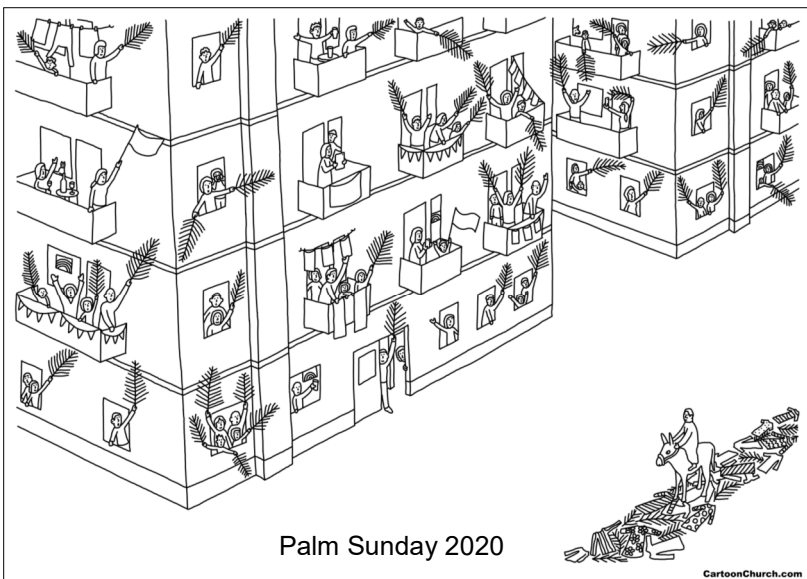
'Fraid not. Information about speeds is needed. In

today's weird science this "information" has a COST. So NO free power!

Today, "information", power, and many other things, are linked together. (Relax, like I told you!) "Knowledge is power" was once human. Now it's "universal"? Better sack that poor demon. But each tiny atom in our huge universe holds tons of "information"! A Being who created such a HUGE amount of information - or power! - and organized it all - oh, that is AWESOME!!

Some scientists do believe in such a One. Are you frightened? A human dictator with all this incredible power would be TERRIFYING! But a powerful (loving!) "Father" ... praise be, that's not the same. Some quotes from the Old Testament do seem terrifying, but today's science keeps reminding me that I should really, really appreciate the good news in our wonderful New Testament.

Phil French



Palm Sunday 2020

Forgive them and release yourself



'WHEN YOU STAND PRAYING, IF YOU HOLD ANYTHING AGAINST ANYONE, FORGIVE THEM.' MARK 11:25 NIV (2011 EDITION)

When someone hurts us, our natural response is to either hurt them back or hope they will suffer for what they have done to us. Yet as redeemed children of God, we know this is the wrong response. That is when we discover forgiving someone doesn't come naturally or easily; it requires supernatural grace on our part. And where do we get that? Through prayer!

Jesus said, 'When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.' Recalling God's grace towards you leaves you no choice but to extend that same grace towards someone who hurts you.

Someone once said, 'Forgiveness is a decision to set a prisoner free, and then discovering that the prisoner is you.' So if you have a desire to forgive someone, get excited; the Holy Spirit has already done half the job.

To complete the other half, humble yourself and pray: 'Father, I turn from every desire I have to avenge this wrong. You saw the situation before it happened, and in Your infinite wisdom You allowed it to be so. Your Word says that "all things work together for (my) good" (Romans 8:28 KJV), so from this moment on, with the help of Your Holy Spirit, I forgive them. I will not dwell on the situation but will declare Your Word instead.'

That's called 'a prayer of release'. And you're not just releasing your offender; you're releasing and repositioning yourself to walk in God's blessing. That's why you must forgive them!

This thought is taken from 'The Word for Today', Daily Bible reading notes produced quarterly by UCB (United Christian Broadcasters Ltd) PO Box 255, Stoke on Trent, ST4 8YY. If you would like to receive these free notes or those aimed at Secondary School age, please ask Evelyn Bartlett ☎ 0118 967 8659 who is our church rep for UCB.

(Continued from page 19)

that we have not been able to do anything for them this year because of the virus. Please think about what you can donate and we will tell you how to do it safely in next month's edition. Your gift could help a community in the following ways:

£4.40 could teach ten farmers like Florence how to plant drought-tolerant crops that can survive the drought.

£10 could buy a tap at a water point which will be installed at an earth dam, making it easier for people like Florence to fetch water.

£1,560 could pay for all the materials, tools and equipment to build an earth dam.

Every pound raised, every prayer said, every action taken - are expressions of our Christian love and compassion, of our belief that all life is equal and precious in the sight of God.

Together, we stop this climate crisis: and give brave, hard-working women like Florence the chance to thrive.

Join us this Christian Aid Week, even if it's only via the website. Further details can be found at caweek.org

Richard Canning
Tilehurst Local Organiser

On how to run your notice board



The Rectory,
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Your decision to place a notice board outside your church seems a good one – and its design in blue plastic with luminous red detachable letters seems entirely in keeping with the aesthetics of your building. Make sure that it is lockable, however, as an innocent notice saying ‘all are welcome’ may be modified by a devotee of anagrams to say something far less polite by the following day.

We recently replaced ours, which had disappeared shortly before last bonfire night. That the Scouts’ bonfire had a board which closely resembled our old one in its centre was, I am sure, a complete coincidence. The Venture Scouts’ collective smirk during the following week’s Parade Service did give one pause for thought, and the Cubs’ collapse into helpless laughter at the chorus ‘So light up the fire and let the flames burn’ only increased suspicion.

On reflection, you may not have been wise to use your notice board to tell everyone your holiday dates. Certainly, various local burglars were tripping over each other inside the vicarage while you were away. However, the note the last one left you, saying that next time he broke in, he would bring you something, since you had so little left, was quite touching.

Inevitably, now that your church has a notice board, there will be open warfare over who is allowed to display notices on it. Will the Slimmers Club be seen as biblical? Why is the Ladies Guild notice twice as large as all the others? And do remember that while everyone will want space to display their notices, no one will ever remove them once the event is over. Plaintive announcements of Christmas parties in April or of Summer Fetes in November only serve to take people down memory lane.

Here’s the best way to manage a notice board: create that panacea for all problems: a sub-committee. These poor people only ever exist in order to get the clergy out of tight corners and to make sure that matters are discussed at such inordinate length that every issue eventually dies a natural death. And if even that fails, you could have a quiet word with our Scouts before next year’s bonfire night.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

(Continued from page 6)

Sunday 12th April - Easter Day

Jeremiah 31.1-6; Matthew 28.1-10; Acts 10.34-43; Psalm 118.1-2,14-24

Old Testament Jeremiah 31.1-6

The prophet anticipates the restoration of all Israel after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC and the subsequent exile in Babylon.

The renewal of Israel's covenant relationship with God (v.1; cf. Leviticus 26.12) is grounded in God's loving faithfulness, which had guided his people from the time of the Exodus (vv.2-3). The prophet is confident that Israel's rebuilding will bring peace (signalled by dancing in verse 4), prosperity and security enough for planters to enjoy the fruit of their labours (v.5). The joy expressed in the Passover's praise psalms (Psalms 115-118) will overflow from worship in the Temple, now restored as the shrine for the formerly divided nations of Ephraim and Judah.

Gospel Matthew 28.1-10

The differences in the four evangelists' resurrection accounts suggest a living rather than static tradition. In Matthew, the women come early to 'see the tomb' (v.1) rather than to anoint Jesus' body. Matthew adds the earthquake and the descent of the angel who rolled back the stone and overwhelmed the guards. This is his more pictorial way of adding colour to the climax of Peter's thumbnail sketch: 'God raised him on the third day'.

Matthew clarifies the ambiguity in Mark's shorter account, where the women run away terrified, silenced by what they have seen and heard (Mark 16.8). Angel, earthquake and traumatised soldiers can mean only one thing: Jesus' tomb has been disturbed by nothing less than theophany, the surprising presence and power of God.

The promise of Jesus' appearance in Galilee is also in Mark, but not in Luke or John where he appears only in and around Jerusalem (except John 21, which may have been a later addition). Matthew adds joy to the women's understandable fear after finding Jesus' grave so palpably disturbed. The privilege granted to the two Marys is a mark of authenticity in a world that regarded women's evidence as worthless. Not only do they see the tomb, they are also commissioned to tell others, first by the angel (v.7) and then by Jesus himself (v.10). They cannot contain their joy – the Easter message is not meant to be kept secret.

The women are at the head of a long line of witnesses stretching to the present day. If Matthew replaces the mystery in Mark's account with clarity and confidence, he also underlines the importance of worship in the Church's testimony to Jesus' resurrection (v.9). The secret is revealed in the joy of those who kneel at the feet of Emmanuel, 'God with us' always (Matthew 1.23; 28.18-20). Matthew's Gospel turns Peter's thumbnail sketch into a vibrant, life-giving story for people from all nations to live by.

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 24)

New Testament Acts 10.34-43

Peter has been summoned, through a vision, to the house of the Gentile centurion Cornelius in Caesarea, the military headquarters of the Roman occupation. The god-fearing Cornelius is sympathetic towards the synagogue and keen to hear more about Jesus (Acts 10.1ff.). We can imagine Peter disturbing a Roman audience with his bold assertion that the 'Lord of all' is Jesus Christ and not Caesar, as in the official imperial ideology (v.36). What are the grounds for such a controversial, cosmic claim?

Peter's thumbnail sketch of the story of Jesus sets out his case. Divine and human action come together in the work of the Holy Spirit through Jesus (v.38), the witness of his first followers (vv.39-41), and the resurrection of Jesus seen as God's vindication of a crucified criminal (v.40). Without this divine imprimatur, Jesus' story would never have been told, such was the shame of his crucifixion. Now, one of those who ate and drank with Jesus (v.41) is about to extend that fellowship to Gentiles – who will soon receive the Pentecostal Spirit (Acts 10.48). Eating and drinking across racial boundaries is a sure sign of the power of resurrection to create a new world. Israel's long-promised freedom is dawning, now that her exile is over at last. God's forgiveness is being extended to all (Isaiah 40.1-2; Luke 1.77; Acts 2.38). The delightful grace of an all-embracing communion with God and among all people is good news worth telling.

The links between the readings

Jeremiah's hopes for his people's future are grounded in God's faithful love, just as Peter's outline of the gospel has Jesus' words and deeds animated by God's life-giving Spirit. Matthew's colourful account insists that not even the shame of Jesus' death can shut God out.

Sunday 19th April - Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 2.14a,22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1.3-9; John 20.19-31

New Testament Acts 2.14a,22-32

Peter gives a powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost, addressed to 'Israelites'.

He offers an argument as to why the resurrection affirms that Jesus is the Messiah from the line of David: David foresaw that the Messiah would rise from the dead. The resurrection is defined as a vindication: 'God raised him up' (vv.24,32) and as a confirmation of Jesus' unique identity: 'it was impossible for him to be held in its [death's] power' (v.24). For those who followed the Jewish faith as taught by the Pharisees, belief in the resurrection was a familiar doctrine but it would have been commonly understood as something that would happen to everyone at the end of time (cf. John 11.23-24), not something that would happen to the Messiah as soon as he had died. Note that Peter puts the emphasis on the resurrection as the event that reveals Jesus' identity, not his death on the cross. Do we sometimes put so much emphasis on the meaning of the cross that we miss the significance of the resurrection?

(Continued on page 26)

New Testament 1 Peter 1.3-9

The writer of this letter picks up the point that the resurrection is life-changing for everyone who follows Jesus. It is through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that we are given not new ideas but a new birth into a living hope and a new inheritance. We have an eternal place in God's family and we are also being transformed in the here and now. The joy, love and security of this relationship can sustain us even through the suffering of 'various trials'. The difficulties of life now have become 'a little while' before the salvation ready to be revealed 'in the last time'. New priorities, new security and a new attitude to life have all been brought to us through Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the event that has released God's great mercy to us.

Gospel John 20.19-31

The resurrection stories in John's Gospel often centre on a particular character. It is as if John is saying: if you want to understand what this event means, look closely at what it meant for this individual (e.g. Mary Magdalene at the tomb). Here we see the disciples' encounter with the risen Jesus through the prism of Thomas' unique experience of being left out of the group, and then being included when Jesus speaks directly to him. There is a common thread running between these two encounters one week apart: it is crucial that the disciples realise that this is truly the one who was crucified. In verse 20, Jesus shows them his hands and his side, and in verse 27 he says to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands.' It is only when they all see the continuity between the one who suffered and the risen one that they know that they are not seeing a ghost or a vision. Death and resurrection are found to be equally real, and so the disciples rejoice (v.20) and Thomas utters one of the most profound of the early creeds: 'My Lord and my God!' (v.28).

Jesus' words of greeting, 'Peace be with you', are bound up with this encounter. This is not the quiet peace of the status quo, of life as normal, this is the disruptive yet reassuring peace that comes because he is risen from the dead. It is the beginning of something new. Jesus breathes on his disciples and says, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. The word for 'breathed' here picks up an echo of Genesis 2.7 and Ezekiel 37.9; it is a breath that brings divine life, new creation, a spiritual presence that only the resurrection has released into the community of disciples. With it comes new authority and responsibility to be God's agents in the continuing work of forgiveness and redemption. The arc of this story then reaches from the first century right out to us in the twenty-first century: 'These are written so that you may come to believe...and that through believing you may have life in his name.'

The links between the readings

All these readings show the resurrection of Jesus as a hinge point in history: Jesus is vindicated by the Father, we are borne into a new relationship with God, and the Holy Spirit comes to the disciples when Jesus breathes upon them.

(Continued on page 27)

Bible notes Sunday 26th April - Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 2.14a,36-41; Psalm 116.1-4,12-19; 1 Peter 1.17-23; Luke 24.13-35

New Testament Acts 2.14a,36-41

Peter concludes his open-air sermon with a strong statement about the identity of Jesus: 'God has made him both Lord and Messiah', and a hard-hitting accusation: 'this Jesus whom you crucified' (v.36).

Events in Jerusalem before the Passover may have convinced members of this very crowd that Jesus was a rabble-rousing, blaspheming troublemaker who needed to be crucified to maintain peace with the Romans and a proper respect for their faith. Jesus' resurrection disproves this assessment: God raised Jesus from the dead, showing clearly that their whole understanding of God's will had been wrong.

How could they get it so wrong? They ask the anguished question, 'What should we do?' (v.37). Peter's answer is surprising – he does not tell them to go away in sackcloth and ashes, but to be baptized and then they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a promise for all who hear God's call. Peter gives them an urgent yet open invitation.

New Testament 1 Peter 1.17-23

The writer continues to encourage his readers by changing their understanding of their sufferings. He evokes two aspects of Jewish culture and shared memory – the exile, and the practice of ritual sacrifice.

'The time of your exile' was originally the time in Babylon after Judah had been conquered (587/6–538 BC). 'Exile' thus becomes shorthand for living in a hostile environment while holding true to the faith (e.g. in the stories of Daniel). So, the readers are being encouraged to understand their sufferings as caused by being God's people in a hostile context, but also to have hope that, just like the original exile, theirs is temporary – they have an eternal home with God, and they are not living outside God's care. They are secure because they have been ransomed with the blood of Christ, who can be pictured as resembling the perfect sacrificial animal. The cleansing he brings is not temporary but resembles a new birth. How are they to live in the light of this? With reverent fear for God, who judges all impartially and with genuine mutual love.

Gospel Luke 24.13-35

In Luke's Gospel, the risen Jesus makes his first appearance during this 10 to 12 kilometre walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Two disappointed and heartsick disciples are making their way home when Jesus himself comes and walks beside them. Their eyes are kept (literally, 'held back') from recognising him. We are not told who or what prevents them from knowing – it could be God's direct action, or the trauma they have experienced in witnessing his death, or a combination of both.

(Continued on page 28)

(Continued from page 27)

Jesus asks them what they have been talking about as they walked along, and there follows the almost comical scene of Cleopas and his companion recounting the story of 'Jesus of Nazareth' to – Jesus of Nazareth! When he first asks them, though, they stand still 'looking sad', as if the horror of recent events has sapped all their energy. The word for 'sad' here could also be translated 'angry'. Either way, they are overcome with deep emotion and say, 'We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.' 'Redeeming Israel' could mean freeing Israel from Roman rule, but it could also indicate more far-reaching hopes, such as the idea that the Messiah would end all wars or bring about the end of time. Whatever they were hoping for, it all seems lost now.

Then the unrecognised Jesus begins to reframe their experience by explaining to them, from the Scriptures, that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer; it was in God's plan and not a terrible accident. It is as if this unknown teacher takes their isolated beads of knowledge and re-strings them into a different sequence revealing a new pattern. Their hearts burn within them as they listen to him. It is this new knowledge, plus their own generous hospitality, that paves the way for the moment when they recognise him in the breaking of the bread.

The links between the readings

These readings encourage us to consider that we might have got things wrong and jumped to false conclusions. The crowd in Jerusalem had previously assumed that Jesus was a troublemaker; the readers of 1 Peter perhaps felt alone in meaningless suffering; the disciples on the road had assumed that Jesus was finished. All these thoughts were overturned by the reality of the resurrection.

Sunday 3rd May - Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 2.42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2.19-25; John 10.1-10

New Testament: Acts 2.42-47

Many people were coming through baptism into – what? Certainly not into an institution. Perhaps it would be truer to say into a new movement.

In this passage, the followers of Jesus are described as spending a lot of time together in the Temple in Jerusalem, but they are not planning a new Temple or rejecting the Jewish traditions that they have grown up with. What has changed here is the quality of their common life: sharing material wealth, eating together, living with glad and generous hearts, praying and experiencing signs and wonders performed by the apostles. Their community is strong, but it is porous. They do not define themselves by their borders, by articulating who does not belong with them, or who is the 'other'. Rather, members are constantly inviting and welcoming others, so that more and more people are added every day.

(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28)

New Testament: 1 Peter 2.19-25

The writer encourages his readers to live a life of integrity, holding true to the values of their faith in the midst of suffering. It is not that he is promoting suffering as a good thing in itself, but if you have to suffer, make sure that you suffer for doing the right thing, not the wrong. Do not buckle in the face of persecution so that you tell lies or threaten others or become violent or abusive. Remember the example of Christ who, under the most extreme suffering, never became less than the person he was. There was no deceit, abuse or threat in his mouth because he entrusted himself to God. This suffering with integrity and trust had a deeper meaning, for he was able to carry our sins for us. This was at a great personal and intimate cost, for he 'bore our sins in his body' and gathered up those who became his followers as if he were a shepherd gathering up straying sheep. The mystery of redemption is that somehow, by his wounds, we are healed. This pattern of steadfast and redemptive love and trust, even in the face of death, is the pattern that the writer commends to his readers.

Gospel: John 10.1-10

This reading begins with the phrase 'Jesus said to the Pharisees'. He addresses them because they have been disputing his authority in the previous chapter; they were very suspicious when he healed a man born blind. So we need to hear the opening words of this passage: 'anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate...' as both a challenge and a warning to teachers and leaders. When it comes to guiding and caring for people spiritually, Jesus is uncompromising: there are those who approach by the gate and whose voice is recognised by the sheep, and there are those who climb in another way, with the intention of exploiting the sheep by stealing, killing and destroying. The sheep will not follow a stranger, but they recognise the voice of the shepherd. Is this perhaps a reflection on the crowds that follow Jesus, feeling instinctively that his teaching brings them closer to God? Are the people like sheep, allowing the shepherd to guide them to pasture? The Pharisees here will not do anything as simple as listen; they are more fearful of their own authority being usurped than they are thankful that a man has been healed.

In John's Gospel, the speeches given by Jesus often move in a kind of spiral – they mention an idea, move on to a second idea, and then spiral back to a fuller understanding of the first idea. This speech has that kind of pattern: Jesus moves from the image of entering by the gate to the image that he himself is the gate. He is both the shepherd with a voice that the sheep recognise and the actual gateway in and out between safe pasture and the protection of the sheepfold. When he summarises what he has come to give, he calls it abundant life – a life so full of life that there is some to spare.

The links between the readings

These readings describe a community of faith living together with a clear identity. This identity can be known through their relationships with one another, their shared moral character when under pressure and their willingness to listen for and recognise the voice of Jesus. It does not reside in a dress code or a religious strapline, but in the quality of their common life.

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All the people on the boat were married.

A Perplexing Poser



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1c, 2a, 3a, 4b

Weird and Wonderful

The word that can be inserted is
Easter

Between the Lines

R	C	T	E	H	L	A	I	M
I	L	E	A	R	M	C	T	H
A	H	M	I	T	C	R	E	L
H	T	I	M	C	R	E	L	A
L	E	C	H	I	A	M	R	T
M	A	R	T	L	E	H	C	I
T	R	A	L	E	H	I	M	C
C	I	H	R	M	T	L	A	E
E	M	L	C	A	I	T	H	R

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Daily Thoughts

Monday - Friday approx. 4.00 pm

Tots Praise

Friday 9.00 am.



Sunday Service (Live-streamed)

Sunday 10.00 am

We are live-streaming our 'At Home' services , and also offering 'Evening Thoughts' via Facebook.

To watch the live-streams or any of our previous videos on Facebook go to

www.facebook.com/st.catherines.tilehurst/ .

You do not need an account to view - if asked to login or join, you can click 'Not Now'.



Once shown on Facebook, all our videos can be found again on our Web Site

www.stcatherines-tilehurst.org.uk/videos

For initial enquiries regarding baptisms and weddings, please telephone ☎ 0118 942 7786
