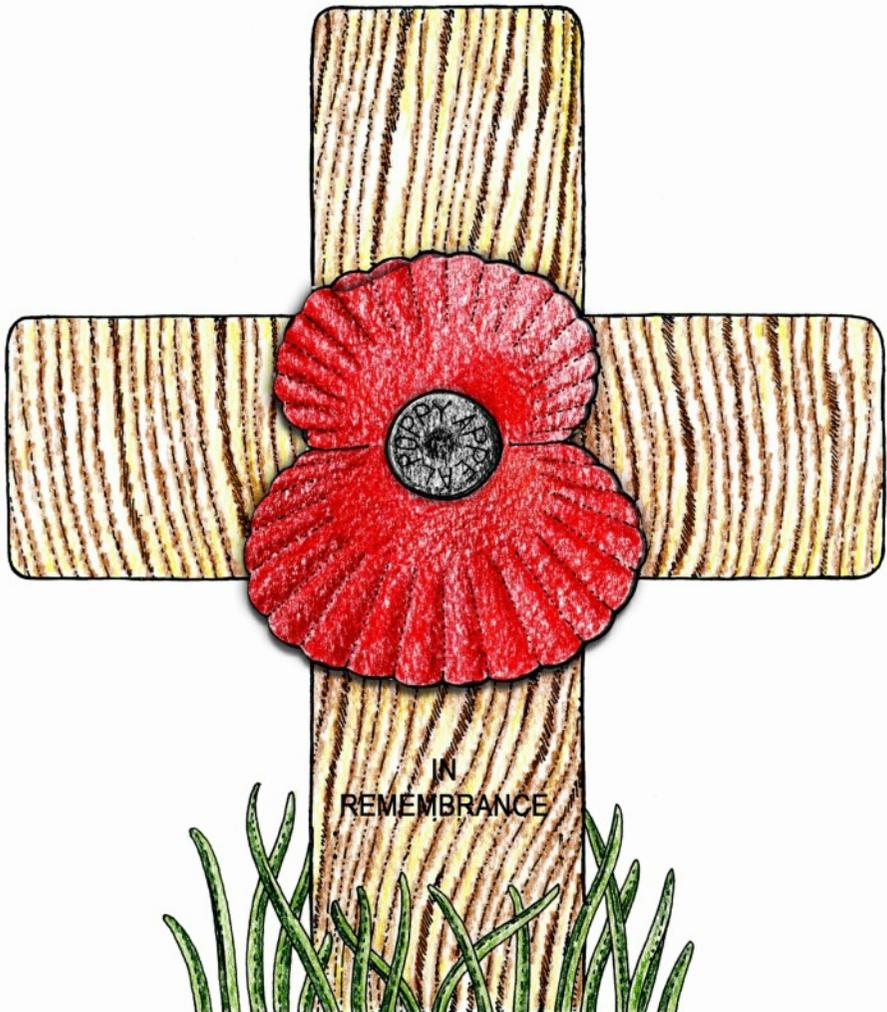


Vol.60 No 11 November 2020 Online Edition

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

***"Loving God, loving each other, loving Brackley"***





## ***The Vicar writes...***

November is a time for remembering. On the 1<sup>st</sup>, we recall those who have died in the faith (All Saints' Day), and not least this month John Lewis and Jim Mortimer, who sadly left us so recently. Four days later, we "remember, remember the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, gunpowder, treason and plot." Then on the 11<sup>th</sup>, we remember all those who have died in armed conflict, "lest we forget." November is a month to recall the past.

Over recent weeks, there have been several resources helping Christians to look back at what the church can learn from epidemics down the centuries, even as we mourn and lament the present loss of life. I thought I would briefly share some of the lessons I have gleaned.

**165 AD** – Smallpox. This is thought to have wiped out between a quarter and a third of the population of the Roman Empire over a fifteen year period. However, according to Rodney Stark's book *The Rise of Christianity*, the church actually grew during this time. Stark attributes this partly to the care shown by Christians towards the sick. The way of Rome was to focus on the powerful and not the weak, but the way of Christ turned this on its head. Although that meant believers were more at risk of infection and death, they earned the deep respect of the watching world and many more people started to follow Christ. Brothers and sisters, we are called to "live such good lives among the pagans that... they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us," (1 Peter 2:12).

**251 AD** – Measles. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage wrote, "This pestilence and plague, which appears full of terrors and gloom, is a trial of the righteousness of each... whether relatives are dutifully affected towards their kindred; whether masters feel pitifully towards servants who are languishing; whether physicians keep from leaving the sick who entreat their aid." Trials in life are exactly that: trials or tests of moral integrity (James 1:2-3, 12). Once again, Stark says the societal value of Christianity became more apparent during this period and he estimates that the Christian population exploded from about 1.9% of the Roman Empire to 10.9% over the next half century.

**542 AD** – Bubonic plague. Justinian I, Roman emperor for 38 years and creator of the Hagia Sophia, faced what was the first pandemic in recorded history. Justinian himself contracted the disease but survived. One of the stories from that time, by Procopius, noted that the plague caused people to shake off “the unrighteousness of their daily lives and practice the duties of religion with diligence.” As C.S. Lewis once wrote, it is often the case that “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

**1350** – Bubonic plague. Not unlike Covid-19, the outbreak originated in China, spread overseas to wreak havoc in Italy, and from there spread like wildfire throughout the whole of Europe. This was the infamous wave of ‘Black Death’ that killed around a third of the population between India and Iceland during the years 1345 to 1352 alone and, in the second half of the century, up to half the population of England. It is sobering to see on the board at the back of St Peter’s that the church had four different vicars between 1347 and 1351, and inspiring to be reminded that church leaders are to follow in the footsteps of “the Good Shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep,” (John 10:11).

**1527** – Bubonic Plague. During another pestilential November, Martin Luther published a pamphlet called “Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague.” It is full of pastoral wisdom. Luther said no one should look down on another for their different approach to fleeing the disease, unless they have an essential duty to perform. He urged Christians to be simultaneously prayerful and pragmatic, “I shall ask God mercifully to protect us... then I shall fumigate!” He explained that love of neighbour requires prudence during an epidemic, since sometimes it required visitation and at other times avoidance. Luther concluded, “This is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.”

**1918** – Influenza (the ‘Spanish flu’). Francis Grimké was born as a slave in the American South, but later became a pastor in Washington D.C. During yet another difficult November, he preached and published a sermon entitled, “Reflections Growing out of the Recent Epidemic of Influenza That Afflicted Our City.” He observed, “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." Of course, some cannot return to St Peter's just yet, but I certainly identify with a renewed personally appreciation for gathering in person.

**2020** – Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). Last month, one national newspaper ran the headline, "Churches tally up their value to society – at £12.4bn." The figure referred to the 35,000+ financially-quantifiable projects run by churches, such as food banks and toddler groups, at least when Covid-19 was not disrupting normal programs. On top of this, there is the literally priceless worth of the church sharing the good news of eternal life. As we face another difficult month and the prospect of a very difficult winter, let us remember this November, that the church still has a wonderful and unique role to play in our community, as we show Christ's love and share Christ's Kingdom, holding out to all "the pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:45-46).

Rev. Rich Duncan

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## **CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL**

This year Samaritan's Purse is offering you the option of either donating a shoebox in the usual way via St. Peter's or of selecting gifts online for Samaritan's Purse to pack for you.

Details of this online scheme at [Samaritans-purse.org.uk](http://Samaritans-purse.org.uk)

If you are donating via St. Peter's, shoeboxes will need to be at the church by Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November.

Please note that due to current restrictions the church is open only on Wednesday morning 9-12 and Sunday mornings 9-11.

On Remembrance Sunday the church is open from 10.30am



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

2nd Brackley Brownies  
(St Peter's Church)

St Peter's Brownies have been meeting online, via Zoom, since April. It has taken a bit of getting used to this new way of meeting; both for the leaders and the girls, but it has been so very important for us all to continue some normality during these uncertain times and was especially important in the early days when we were mainly confined to our homes.

It meant the Brownies could see their Brownie friends and do fun things - something for us all to look forward to each week.

The Brownies have written this poem and drawn pictures on the "Whiteboard" on Zoom (a new skill for us all).

## "Thoughts of Autumn"

### *A Special Autumn Poem*

Leaves are falling

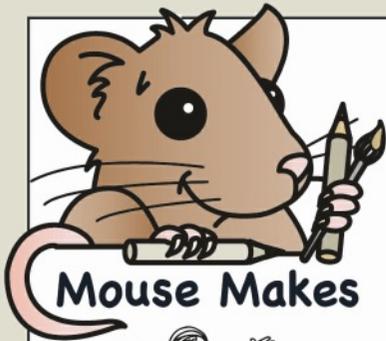
Leaves are changing colours

Animals are hibernating

The sun starts drooping and  
the rain comes to land

Farmers are starting to gather  
all the food  
Halloween comes.





## REMEMBERING

How do you remember things?

In bible times God's people would remember what God had done for them by building monuments made of stones and by holding festivals and celebrations to give thanks to God.



READ *Joshua 4:1-9* and *Exodus 12:1-14*

Today we too build monuments to remember and hold services of thanksgiving like **Harvest and Remembrance Sunday**.



*Is there anything you would like to thank God for?*



REMEMBRANCE • SACRIFICE • VICTORY • TRIUMPH • MONUMENT  
 ROCK • PILE • OBSERVE • TRIBUTE • COMMEMORATE • RECALL • OFFERING  
 HONOUR • CELEBRATE • PRAISE • REJOICE • THANKSGIVING • DAYS  
 FESTIVAL • EASTER • PENTECOST • HARVEST • CHRISTMAS

## Remember, remember...

**N**ovember – 1st: All Saints, 2nd: All Souls, 5th: Guy Fawkes, 8th: Remembrance, 11th: Armistice... 22nd: Christ the King (and 29th is Advent Sunday this year). Lots of church, community, and civic highlights. This year still very real, and very important – but subdued and maybe overshadowed by the virus.

Remembering still matters though. Not just wars and those lost in them or damaged by them, not just those currently in our armed forces – though we mustn't minimise that at all. But we need to remember our story, our history (even Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators). We need to remember our Church story, and who we are as the inheritors of all the saints, named and unnamed. We need to remember those we have lost, those who have gone before us into eternity. And above all, we need to remember that Jesus is still Lord, that Christ is still King, High King, Lord of lords and King of kings.

In these strange days of covid, apparently running through the dark winter ahead, we need hope and light. In a sense, some of that comes through our support for each other, our continued self-discipline for the common good, and the scientific endeavour to find a cure or at least a vaccine. But in the

deepest sense, hope and light come only through Christ – and we are assured of that by remembering the past.



Ultimately we have hope, and light at the end of every tunnel, because God is faithful. Scripture and Church history point so consistently to a merciful, saving, promise-keeping, faithful God. Nothing "in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord". "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength." "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Remember, remember, what a faithful God we have. Remember, remember, his faithfulness to the saints of old. Remember, remember, that Jesus is King. Remember, remember, that he promises to put all things right.

With best wishes

+ Donald

+Donald  
Bishop of Peterborough

## Christmas Trees 2020

So we all know Christmas this year will be a different experience for us all however we want to celebrate it to our best abilities at St Peter's We will therefore continue with our Annual Advent Christmas tree display from the Church and Brackley community on the Church window sills.

Obviously they will be socially distanced !

So please decorate an artificial tree no higher than 3 ft .  
Make a sign or label to show who you are to attach to it, or place in front of it .  
This year **No lights** please as we can't switch them on and off .

The Church is open ( at the present time ) on Wednesdays so trees can be brought on Wednesday 25th November  
Between 9-12 to be placed on a window sill ready for the Advent season .

There is sanitizer as you enter.

If you would like more information please call me on  
07845397168 or email

[Caroline.dunning@btinternet.com](mailto:Caroline.dunning@btinternet.com)



If you have enjoyed this short online edition of the current magazine, you can purchase the full 20 page printed edition for the modest sum of 40p.

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