

Stranton and Burbank Community Church

SIGNPOST



**Rooted in God's love
Growing together with Jesus
Branching out in the
Power of the Holy Spirit**

May 2020

Lock Down / Look Up

Jacqui Rogers asked a question on the WhatsApp church group. What is life and faith like during lockdown? Personally, I have had mixed feelings and thoughts during this time.

Firstly, I haven't been going to lots of meetings, which means I have had more time at home. I have now discovered Zoom, an online conference call app. So I have meetings with people on the laptop and I can see them! The Morning Prayer which I normally attended in the church building is now done sitting in my office, but there are also more people joining in with online prayers. Which is great, and information about this is on the notice sheet if you would like to try it sometime.

I am getting my head around doing online church services, such as Thoughts for the Day, Compline and Communion services. If I use my phone for recording then I can read people's comments during the service. However if I use the laptop to record I can't see the comments clearly! My laptop is very light sensitive therefore I have to draw the curtains during the day! All these small things which I would never have thought about before lock down! I have noticed that when doing a service the people who are watching are not just the expected congregation. People from Huddersfield, my home town, are logging on, Kat from Germany is watching and also some of the teachers from Ward Jackson School too, which is all very encouraging. Perhaps after lockdown we will continue to record the services and put them on line, I don't know how? I will need to find an IT person for that one!

I am someone who likes to wake up, EAT and drink tea, then have a quiet time. I do feel blessed during this time and it really sets me up for the start of the day. The Lectio365 app is very good and I know lots of people are really appreciating the way the readings can speak personally into their lives. I am also reading a devotional book by Bob Geoff which is very good. All these lead to me feeling positive each day.

Although I have to admit that each Sunday I do feel flat, it has taken me a while to realise why this is. I would say that I see myself as a shepherd of God's people. But Sundays now are a constant reminder that I am not with my sheep and I am not, in one sense, doing the job I love to do, which is to look after the sheep. The feeling of loss and grief is very real. Now to counter-balance that lack of contact I have been taking bike rides and delivering bible notes and letters plus offerings of Angela's baking to some of 'my sheep'; taking the opportunity to knock on the door and move away for a safe chat. Every Sunday I do still wish I was doing the 9:00/9:15am and 11:00am services!

Other things that are happening during lockdown... Our house has had a mini makeover. Angela painted the hall and stairs and then we painted the kitchen together. Cupboards have had a good clear out and I even had a go at cleaning the garage and found three bikes in there!! Now Angela and I have discovered you can get a lot further on a bike and it also seems easier than walking. These are the sort of things we want to keep going when lockdown is lifted.

To finish then, God doesn't say that life as a Christian will be a rose garden and that life will never be hard!! He does say, however, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you". Regardless of what it is we are going through God wants to go through it with us.

Don't lock God out of your hearts at this time. Look up to him for help.
Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. James: 4 v 8.

Keep safe

Rev Clive

Easter Sermon 2020

In her Easter message the Queen said, “This year, Easter will be different for many of us, but by keeping apart we keep others safe. But Easter isn’t cancelled; indeed, we need Easter as much as ever. The discovery of the risen Christ on the first Easter Day gave his followers new hope and fresh purpose, and we can all take heart from this. We know that coronavirus will not overcome us.

As dark as death can be – particularly for those suffering with grief – light and life are greater. May the living flame of the Easter hope be a steady guide as we face the future.”

Looking at our gospel reading from Matthew 28 the living flame of the Easter hope begins with two women called Mary. Two of the women who witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion, death and burial. It’s dawn on Sunday the first day after Jewish Sabbath and they come to the tomb.

Matthew tells us of an earthquake and scattered guards. The women meet an Angel and they hear the words, ‘Do not be afraid... Jesus has risen, see and go and tell the others’. Then they meet the risen Jesus. He says, ‘Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers.’

For the women the sadness of mourning is turned to the joy of hope. The darkness of Good Friday is penetrated by shafts of light of the first Easter morning. And we like the women, we need to hear the words of the angel, the words of Jesus, ‘Do not be afraid.’

Our winter has been long, wet and cold, but recently it has been dry and warm. Yesterday I talked with Rob about the farm. Previously Rob had told me how they had failed to sow any winter wheat. But in the last few weeks they have sown barley. On a walk in the last couple of days Rob had noticed a green sheen across the fields. The seeds are germinating and beginning to sprout. Spring is in the air, there is hope.

We must not minimise the darkness. These times are and will continue to be tough. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) rightly called for lent to be a time of lament, time of sorrow. To quote the organiser ‘By letting ourselves grieve and standing alongside those who are suffering we participate in God’s own suffering and through this hope is released.’

But today, Easter Day, we celebrate the resurrection. It’s a day of light and hope. Alastair Bateman the CEO of CMS in his Easter address talked about a Christian in Burundi called Maggi Barakitse. In 1993 witnessed her best friend being killed. Rightly Maggi grieved and lamented the death of her friend. But her Christian faith led her through to found children’s centres, community projects, and she encouraged members of her community to choose the way of respect and dignity instead of hatred. Maggi saw new life and hope rekindled in her community.

Filled with faith and hope Maggi said this, ‘Love made me an inventor. Every day I improvise new life’. Filled with Easter hope and empowered by the Holy Spirit may God’s love cause us to be inventors, Daily improvisers of new life. This Easter may new life and hope be rekindled in our community...

Norman - edited 13.4.20

Mothers Union

April 2020

At our March meeting we welcomed Jill Barrett as our speaker. Thank you all for coming to hear Jill as she talked about how she became involved with supporting Kilamatinde nearly 24 years ago. Jill asked for prayer for the many new people who are now in place there – a new Headmaster, new medical staff, and a new focus on what is the next priority. Later this year Jill hopes to visit again to meet, support and encourage old and new members of staff there, and she asked for prayer for herself in getting to know and supporting the new staff. Please pray for Jill's health too. Many thanks to Jill for enlightening us and bringing us up to date.

This year seems to have flown by. The winter with its floods and storms that dragged on and on. Spring is now well on its way with daffodils and other bulbs pushing through the soil. I managed to tidy up the patio at the back of the house and felt quite virtuous – but the side garden still needs an overhaul. I convince myself that the birds will use all the old twigs and tatty leaves for building their nests. Sometimes we need a good tidy up and refocus on what is the most important thing to start or give up. Easter is almost here with sorrow of the Crucifixion followed by the resurrection and joyous new life. Let's pray for the Mothers Union in all it does in our Diocese, in our country and throughout our world. Do have a Happy Easter.

God bless

Love **Ann Courtenay**

May Update

Ann asks that members hold each other and members worldwide in prayer during this time.

Many Mothers Union members in the UK, including Ann, are making laundry bags for NHS workers to use to send their scrubs for cleaning. Ann is also beginning to make scrubs and having to relearn childhood sewing skills!



From the Home Front

Lost in the Mists



As we followed the road to Durham it seemed that the Cathedral, along with Durham City, had disappeared, it was not visible as the valley bottom seemed to be shrouded in a thick white mist yet the hill tops and wind turbines beyond the city were bathed in sunlight. As we drove into the city – there was no mist at ground level – it was low suspended cloud! Going out towards Lanchester we drove through this cloud and the road ran parallel to

and just above this mist/cloud which was strung along the Derwent valley.

The effect was ethereal, awesome as you can see. All the fields, vegetation, livestock and buildings at the bottom of the valley were invisible. From the bottom of the valley it looked like a grey cloudy day. However driving along at the height of the mist we were in basking in sunlight with views stretching for miles....



It seems that life can reflect this bizarre weather phenomenon. At times the drudgery and disappointments of life make us depressed and our outlook is grey; we are unable to visualise life outside this moment or any improvements. On other occasions our dreams and hopes all seem to have been swallowed up - disappeared from view, no longer obtainable no matter how hard we try. We cannot imagine a way through this shroud of mist suffocating the life out of us; it seems to be impenetrable. Yet with faith and trust, not giving up or accepting the negatives, we can work our way up and out into the sunshine once we are on the right road. Perhaps prayers or the Holy Spirit have strengthened and guided us back to the right route. God has promised us joy and to prosper us. Just remember you have to keep on the road in order to emerge from the mists of unhappiness, guilt, pain and doubt into God's sunlit pastures.

J.A.R.

Lockdown life in the Vicarage

Life in the Vicarage went into a bit of a whirl when lockdown came into place towards the end of March. We were inspired by Mother Gemma who quickly became familiar with 'Going live' on Facebook technology to make services available.

We experimented with various setups for services involving balancing tables on top of each other, attaching a mobile phone to a microphone stand, balancing the said mobile phone on top of the piano in order to have musical accompaniment. It's been exciting to worship not only with church family in Hartlepool but also people who don't usually come to church or others around the country and even abroad.

Phone calls and WhatsApp video calls to friends from church have helped us to feel connected. Norman has found Zoom to be an excellent tool allowing Morning Prayer and meetings to continue. I've also enjoyed finding ways of staying connected online with the Messy Church family and the Toddler group.

For me 'PE with Joe' on YouTube every morning and a walk with Norman in the afternoon has helped to keep me sane. We enjoyed our holiday week, not in the Lakes as planned, but having a week off parish duties and time for some longer walks, time in the garden and a little painting.

I decided to increase my Facebook profile and have had a daily thankfulness theme running over the last few weeks, which has also helped to keep me feeling positive.

We have enjoyed a little more time to read books and connect with God in the quiet.

We are very aware that although we have had a reasonably straightforward transition into lockdown that many people are struggling financially or emotionally, or are out in the big wide world keeping essential services running and we are profoundly grateful to them.

May God sustain and protect you through this difficult time.

Julie



Communities of Hope Update

Amidst all the uncertainty of the pandemic behind the scenes we are continuing to work towards establishing the 'Community of Hope' project later this year. Our vision is for Hartlepool to be transformed by the incredible love of God seen in Jesus and his people. Yes, we want people to discover faith and to become part of a faith based community, but we also want to see the hungry fed and prisoners set free. The initial twin focus will be work based in St Aidan's Kitchen and on St Matthew's Community Centre. In both places we will build on the existing good partnerships we have with many different groups.

At a diocesan level the bid document has now been submitted to the Central Church for scrutiny and we will not hear anything further until the end of June. Despite the major financial problems associated with the pandemic we have received reassurances that the money for the £4million bid, lasting 5 years, has already been set aside. Please do pray that this money will be released and pray that those things that God wants will definitely come to pass smoothly, quickly and ABUDANTLY.

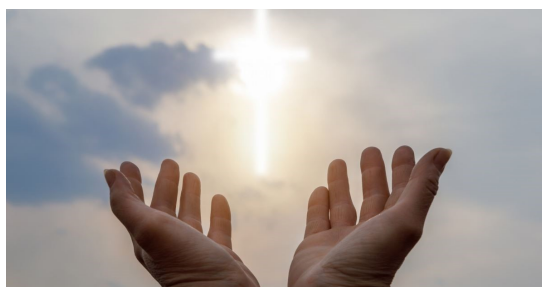
We now have a Steering Group for the project which includes 5 lay folk from the three parishes plus 2 clergy, Mother Gemma and myself. The group will officially be a subcommittee of Stranton PCC and the PCC will have legal responsibility for the whole project, but this project is very much a group initiative for the whole of Hartlepool.

There will be three full time posts associated with the project: A Project Leader, Community worker/evangelist and a Children and Families Worker. Originally we were planning on advertising in June, but we are now planning on advertising in July with a view to starting the project in September when hopefully we will be allowed to gather again, all be it in smaller number and with a degree of physical distancing (this is conjecture I have no inside knowledge!).

The whole bid is to encourage 'Church Growth', part of which is the development of leaders for the Church of the future. As a group we are committed to mission, uniting across churchmanship boundaries and committed to working with those on the margins. This is an attractive place for people to gain experience. We are therefore now part of the Ministry Experience Volunteer scheme and are looking forward to welcoming Joel Galley who will be working with us from September. There are also possibilities of the placement of a 'contextual ordinand' starting in October. This would be a student from Cranmer who studies full time but half of their work, 3 days a week, will be in the context of our Group Ministry. Watch this space for more news and more detail.

I am left praying: Lord may your kingdom come. May your will be done.

Norman



Redemption

Isaiah 44: 22 I have swept away your offences like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

What do we understand by “redemption”? Dictionary definitions mention “buying back” something sold, or settling a loan that had been secured by depositing an asset, and that sort of thing: but these are only legal definitions, and don’t really get to the heart of what redemption can mean in personal terms.

So let me tell you a true story, about one of the first experiences I had as a young child of about six or seven years old, that spoke to me of what redemption can really be.

Far too many years ago now for me to have an exact date, sometime in the early 1960’s, my mother, like many mothers then and now, was struggling to bring up a large (-ish) family. So many meals to cook, clothes to wash and iron, beds to make and rooms to clean, fires to lay, and all on a tight budget. She cooked all the time to feed her growing family; good honest food – no takeaway meals, and one of her treasured and essential kitchen aids was a Pyrex glass measuring jug.

But the jug was imperfect. The handle was broken. Not dangerously so, but broken all the same. Half of the handle was missing. It wasn’t my Mum’s priority to replace it, but that jug was definitely on her list of things to replace.

Time rolled on, the endless way it can do for children: on (in fact) to the Church Christmas Fair – you know, the one where every year we have a good clear out of stuff and then go and stock up again on other people’s clear-out bargains? Well, I went along with my pocket money hoping to buy some family Christmas presents. Now I knew there was something about Mum’s measuring jug that made her dissatisfied with it, I wasn’t sure what – it looked alright to me. But then, I didn’t actually use it - it was just something she had mentioned once in passing, in my hearing: “I need to get a new measuring jug.” And behold! Right there, in the bric-a-brac stall, at the Church Christmas Fair, was - a measuring jug!. Just the same size and type as my Mum’s - and it cost only sixpence! (I said it was a long time ago). Job done - bought, wrapped and presented on Christmas Day.

My mum actually cried tears of joy (and amusement) as she unwrapped it. It was not only “a” jug, it was “her” jug. She had bought a new one, and donated the old one, the imperfect one, to the Christmas Fair: But she was deeply touched that one of her boys, knowing she needed a “new” jug, had redeemed it, in all its imperfection and ordinariness: and it had been bought back, through a child’s love and concern. She accepted it - and appreciated it then as a redeemed item, far more than her new jug, as that had been bought only with money, not love (and sixpence).

There was no more talk of getting rid of it after that. She cherished it, used it and kept it until she died, just a few years ago – it was still part of the well-used contents of her kitchen more than fifty years later, and after three intervening house moves. That momentary act of childlike love made a decades long impression, both on her - and ultimately on me as an adult, in my understanding of the lasting personal impact and connection that a single momentary act can have.

So it is, in some way, with God and ourselves. He could, for all our imperfections and ordinariness – our sinfulness – simply have discarded and rejected us; but in his unbounded love for us through the acts of the death and resurrection of his son Jesus, he paid the price to bring us back, and cherish us, and keep us in His Kingdom, and make us whole and fit to live in His everlasting presence.

David Craig

A long lockdown

Mid-March 2020 and the Government announced measures to stem the coronavirus pandemic.

These measures included a 'lockdown' to curtail the spread of the virus. From this point life, as we knew it, changed drastically. Because of age we were told to stay at home for twelve weeks, self-isolate, no social contact with anyone, including with Paul, Tyler and Lorelai. We did not accept this graciously but realised that although fit and healthy we needed to abide by these rules.

Paul still has his contact with the children, so we have been in touch via facetime which is good. They talk, sing songs, let us see what they have been making and we join in with their games. They Facetime to say good morning, during the day and before bedtime to say goodnight. We get virtual hugs and kisses. Can't wait for the real thing, although it may be a while yet. Holidays we had planned with them have had to be cancelled which they do understand.

I am spending time baking and have even started to make bread, Paul managed to get me some bread flour. The house has been spring cleaned, paperwork filed and a lot of shredding has been done. I'm going to start sorting through old photographs this week, I have already done this with those held on the computer. Lots of books to be read and think I may start cross-stitching again!

Peter has been fence and shed painting, also gardening. He started to sort out the garage and shed. He exercises daily, one day walking, the next day on the bike. He's also proficient at veg preparation and washing up. Lots of spare time now so he can catch up on his reading too.

Anything we need, food or otherwise we turn to Paul or our neighbour Sue, they look after us well.

Life is a lot slower now, but we are getting used to it. Only wish we were a few years younger and we could be out there helping.

We appreciate the work done by Norman and Julie, Michelle, Clive, Mother Gemma and all those who share worship, be it Songs of Praise, Reflections or Night Prayers.

Take care, stay safe, and stay in.

Maureen Anderson

Foodbank update - Message from Revd Andrew...

From the beginning of May, the foodbank is moving from a "collect" service to a "delivery" service, facilitated by British Gas, which has made its vans and drivers available nationally to deliver food to individuals and families in need. People in need of food relief should apply to one of our referral agencies (or the Council's Hub) as usual. Visit our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/Hartlepool-Foodbank-203052626543200/>

for more details: in praying for this work, give thanks for the generosity that this has unlocked on the part of many individuals and businesses. Continue to pray for those who are not only socially isolated but also find themselves short of the necessities of life because of loss of jobs and livelihoods.

View from the other side of the world

Seeing the word 'CANCELLED' next to our flight number left me with a sick feeling in my stomach. With only 24 hours until our departure the airline had cancelled with no communication via phone or email, nor pre warning to enable us to apply for an earlier flight. After an hour spent on the phone to Dubai the airline employees advised us not to take the refund voucher but to check their website regularly for updates and maybe in a couple of weeks flights would resume! Suddenly everything had changed. We were in New Zealand – the other side of the world – and we couldn't go home.... Within the following 48 hours New Zealand was in lockdown and we weren't able to travel at all!

We tried to contact the British Consulate for advice, but the repeated telephone message just told us to return to the UK as soon as possible – if only!

We quickly became resigned to the fact that we were stranded and abandoned by Emirates airline and the British Government. No one seemed to care or want to know that we were in New Zealand and stuck. We had no real control of our lives! However it soon dawned on me that I was not abandoned at all, but was 'in this place' for a reason.

We knew we were in a very safe place, we were fortunate that my niece and her family made us very welcome in their large house set in 17 acres. We had company both human and animal and masses of space with beautiful scenery. There was plenty to keep us occupied – feeding eight every day – with 4 adult cooks and three teenage trainee bakers, we were able to try lots of new recipes with the autumn harvest of fruits and produce (apples, peaches, pears, walnuts, tomatoes, salad leaves, spinach, plus an abundant supply of freshly laid eggs!). We were able to help with decorating (all the internal doors needed painting), cleaning the cupboards, plus splitting and chopping wood, feeding and moving livestock, working in the garden (including building more raised vegetable beds). In addition the extra adults meant that Ghislaine and Brendan were able to clean and put away all the equipment from their marquee and event hire business for the winter (this included washing and folding marquee sides and roofs, sterilising cutlery and dishes, washing chair covers plus much more) in a fraction of the time it normally takes them. I even learned the new skill of raking uphill and bagging horse poo to sell – not as awful as it sounds!

During this time I found I had to develop trust that the Lord was in control and pray for patience and strength when a bout of home sickness left me in tears or I just longed for some personal space in the busy household. I felt that God was working things out in me too. I overcame my fear of moths in confined spaces, the fact that there were mice in the kitchen (it was a farm and autumn was well advanced!), my abject dislike of putting my bare hands in soil and picking up horse poo!!! I felt I had to be obedient to God's promptings. So when I kept having the feeling I needed to join Facebook – a part of social

media I have always disliked – I did. Then I discovered the Stranton and BB drop In WhatsApp group and I was able to watch and at times join services with my church family, which helped tremendously with the homesickness – you all felt so much closer. The music and prayers from services along with Lectio365 gave me peace and enabled me to hear God more clearly. Some areas of long standing inner pain were healed during long walks and my early morning prayers (Compline to you!). The news of repatriation flights came via Facebook and initially we felt it was wrong to take places, as we knew of so many other stranded Brits who were really struggling financially and emotionally. It was wonderful to be able to ask for prayers and to speak to spirit filled church family during this time. When an even longer delay before the resumption of flights was announced we felt prompted to act.

From that point we felt that God was leading us by the hands and preparing the way.

Those who left on earlier flights fed back helpful and supportive information so our anxiety was lessened. Good friends found us suitable car-hire information. Our baggage weight was spot on and when we boarded the plane we even had upgraded seats ensuring comfort and space during the 25 hours of flying. We felt the risks of moving out of our safe lockdown bubble was minimal as everyone was in the same isolation state as us with no ‘outsiders’ joining the flight. The aircrew were all masked, gloved and visored. When we reached Hong Kong to refuel I switched on my Wi-Fi to find Norman and Julie starting a live service - I felt wrapped in a protective blanket of prayer... We were well fed and did manage some sleep on the journey. Within an hour of landing at Heathrow we were driving our hire car around the M25. The traffic on the roads was incredibly light and our journey was swift and stress free.

New Zealand was the holiday of a lifetime, a time of fun and amazing adventures, awesome scenery and wildlife with lovely people, an opportunity to draw close to my Kiwi family and my big sister. But God also used it for so much more. Worldwide Covid 19 lockdown was an opening up of so much in my life plus the emergence of a stronger and more trusting relationship with my Abba Father.

J.A.R.





A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has 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 offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

The service is supported by the Church of England nationally as well as through the Connections group based at Holy Trinity Claygate in Surrey and the Christian charity Faith in Later Life.

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.

Callers will hear a special greeting from the Archbishop before being able to choose from a range of options, including hymns, prayers, reflections and advice on COVID-19.

Options available include materials also available digitally by the Church of England's Communications team such as Prayer During the Day and Night Prayer, updated daily, from Common Worship, and a recording of the Church of England weekly national online service.

A 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 said:

"With many in our country on lockdown, it's important that we support those who are feeling lonely and isolated, whatever age they are."

"The Daily Hope service will allow people to hear hymns, prayers and words that offer comfort and hope, especially in this Easter season."

"I want to urge people to spread the news about this service. If there is someone you know who is particularly struggling, give them a call and let them know about the Daily Hope."

"I'm going to phone a friend; will you join me?"

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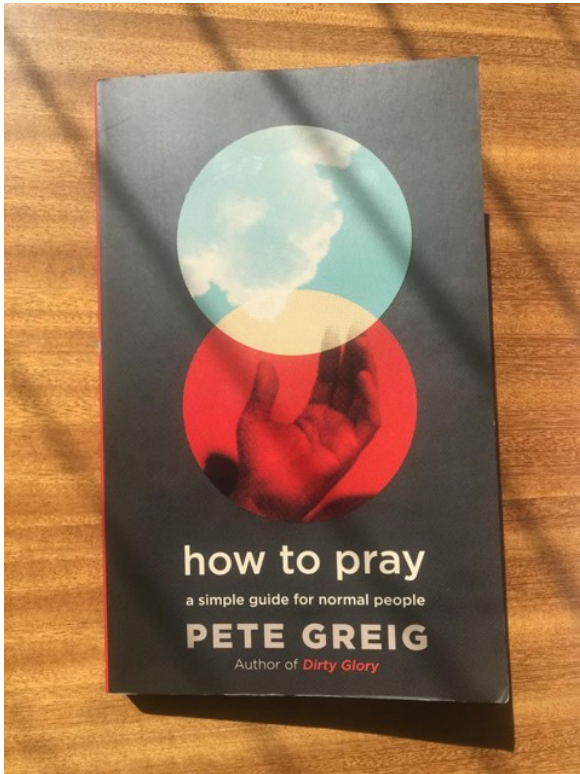
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Life in Lockdown - Reading?



One of the things I have been doing in lockdown is reading a bit more. I am not always good at making time for this when life is going full pelt, which I confess is not a good thing to admit as a vicar.

One of the books I have been reading is 'How to Pray – a simple guide for normal people' by Pete Greig. Based on the Lord's Prayer, this book is an amazingly well written book with a great deal of knowledge, lots of stories and also a great deal of gathered wisdom. Whether you are just taking your first steps in learning to pray or are someone who has a life committed to prayer I think there

will be something in this book for you.

Pete Greig the author is one of the founders of the 24-7 prayer movement in this country. He has been teaching on the subject of prayer for more than 20 years.

Why not get hold of a copy and read it - ISBN 978-1-529-37492-6

If you need help in ordering a copy please contact the church office using the mobile number.

Norman

Junior Lockdown Quiz

- L Which L was raised by Jesus? L _____
- O Which O is associated with a King of England? O _____
- C Which C was the High Priest at the first Easter? C _____
- K Which K can be found in the Jungle Book? K _____
- D Which D described Brian Connley's character? D _____
- O What O is given by a Sergeant Major? O _____
- W What Ws were involved at the miracle at the wedding at Cana?
W _____ & W _____
- N Which N story has helped to inspire Thursdays NHS support?
N _____

Answers on page 22

Prayers for the Hartlepool Communities of Hope please.

Mark 11:24 (ESV)

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

Imagine: St Aidan's Kitchen has grown into a worshipping community with regular courses on faith and discipleship led by kitchen volunteers who have, not only attended such a course but, developed it.

Imagine: schools clamoring to be invited to experience Christmas and Easter.

Imagine: "Open the Book" being delivered to more schools by groups of enthusiastic volunteers.

Imagine: families from our school links discovering faith

Imagine: St Matthew's Community Centre being used to capacity, new gatherings in place, everyone aware of activities available.

Imagine: communities where people understand how to identify and support each other's needs.

Imagine: the good things spreading across our town.

Just imagine...

The above is all possible, but needs prayer to underpin it.

We need to pray that the resource bid to fund three enthusiastic Christians is successful.

We need to pray the appointed personnel kick start our imaginings.

We need to pray constantly for the work of our parishes in creating Communities of Hope.

To this end I am setting up a WhatsApp Hartlepool Communities of Hope prayer group. (Actually named Hartlepool Communities of Hope) For those interested in this please let me know.

However, for those who do not use computers or choose not to use WhatsApp, different arrangements will be made - please let me know so we can work out how best to keep you updated.

Blessings

Patricia Watson mob:07708 131750

phone: 01429 869982

Email: patriciawatson2@gmail.com

Gardeners' Prayer

Oh Lord Grant that it may rain every day from say midnight until 3 o'clock in the morning – but you see it must be gentle and warm so that it can soak in. Grant that at the same time it would not rain on alyssum, helianthemum, lavender and the others which you in your infinite wisdom you know are drought loving plants – I will write their names on a bit of paper if you like – and grant that the sun may shine the whole day long, but not everywhere, (not, for instance, on the spiraea, or the gentian or plantain- lily or rhododendron) and not too much, grant that there will be plenty of dew and little wind, enough worms, no plant lice or snails, no mildew, and that once a week thin liquid manure and guano may fall from heaven!

Amen

Quotation from Czechoslovakian Karel Capek

Sent by **Andrew Craig**

Lockdown in Spain

We're in our eighth week of lockdown here in Spain and are just beginning to very gradually go into a de-escalation programme, which will last till at least June. We've been confined to our homes during this time and only allowed out for essential shopping trips to the nearest supermarket, pharmacy etc., with only one person allowed in the car, unless for emergencies. We must carry ID at all times and be prepared to be stopped by the police and show our shopping receipts. Failure to comply results in large fines or arrests. Everything except food shops are closed. Food shopping is hard work, as we wear masks and gloves and have to disinfect our hands at the entrance to the shop and then wash clothes and disinfect phones etc when returning home!

We're lucky, because we have a large garden and so have outside space. People in apartments, including our daughter Vikki, have been stuck inside with only a supermarket trip to look forward to. This, 4th May, has seen a change for the better, as deaths are dropping and new cases falling and we are allowed outside for a walk, exercise within a kilometre of our home, but only during designated time slots. Ken can't, because he broke his foot 3 weeks ago (silly)! If all goes well, next week we will see bars and cafes opening in outside areas, with 50% occupancy and socialising of up to 10 people outside or in houses. Even when we have more freedom of movement, we cannot travel outside of our province, which means we won't see Vikki till later in June.

The Spanish Government has been brilliant and most people are obeying the lockdown rules which are very strict. Our local Town Hall is tremendous with regular disinfecting of streets in town, daily updates on our town app, and our Mayor contacted us regarding masks, gloves and sanitizer, and arranged to meet in the lane to give us ours 3 weeks ago. He is heavily involved in the parish church and does a lot of the confirmation classes (pre virus obviously).

The local church is also very supportive and The Costa Blanca Anglican Chaplaincy broadcasts regularly on the coast, while Josie Watson keeps us updated about Stranton on-line services. It has certainly been a test of our faith, but as we always say 'The Boss will sort it out!' And He will! We have also kept in touch with family and friends regularly by WhatsApp calls and video, also Zoom.

On a lighter note, we have a very clean house and tidy garden and newly decorated bedroom and study! Also one of our cats gave birth to five kittens in our bedroom last month so we now have thirteen cats!

You all keep safe and God Bless. Hope to see you in December.

Ken and Corinne Cornforth, L'Olleria, Spain.



Boys Brigade



Like everyone else the Boys Brigade has been hit by the Covid 19 Crisis.

On Monday 16th March we were informed by Boys Brigade Headquarters to cease all activities.

This could not have come at a worse time as we had a big 90th Celebration Photograph and Quiz Night planned for Friday 20th March.

Since then each Lad has been sent a craft package to do during this lockdown period, plus we have sent special 90th badges to former leaders, helpers and friends of our Company.

We now await information from HQ about our Summer Camp before we make a final decision on whether to cancel!

Whilst it's all a bit doom and gloomy at the moment - I'm very confident that once we can get back we will come up with a great recruitment drive...

Stay safe and keep well. **George Bainbridge**

Look to the Horizon (Good Friday 2020)



It was a sad heart-breaking day a long time ago
When gross injustice ran the show,
Cruelty reigned and put on a great display.
A man deserted and isolated by nearly all he knew
Yet he went through it just for you.

Now two millennia on, we too must isolate.
A chance to gift life and healing time to you,
The difference is that we are not alone
We can encourage via Skype, Zoom or phone.

Even then we still find it very hard to do,
Imagine being forsaken by your father too.

Yes it's still heart breaking this Good Friday
Yet we know that there is hope on the horizon

Just like Christ, our nation will experience a true resurrection.

George Bainbridge

Thoughts during Lockdown

Over the last few weeks the word PURPOSE has not left me.

The meaning of the word purpose is:

'The reason for which something is done or for which something exists.'

For a lot of us our lives have dramatically changed and our day to day does not look the same, I am sure I am not alone when I started to think 'what is my purpose?'

Who am I when I am not working full time?

I think I started a crazy cycle of emotions!

I began lockdown with FALSE MOTIVATION OR EXPECTATIONS listing in my head all the things I could possibly do now that I would have more time! I would learn BSL, I would decorate, I would write letters and write cards every day! Out of all of that list I have done one of them!!!! I am still working shifts at school but thought I would have the energy for doing so much more!

The next phase was IRRITABILITY, oh boy was I annoyed at everything and everyone!!

Why were we having on line church three times a day? Why did people NOT social distance when I was out for my walk, why did I have to move instead of them? Don't get me started at the constant cycle of Covid 19 news! I had to stop listening because that began to really get me down!

Then came GRIEF. I could well up at anything! Not being able to be with family on my birthday, being away from my eldest, not being able to make sure the children I work with on a daily basis were okay. Not being able to go for a drive and a walk where we wanted to go! I would read on Twitter of so many loved ones dying...

The fourth stage led me to question "WHAT"- if this goes on for months and months? What will it all look like when we come out the other side?

Then the last stage that I'm still working through is ACCEPTING THE NEW NORM Trying to find a new rhythm, a new routine. This will look different for everyone.

So what is our purpose in this messy scary time?

Our purpose is to be in community, we were created to be in a relationship with God and others and to be a family of believers and right now that is our biggest challenge, we can't be in our church building, we can't be in each other's - how on earth do we do community?

I would like to suggest that we all need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit at this time, to ask God to guide us in who we should reach out to, ask Him to place people on your heart that need, a phone call a message, a letter, a parcel to drop on their doorstep. I think it's very easy to wallow in our own struggles and think of ourselves, but when we reach out to others it helps them and it helps us too! When we reach out to others we are being in community.

We need to remember that we are enough as we are, if we never worked again, if we had to live in lockdown forever, we would be accepted and loved as we are.

God created you and He delights in YOU.

PSALM 104: 31 The Lord takes pleasure in all He has made. He loves YOU!

In school at the moment we are doing a lot of creative play and all I'm hearing is "Angela look at this, Angela watch me do this, Angela look what I've made"

God wants us to do that with Him, He wants us to talk with Him and be honest with Him. Share with Him what you are feeling in this crazy time, He can handle all your emotions as He created them! Share with Him the good and the bad.

Acts 17: 27 His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him, even though He is not far away from any one of us.

God is not on lockdown. He is not playing hide and seek with us, He is a prayer away and your purpose right now is to be loved and cared for by Him and then you go and love and care for others.

Let me close by sharing a prayer with you that is in our study

Be silent
Be still
Wait before your God
Say nothing
Ask nothing
Be still, let your God
Look upon you
That is all
God knows
God understands
God loves you with
An enormous love
God only wants to
Look upon you with love.
Quiet
Still
Be
Let your God love you.

Angela Hall

Stranton Sunday Club!

Hello everyone, this is Kate (one of the Sunday Club Leaders) and I am just giving you an update on our fantastic Sunday Club. It has been continuing in a slightly different fashion due to the lockdown, as I have been emailing Sunday club activities. The emails all have a bible story and suggested activities for children to do. The activities have ranged from drawing pictures, singing and dancing, creating blanket forts and even star gazing. Our Sunday Club has looked at different themes including the fruits of the spirit, the creation story and people of the bible with great faith. Or sometimes if I find or see something interesting, then I will send an email letting everyone know or providing different activity ideas including yoga, Earth day activities and also some fun things to do to keep us all entertained.

If you would like to receive the emails which are sent a few times a week and always on a Sunday, then please feel free to contact me and I will happily add you to the list or if you have any queries. My email address is kate.lawson4@outlook.com.

Stranton Toddlers is alive and kicking!

Although we are not able to meet in St Matthew's Community Centre on a Tuesday or Friday at present, do join us on our Stranton Toddler Group Facebook page on Tuesdays at 10:30am, live every week for a 15-minute singing time and story with Julie and Pippo.

Messy Church online is Sunday afternoons 4:00pm on our Stranton Messy Church Facebook page.

We are missing seeing everyone at St Matthew's for our monthly Messy Church of fun, friendship, worship, food and mess!

The good news is that we are now meeting online, 4:00pm every Sunday afternoon for a bible story, prayer, song and craft ideas.

Do join us!

Julie

Anzac Biscuits

Ingredients

- 110 g (1 cup) rolled oats
- 150 g (1 cup) plain flour
- 120 g (2/3 cup) brown sugar
- 70 g (2/3 cup) desiccated coconut
- 125 g butter
- 2 tbs golden syrup see recipe notes
- 1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda



Preheat oven to 160C (fan). Grease and line three flat baking trays with baking paper.

Combine the rolled oats, flour, brown sugar and coconut in a bowl.

Place butter, golden syrup and 2 tablespoons cold water into a microwave-safe bowl and heat for 3 minutes, 50% power or until melted.

Stir through the bicarbonate of soda.

Pour the butter mixture over the oat mixture and stir to combine.

Roll level tablespoons of mixture into balls.

Place on trays, 5cm apart and flatten slightly.

For chewy ANZACS, bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until light golden. For crunchy ANZACS, increase cooking time to 12-15 minutes.

Leave on the baking trays for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

Lockdown Quiz Answers

L - Lazarus O – Orange C – Ciaphas K – Kaa D - Dangerous O – Order
W - Water & Wine N - Noah

Top tips for tip-top taps

As many will have found, making the best out of lockdown can include taking the opportunity to catch up on those niggling little household jobs that you have been putting off for when you no longer have an excuse. So it was with our cloakroom taps: dating from the 1960's they had become leaky, lime-scaled and difficult to turn on and off (a bit like their owners, perhaps). As more frequent hand-washing became part of the "new normal" this simple, quick and seemingly straightforward task rose rapidly to be top of our "to-do" list. Along with a well overdue lick of paint, the cloakroom was to have a new tap top make-over that even our children had been telling us was well overdue ever since ... well, they were children. And as there was no actual emergency we would have to do it ourselves, according to the lockdown rules.

Getting some new tap tops by online order was easy, and finding the tap wrench was straightforward enough. Getting the tap tops off against the resistance of years of lime and corrosion was a bit more challenging, but our next problem was that the new tap tops didn't fit the old tap bodies (the diameter and thread was different). So we ordered – online- a conversion kit that we thought would do the trick: it didn't. Those basin taps from the 1960's must have been made to a different standard from modern ones.

The next logical thing therefore was to do a full tap replacement, and tap bodies were duly ordered, online, to go with the new tap tops that we already had. It was going to be easy to get the old taps out from the basin of course – right? Wrong. First the tap wrench cracked under the strain: next, out with the adjustable spanners and mole wrench which of course wouldn't reach into the enclosed space under the basin: finally, as a last resort the 13.5" Stillson wrench was brought out of retirement – you know, the type used in heavy engineering to give some real leverage. Guess what happened next...

You got it! The basin broke in two. We were having a smashing time of it. With taps standing on the ends of pipes and no basin, we turned off the water, cut the pipes, put on a couple of end stops (top tip - ALWAYS have a couple of compression end stops to hand if you go anywhere near your water supply that doesn't have isolation valves, with a hacksaw) and retreated to assess what to do next.

Getting a new basin was going to be tricky. We had the taps already (obviously) but most cloakroom basins nowadays use new-fangled "mono" taps and we weren't going to mess with the plumbing any more if we could help it! Basins that take two taps we found mostly to be too big for our cloakroom, but we did eventually find one and ordered it (you guessed correctly) online, paying extra for "next day" delivery. It did not arrive the next day, or the day after, or the day after that, but just as we were about to lodge a query, it did arrive - we saw the delivery man place it outside the front door, take a quick photo to prove it had been delivered, and RUN back to his van before we could react. We just knew something was wrong as we picked it up: basins don't usually rattle, this one did. It was in fact in numberless pieces inside its box. Glue was not supplied. As we said on the phone to our daughter who had just taken delivery (and sent a picture) of an intact hand thrown clay strawberry planter, our cloakroom basin had also clearly been "hand thrown" – across the warehouse. Her hilarity at our misfortune far exceeded any sympathy we might have expected.

We lodged an (online) enquiry with the basin company: the automatic response was not encouraging – it could take 72 hours for them to respond to our email, so we persisted on the website and found in a remote sunless and un-regarded corner of the small print a link to a customer service "chat-bot" through which we finally managed to contact (though not speak to) a (real?) person. "Eloise", for that was the chat bot's persona, promised that a new basin would be dispatched forthwith and be with us next day: which it wasn't. It arrived in fact four days later, eight days after the original order had been placed. But it was in one piece, and it fitted. It all works. Nothing leaks. And the tap tops are beautiful - we defy ANYONE to say otherwise.

We know that this experience is trivial in the face of the real problems many people are facing in lockdown, with anxiety, loneliness, fear and many practical and financial difficulties: God has reminded us that we never really had a problem, but we share this story (just as it all did happen to us over the space of three weeks) in the hope it will give you a smile in serious times.

David Craig (This is the modern version of "the Gas-man cometh" by Flanders & Swan.

Where are you on the Hymn Tune Spectrum?

These thoughts were prompted by my recent re-reading of a piece by Quentin Letts in his book “50 People who b-----d up Britain”. He was referring in this particular article to one Graham Kendrick as follows:

“One of the more excruciating dilemmas in twenty first century Britain – makes your toes curl like Ali Baba’s slippers – is attending a wedding or christening and discovering that your friends have chosen a “happy- clappy” hymn.”

The rest of the piece follows in similar vein and reflects, in his view, the sad loss of the more muscular tunes and harmonies from Hymns Ancient and Modern.

This set me thinking about our own feelings regarding the hymns and worship songs which are on offer today; and what a wide selection we have.

It was ever thus, at least since hymn writing and singing became the norm in churches of most denominations some 250 years ago, and that Charles Wesley was responsible for at least 6000 during his lifetime. How were they received in those days? And was there a similar feeling about the content and style as we seem to have today?

Back in the latter days of Good Queen Bess there was a collection prepared by Shernhold and Hopkins, but later in the days of Oliver Cromwell hymn singing was frowned upon. Later collections were put together by Tate and Brady and Chetham’s Psalmody. From the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a gradual change from the Metrical Psalm towards the hymn format we know today. Isaac Watts and John and Charles Wesley led the way in this respect.

The right tune

There has, it seems, always been a tendency to chop and change the tunes for a particular hymn. In fact a recent trawl through the internet revealed over 30 different published settings for “O little town of Bethlehem”.

It is this which gives such a rich variety to our hymn singing: using the tried and tested, and sometimes less well known tunes to popular hymns and songs. This can sometimes lead to fierce debates between organists and clergy or organists and organists, about which is the “right” tune for a particular hymn.

Well, “you pays your money and you takes your choice!” If the tune fits the words, or vice versa, and expresses the sentiment, then what is the problem? I suppose that it is ultimately tradition and personal choice. It is only when the organist puts in a sly one “off the cuff”, for example “The Muppet Theme” for O Jesus I have Promised, that sensibilities are outraged and the feathers begin to fly! (Try it! It does fit).

I suppose that the Victorian era was the purple period for hymns and tunes and the beginning of a move to a broader approach to hymn singing. In particular the works of Moody and Sankey, whose hymns and tunes were extensively used in their mission journeys. It has been said that although a lot of the music was of poor quality (in relation to what, I ask myself?), the words did much to convert people of working class origins to Christianity. One contemporary writer said that they had “reduced the population of Hell by over a million souls”. Among other critics, William Henry Monk, the Editor of Hymns Ancient and Modern, said of the more sensational tunes of the Mission Hymn Books;

“It is not the pretty tune that is the most fit, nor the most popular that is worthy of

popularity. Some of the melodies of Moody and Sankey are popular enough, but it is quite another question whether they are worthy of association with God's Worship."

Is there not an echo of those sentiments today in relation to more recent collections of Worship Songs. Alongside Moody and Sankey of course there was William Booth and his Salvation Army. He drew quite frequently on a style of hymn singing from the popular tunes, harmonies and rhythms of Victorian popular music and the Music Halls. Indeed even in the 1988 Tune Book there is an adaptation of a 1930s popular ballad - The Voice in the Old Village Choir, recorded in 1932 by Ambrose and his Orchestra, and now set to new words - The Well is Deep. William Booth is alleged to have said on one occasion in answer to criticism of his choice of songs - "Why should the Devil have all the best tunes?"

And so today we have a vast array of old and new to choose from. Traditional foursquare muscular Anglican and Methodist; the Mission Songs which have survived from Moody and Sankey (perhaps in modified form); the range of songs and Christian music from the Salvation Army and the wide choice from numerous other collections such as Songs of Fellowship, Mission Praise (Complete!), Iona and the new collections from various denominations and worship groups.

A final comment, taken from that Supplement, and which could be and probably is made in relation to today's various collections:

"Some of the tunes may not commend themselves to persons of severe musical taste, but their omission was impossible from a book providing for the service of Song in a Church representing varying degrees of musical ability and culture."

So there you have it, where exactly do you stand?

Jeff Parsons © 2018

To bless you

If you have access to the internet

Be blessed with this recording.

<https://youtu.be/PUtl3mNj5U>

Makes you smile...



CELEBRATE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

to

Belated birthday wishes for

April

Matt Appleyard
Rachel Cartwright
Paul Cartwright
Abigail Craig
Andrew Craig
Frank Endean
Angela Hall
Rebekah Hart
Kate Lawson
Linda Parvin



May

Barbara Busby
Sarah Cartwright
Elspeth Craig
Violeta Demas
Kath Harkness
Mike Peacock
Eve Coils
Andrew Rogers
Kath Weimer
Janice Young

**Congratulations
on your Wedding Anniversary April**

Ruth & Gavin Smith

Chloe & Jordan Thornhill

**Congratulations
on your Wedding Anniversary May**

Amy & Phil Warnes

**Diamond Wedding Anniversary
Congratulations to**

Pat and David Webster



**If you have something to celebrate we would love to share it - email
admin@stranton-church.org.uk
or phone 864006.**

Proposed Sunday Rota

10th May

9.00am	1662HC	Clive
9.15am	Eucharist	Gemma
10.00am	Morning Worship	Norman & Julie

17th May

9.15am	Eucharist	Gemma
10.00am	Parish Communion	Norman & Julie
3.00pm	Songs of Praise	Andy & Lucy

24th May

9.00am	1662 HC	Norman & ?Julie
9.15am	Eucharist	Gemma
10.00am	Morning Worship	Clive & Angela

31st May

	(Pentecost)	
9.15am	Eucharist	Gemma
10.00am	Parish Communion	Michelle
3.00pm	Songs of Praise	Julie & Norman

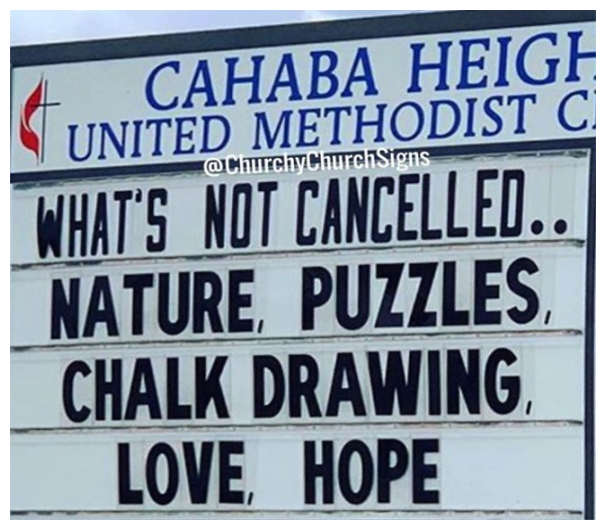
7th June

9.15am	Eucharist	Gemma
10.00am	Parish Communion	Norman & Julie
3.00pm	Songs of Praise	Andy & Lucy

14th June

9.00am	1662 HC	Michelle
9.15am	Eucharist	Gemma
10.00am	Morning Worship	Clive & Angela

Makes you smile...



Who's Who

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