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***ST PETER'S CHURCH
BRACKLEY***

"Loving God, loving each other, loving Brackley"



Revd. Rich Duncan writes.....



As we hope for a further lifting of lockdown restrictions this month, let me mention three trends I see developing in relation to St Peter's and the pandemic recovery. There seems to be...

1. Greater appreciation for church.

York University recently published a study based on a survey taken between August 2020 and March 2021 of over 5500 people, looking at the human cost of the pandemic when places of worship were frequently closed. It found that churches are seen as a vital part of the nation's pandemic recovery. Amongst other things, the survey found that 75% of non-church members wanted access to churches as quiet spaces of reflection and comfort. The lead researcher observed: "I think many people who don't normally go to church hadn't realised what churches meant to them until it was all taken away in a moment." The head of 'Places of Worship Strategy' for Historic England, commented that the report shows that churches are "acting as symbols of their community's long-term survival while serving as local hubs for social care, practical support and companionship." I'm pleased to say that St Peter's is once again open every day of the week (roughly 9am-3pm) for the Brackley community.

I have also been very encouraged by the increased appetite for Sunday services. After the Spanish Flu wreaked havoc in 1918, a pastor called Francis Grimké wrote, "This epidemic... has brought out in a way that is very gratifying, the high estimation in which the Christian church is held in the community—the large place which it really occupies in the thought of the people... I do know that large numbers of people have regretted the closing of the churches. I hope that now that they are opened again, that we will all show our appreciation of their value by attending regularly upon their services." I couldn't have put it better myself.

2. Greater need for church.

This greater appreciation for church is hopefully linked to a heightened sense of our need for God. Sometimes, having the *peripheral* things of life stripped away helps us to see what is really *important*. In fact, sometimes having the *important* things stripped away too helps us to see what is *essential*. Corrie Ten Boom said, "You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have." A church leader called Rick Warren, drawing comparisons with the Great Depression, made the point that difficult circumstances often make people turn to God, placing a responsibility upon the churches to respond to that need, "In the 1930s there were two things that increased: theatre attendance and church attendance. People were looking for escapism and they were looking for meaning. When the economy is very tough... that is the time for us to expand and push out, not for us to retreat."

In a very real sense, the worst of times can be the best of times. This explains why St Paul seemed most joyful on death row (Philippians 1:18-21), why James tells us to rejoice in our sufferings (James 1:2-3), and why the Lord's discipline is that of a loving Father (Hebrews 12:7-11). Our reliance on Christ strengthens as our own resources diminish, and the good news shines brighter the darker the world becomes. "Behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face," as William Cowper put it, or, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him," (Romans 8:28).

3. Greater need in church.

Alongside a greater need *for* church, there is also greater need *in* church:

- greater *relational* need as those who have been isolated crave community (why not aim to talk to one new person each Sunday, or give someone a ring this week?)
- greater *emotional* need as the Good Grief Trust predict a 'tsunami of grief and mental health issues' over the coming months (why not give me a call if you would like to chat through some feelings of loss or anxiety?)

- greater *financial* need as churches like St Peter's try to recover from a sustained loss of income (why not review your giving if you haven't done so in a while?)
- greater *practical* need as many step back from volunteering roles and rotas (just as the National Trust has similarly seen its volunteer base decimated, so too has the national Church, so why not reassess how you serve at St Peter's?).

Finally, a heartfelt thanks to the congregation for your forbearance during this period of flux. A windy journey is probably far more jolting and nauseating for the passengers on a bus than for the driver, so thanks for holding on tight to the St Peter's Express!

HOLIDAY CLUB

Bookings are open for this year's holiday club, mornings Monday 23rd to Thursday 26th August for primary school age children.

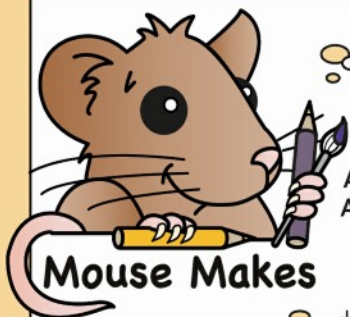
E.mail Val (vlynam01@btinternet.com) or ring her on 701864 to book a place for your child.

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marilynisrael2017@gmail.com



Read the full story in
Luke 10:25-37

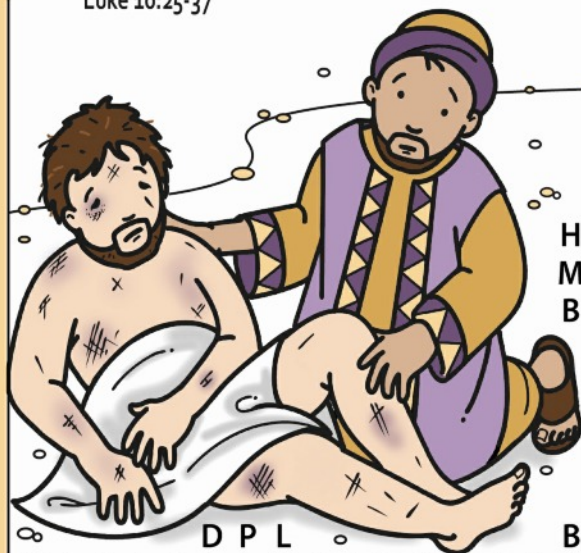
The Parable of the Good Samaritan

A man asked Jesus "Who is my neighbour?" and Jesus replied with this parable:

A man was attacked by robbers, they tore his clothes, beat him and left him almost dead. A priest saw him but walked by on the other side. A Levite saw him but walked by on the other side. A Samaritan saw him and took pity on him, he poured oil and wine on his wounds and then bandaged them. He lifted the man onto his donkey, took him to an inn and cared for him.

The next day he gave the innkeeper two denarii to look after the man until he returned.

Which of the three travellers do you think was the neighbour to the man who was attacked?

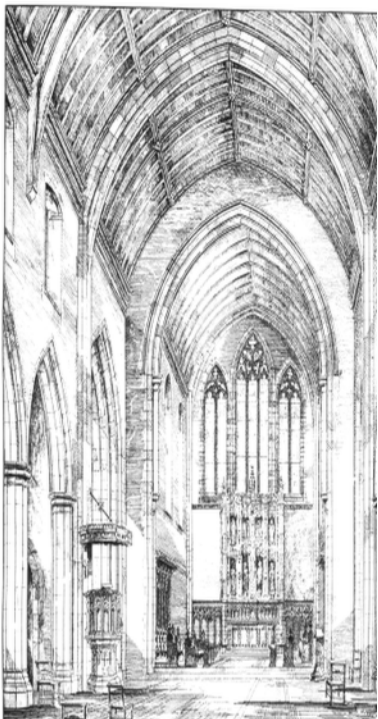


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JESUS • PARABLE • JERUSALEM • JERICHO • JOURNEY • MAN • ROBBERS • SAW
CLOTHES • DOWN • ROAD • PRIEST • PASSED • PLACE • SIDE • LEVITE • CARE
GOOD • SAMARITAN • COMPASSION • BOUND • WOUNDS • POURED • OIL
WINE • MERCY • INN • TWO • DENARII • REPAY • BACK • NEIGHBOUR • GO DO

The Ancient Church

Sometimes I sit within my pew
And gaze upon an ancient view
Of stones, which, set by mason's line
Have stood through centuries of time;
Of glass, whose colours, vivid, bright
Have told their wondrous tales of light
And filtered sunshine's timeless rays
To countless eyes through countless days.



The pulpit where, through long past years
God's servants preached to faithful ears;
The lectern and its Bible read
Aloud to both the quick and dead;
The feet, which down that aisle have trod
To worship everlasting God;
The angels, as they downward gaze
Have heard ten thousand songs of praise!

Songs of joy, and infant cries
As they gathered to baptize,
Songs of love and celebrations
In marriages and confirmations,
Songs of sadness and of loss
Sung before the Saviour's cross.
So many lives have come, then flown
Within this ancient house of stone.

So, as I sit and wonder how
Such history should guide me now?
Such faithful worship through the years
May move me to shed humble tears.
These ghosts bring me joy, not fear
I know I'm just a tenant here
And in one way they are my guide –
They keep me free from pompous pride!

By Nigel Beeton

3rd July

St Thomas the Apostle – confused and doubting

Thomas, one of Jesus' 12 apostles, was an impulsive, confused, honest sceptic. Jesus could understand and work with such a man. Thomas' impulsiveness was evident when Jesus prepared to visit Lazarus in Bethany. It was a dangerous trip to make, because of the Jews, but Thomas urged his fellow disciples: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (John 11:16) Instead, Jesus brought Lazarus back to life.

Thomas' confusion is shown in later talks with Jesus. He was not really sure where Jesus was going long-term (John 14:5). But Jesus accepted this confused commitment, and began to untangle it, patiently explaining:

"I am going to my Father", and "No one comes unto the Father but by me."



Finally, Thomas' honest scepticism is revealed after the Resurrection, which he flatly refused to believe - unless he could touch the wounds of the risen Jesus. Sure enough, Jesus appears - but instead of scolding him, shows him the wounds. Thomas responds: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:26ff).

Thus Doubting Thomas' honest doubts, turned to honest faith, have become a reassurance for thousands of men and women across the centuries, who also want to follow Jesus, but who require some proof of this amazing event - the Resurrection. In Doubting Thomas' complete affirmation of faith, after meeting the risen, crucified Christ, they can find support for their own faith.

Ancient legends tell how Thomas went on to India as a missionary. There are rumours that Thomas even built a palace for a king's daughter in India, and thus he is the patron saint of architects. It is believed that he was martyred by a spear on 3rd July, 72 AD in Mylapore, near Madras. 46 ancient churches in England were dedicated to him.